

## ***Beads - It's a Numbers Game***

Many times people will ask what size bead to use on their canvas. Some are happy with size 11 on 18 count, while others prefer size 14. There are many opinions, but the definitive answer is:

It depends.

The first step in choosing is to understand what those numbers mean. Glass beads come in a variety of sizes and shapes, some with single holes and others with multiple holes. The beads used most in canvas embellishment are seed beads. These are round in shape, and while the actual size of the hole and shape of each bead may vary slightly, they generally are sized by degree and sold by weight in grams.

Seed bead sizes are referred to by “aught”. This can be shown as #11; 11/0; 11°; or simply 11. This measurement tells you approximately how many beads are in an inch when they are laid out in a row. The photographs below show a line of 11 seed beads (Fig A), a line of 14 seed beads (Fig B), and a line of 11 Delicas (Fig. C).



Figure A

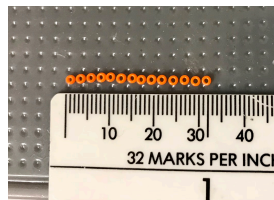
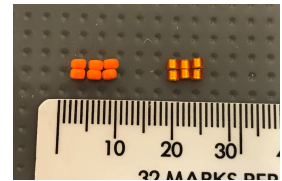


Figure B



Figure C

Another consideration will be the shape of your bead. Seed beads are rounded in shape, almost like a donut seen from above. Delicas (also known as Magnifica beads) are like a cylinder, with larger holes and thin sides. Because of this shape, they are very uniform and are great in areas where you want the beads to lay flat and even. If you are working on 18-mesh canvas, and you want 1 bead per canvas intersection, you would be better off using size 14/15 Delicas instead of an 11 seed. If you are doing random embellishments with single beads or groups of beads (such as loop or messy beading), seed beads in any size will work beautifully. As an example, the photo (right) shows a comparison of 11/0 seed beads and 11/0 Delica beads. You can see how the same number, size and spacing of the seed beads uses almost twice as much physical width as the Delicas.



Finally, beads are usually sold by weight. There are approximately 110 size 11/0 seed beads in a gram and approximately 290 size 14/0 seed beads in a gram. Delicas sized 11/0 have approximately 190 beads in a gram.

Of course, there are many more factors to consider (such as threads, needles, and stitch types) when embellishing with beads; size and shape are just the beginning. The more you know about the terminology of beads, the better your bead embellishment will be.