

Essential Tools for Jewellery Making with Wire

In the past, craftsmen have resorted to marking their round-nosed pliers with marker-pen in order to achieve uniform loops for certain pieces. If looping is integral to your designs, then you might want to consider a pair of stepped pliers, which allow you to repeat circular patterns over and over again, safe in the knowledge that the sizes of the loops will not vary.

Round-nosed pliers are one of the tools that are fundamental to wire jewellery making. Their rounded noses allow a grip on the wire that will not mark, crush or kink it, enabling easy manipulation for intricate movements such as the turning of loops in head and eye pins when making earrings or pendants. Conversely, flat-nosed pliers are used for straightening metal findings and, again, are designed to minimise scratching and damaging.

Side cutters (or diagonal cutters) are also an essential tool, enabling the craftsman to make specific pieces in specific sizes, or add further detail to a piece. Because of the many different gauges of wires there are many types of cutter available. Everyday cutters, used regularly, will eventually chip and blunt, no longer offering the precision and cleanliness of cut that are offered by a new pair or a pair that are designed to cope with particular wires. When working with wire you often need to ensure you get a clean straight cut, and therefore worth investing in a flush or semi flush cutter to avoid crushing the end of your wire.

Before the advancements in the tools of jewellery making, many craftsmen used towels or handkerchiefs on which to lay out beads whilst designing pieces such as necklaces. Unfortunately, these seemingly benign items often caused more problems than they solved: scratching or damaging the beads and occasionally aiding their loss. Now there are bead boards and bead mats, which are made of felt and minimise wear and tear on the [jewellery findings](#), but with enough friction to prevent items such as beads or stones rolling away. For serious jewellery makers, these are almost indispensable now, especially where design work is concerned, allowing the meticulous arrangement of experimental designs to be accomplished.

Most important of all must be the wire itself; nothing would be crafted without it. Jewellery wire is available a range of diameters and densities. The diameter of the wire effects its flexibility e.g. 0.5mm diameters is more flexible than 4.0mm

A wire's solidity is measured in terms of its 'hardness'; either 'dead soft' or 'half hard'. Dead soft wire is, as the name suggests, very soft and can be manipulated by hand; its most common uses are for decorating beads and pendants. Half hard wire is more resistant and requires tools to bend and shape it. This wire is the most fundamental wire in wire jewellery making.

As ever, it's always worth consulting a specialist jewellery making supplier – look online for the best deals on essential materials and equipment.

About the Author

Adam Hunter – E-commerce Marketing Manager of [cooksongold.com](#). Cookson Precious Metals offer a choice of supplies from over 10,000 products including gold and [silver wire](#), jewellery tools, findings, precious metal clay and precious metal sheet - gold, silver, platinum and palladium plus technical information for jewellers, jobbers, designer, craftsmen, artisans and students.

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