

Turning Household Items into Bench Aids

by Jurgen J. Maerz

This fall, MJSA Press will publish Jurgen J. Maerz's second book, Adventures at the Bench: Tricks and Tales, the prime sponsor of which will be Johnson Matthey. In this new volume, Maerz, the director of technical education for Platinum Guild International USA, offers step-by-step projects, overviews of basic platinum fabrication, laser repair, and—of course—a wealth of tricks designed to make life at the bench a little easier. This Tech Sheet offers a selection of tricks on how to take some common household items and turn them into valuable bench aids. [For more information about the book, e-mail info@mjasa.org.]

Hold On:

The Multi-Purpose Clothespin

It's amazing how many common items found around the house can become a bench jeweler's new best friend. Take the wooden spring-action clothespin: This handy little aid can be easily modified for a number of jobs. For instance, all jewelers know the importance of a vise to secure a pearl they need to drill. With a few easy modifications, your clothespin can serve the same purpose. First, with a large ball bur, carve an indentation into the interior of each jaw [1]. The indents should be just deep enough to keep the pearl from slipping out during drilling [2]. Now, all you have to do is insert the pearl into the clothespin's jaws, and allow the pin's light pressure to securely hold the pearl during drilling [3].

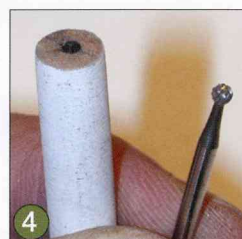
When you're ready to glue the earring post assembly into the hole, your clothespin can help you with this as well. Simply cut a slot in the front end of one of the clothespin jaws, wide enough to fit the post. Now, open the clothes-

pin, rest the pearl between the jaws, and fit the post through the slot. Once closed, the clothespin will again apply enough pressure to secure the assembly and ensure that the glue affixes properly.

And if you want a device to hold a part to a polishing wheel, the clothespin can be of service yet again. Since the prongs are made of wood, you can be sure the heat build-up won't reach your fingers.

One of the best parts of the multi-purpose clothespin: all three of the above

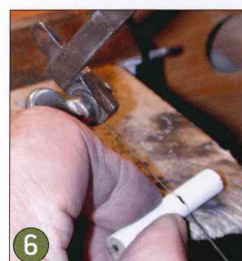
modifications can be performed on the same pin, making it truly one of the bench jeweler's most valuable aids.



Pencil Power:

Gaining Bur Control

This great little trick comes from my friend Charles Lewton-Brain, the renowned goldsmith, author, and educator, as well as the proprietor of Brain Press in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. With the help of a modified pencil stub, you can have a simple little grip that will give you more control when you



are cutting or grinding with a bur.

We begin with the stub of a pencil [4]. Measure along the shaft about 1 inch, or from the beginning of the bur's shaft to about one-quarter of the distance from the end [5]. Using a jeweler's saw, cut the stub to the proper length [6].

Once the pencil has been cut to the proper length, you must remove the lead from its core. Take a twist drill that is the size of the bur shaft or slightly larger, and begin cutting through the lead [7]. [Be aware: ground lead is very messy!]

Once the hole has been drilled through, push the bur through the pencil stub. [No need to clean the stub of lead: more about that in a moment.] You should have plenty of room to attach the end of the bur to the flex-shaft handpiece [8].

Now, when cutting or grinding, you can

grab the pencil stub and it will keep the bur still [9]. This trick also has another benefit: The leftover graphite from the pencil lead will act as lubrication, allowing the bur to turn freely as you work.



All this information leaving you shaken and stirred?



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