

A mala represents something different to each person. It can be a tool for meditation, a reminder of an intention, a piece that inspires you, or a beautiful manifestation of a feeling.

Whether you're just starting a meditation practice, or you're an advanced practitioner, Mala beads are a great tool to help focus your attention.

Mala beads have been used by yogis and spiritual seekers for thousands of years to help keep their minds focused during meditation. Malas were first created in India 3000 years ago, with roots in Hinduism & Buddhism, and were used for a special style of meditation called Japa, which means, "to recite".

Traditionally, a mala is a strand of 108 beads used in meditation and prayer. Mala means "garland" in Sanskrit, and the 108 beads are spiritually significant in India. 108 represents the whole of the universe, according to Vedic cosmology. There are 108 letters used in the Sanskrit alphabet, 108 sacred texts of the Upanishads, 108 holy sites in India, and many more correspondences. When you recite a mantra 108 times, the energy of that mantra fills every cell in your body with the healing energy of those words. You can also see the significance of 108 in the Sri Yantra, which has 54 masculine lines and 54 feminine (equaling 108). Wearing or holding one brings about higher consciousness and balance and an awakening of the spiritual body. The Guru bead is the 109th and usually larger than the others. The Guru bead is your teacher, it is said to hold your prayers and intentions. *Guru* translated sa Gu—Dark and Ru—Light. The Guru bead represents any person, place or experience that takes us from being unaware into awareness.

Malas are commonly finished with a tassel. The tassel symbolizes the 1000 petal lotus flower which grows from the bottom of ponds or muddy streams up through the water to bloom beautifully. It closes and sinks below the water every night, then resurfaces and fully blooms brightly again. This is a powerful reminder that if we are grounded in our practice, we are able to beautifully bloom and shine in any given situation, no matter how murky, over and over again.

During meditation, pass the beads through your fingers while silently or out loud, repeating a mantra. The act of repeating a prayer or mantra while holding and passing the beads through our fingers helps anchor our thoughts and still the mind so that we can reside in the present, sacred moment. Chant mantra as if you're infusing the bead with its vibration. After you've chanted on the first bead, slide your thumb and middle finger to the next bead. Chant the mantra, then move on to the next bead, and so on. Don't rush as you pass over each bead. Try to find an effortless concentration, accepting that thoughts will come, but allowing them to float away just as easily.

Chanting sacred texts or words is a method of approaching or attaining the humility necessary to reawaken our essential and primordial nature. The very act of pausing on a bead brings you back to the center of where you are and *who* you are.



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