

Jewelry Making Basics . . . The tools – Part II

with Liz Carter

This month I'm finishing the list of the tools used in jewelry making. This list is taken from [Bead and Button magazine](#). It's always good to know the right tool for the right job, and what its proper name is.

Additional tools:

Alligator clips are hinged clips with serrated edges, often used to clamp wires during electrical work. In beading, they are used to clamp the end of a strand of flexible beading wire, to keep the beads from sliding off. Because of their serrated edges they can damage threads. See also Bead Stoppers and hemostats.

Anvils are steel or iron work surfaces used by metal workers such as jewelers or blacksmiths. A traditional anvil has a flat surface on top and a round or curved horn on the front. You can use an anvil for hammering and shaping metal and wire. See also bench block.

Awls are pointed tools used to pierce solid materials (such as leather), to mark or score softer materials (such as metal clay), and to place or pick apart knots. Pins can often be used as awls.

Bead mats are usually made of a soft or nubbed fabric, such as Vellux, and are used as a work surface for beading because their surface texture stops the beads from rolling away.

Bead Stoppers are metal springs that clamp over the ends of beading wire, cords, and threads to keep strung beads from sliding off. See also alligator clips and hemostats.

Bench blocks are solid, smooth work surfaces, usually made of steel, that can be used for hammering and shaping metal and wire. See also anvil.

A blender is a flexible, tapered tool used to smear and blend seams when working with metal clay.

A bone folder is a smooth, polished, blade-shaped piece of animal bone or horn, traditionally used in papercrafts.

A brass brush is a small scrub brush with short, tough bristles made of brass wires. It is used with soap and water in the first steps of polishing metal and metal clay pieces.

A jewelry buffer polishes metal projects to a shine. Usually a soft cloth, like muslin or flannel, is attached to a motorized wheel.

A burnisher is a polished metal or stone tool used to polish (burnish) metal, including fired metal clay, to a high shine.

Calipers are used to measure sizes and distances. Bead calipers measure the outside diameters of beads and jump rings.

A dapping block is a wood or metal block (typically a cube) with round, hemispherical depressions used to form domes. The steel rods with matching domes on the ends are called dapping punches.

A design board has grooves and rulers to help you lay out and plan your jewelry designs.

A dowel is a firm rod or tube, used as a core. Dowels are used to help tubular beadwork hold its shape and as the core for making coils.

A drawplate is a plate of wood or metal with funnel-shaped holes of diminishing size used to reduce the diameter of wire. The process is called drawing.

A Dremel is a brand of motorized rotary tool. See flex shaft.

Emery boards have a rough, gritted surface over a cardboard core and are used for filing surfaces or edges.

Files are made of a hard metal and have a rough, serrated, or textured surface used to smooth or shape surfaces or edges. There are many types of jewelry files available, including long and mini files and round, half-round, triangular, oval, and flat shapes.

Finishing papers are much like sandpaper, but have a very fine grit. They are used near the end of surface finishing and polishing to bring the surface to a uniform smoothness. See also sandpaper.

Flex shafts are versatile jewelry-making tools consisting of a precision high-speed motor, 3-foot flexible extension, handpiece, and foot rheostat. It is used for drilling, grinding, sanding, carving, and polishing.

A hemostat is a surgical clamp, much like an alligator clip. In beading, it is used to hold the ends of cords and wires. See also alligator clip and Bead Stopper.

A kiln is a furnace used for firing materials (such as glass, ceramics, or metal clay) at a high temperature. There are many different types of kilns on the market.

A lathe is a tool that spins an object in place while a craftsperson applies various tools to the spinning object to alter its surface.

A beading loom is used to produce a woven fabric of beads. There are many types of looms available. To learn how to weave on a loom, visit <http://bnb.jewelrymakingmagazines.com/>

A mandrel is a tapered shaft around which metal is pressed or hammered to change its shape. There are specialized types of mandrels, such as ring mandrels or stepped mandrels. Mandrels can also be

used as dowels to hold materials in a round shape when beading or working with wire. See also dowel.

A measuring tape or tape measure is marked with distance increments, such as inches or centimeters, and is either collapsible or can be coiled. For beading, flexible fabric or vinyl measuring tapes (which can be used to measure round shapes) are more useful than rigid metal hardware measuring tapes.

Molds made from wax, silicone, two-part compounds, and other materials are often used for jewelry making. They allow jewelry makers to control the shape and texture of a piece and to make multiple identical pieces.

Nonstick work surfaces, like flexible Teflon or Silpat sheets, are used with metal clay to keep the clay from sticking to the work surface.

Paintbrushes have many jewelry-making applications, from smoothing metal clay surfaces, to adding small amounts of moisture or applying glue. Usually basic craft brushes are all that is needed.

A pasta machine can be used to condition, blend, and resize polymer clay. Pasta machines used with clay should be dedicated to that use only.

Playing cards are often used to roll out metal clay to a consistent thickness by placing the ends of a roller on equal stacks of cards.

Plexiglass squares are used by polymer clay and metal clay artist to roll out long coils of clay.

Polishing cloths are used to shine up finished jewelry and remove tarnish or oxidation.

Punches are hardened steel tools used to decorate, texture, or form metal.

Acrylic or Teflon rollers are used to flatten metal clay.

Rulers are marked with distance increments, such as centimeters or inches, used for measuring. Clear plastic rulers are especially useful for measuring bead sizes and beadwork.

Sandpaper is coated with a gritty surface and used to grind out surface imperfections. Different types of sandpaper are used differently: Jewelry-grade sandpaper is finer than regular sandpaper, and some types of sandpaper are designed to be used wet. Sandpapers are usually numbered; the higher the number, the finer the grit. When using sandpaper, always start with the coarsest grit and work to the finest grit.

Self-healing polyform boards return to their original shape and consistency after use, making them a great work surface for projects involving pins, such as chain maille or macramé.

T-pins are sturdy sewing pins with a bar across the head, giving them the shape of the letter T. They're useful for pinning materials to a work surface.

Texture sheets have a molded or etched surface, which is used to shape the surface of metal or polymer clay.

Toaster ovens are used to harden or cure polymer clay. It is advisable to use a toaster oven dedicated to this use only.

A torch is an open-flame heat source that can produce temperatures higher than the melting point of the metal being used. Simple one-part torches use compressed gas and atmospheric oxygen; more complex torches combine compressed gas and compressed oxygen to reach higher temperatures.

A tumble polisher uses shot and a burnishing compound to polish and harden metal jewelry. The canister rotates or tumbles on an axis or a set of bars, constantly shifting the contents to achieve a uniform shine on the finished pieces.

Tweezers have two fine tips that come together to grasp or pull. They are great for reaching into small areas or grasping fine materials. There are many different types of tweezers available: hinged or V-shaped, steel or copper, etc., so it is easy to find the specific tool needed for each task.

Until next time, Have a beadiful day!

Liz

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