

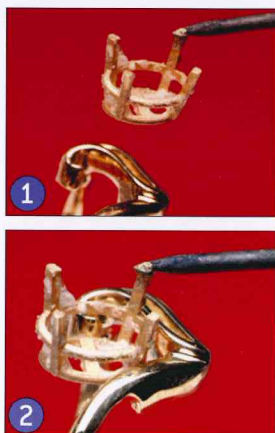
Bench Tips from Gregg Todd & Greg Gilman

For bench jewelers, every minute saved by a handy tool or an innovative technique can be invaluable. Gregg Todd and Greg Gilman—regular contributors to AJM's At the Bench column and the authors of the MJSA/AJM Press book, At the Bench: An Illustrated Guide to Working with Gold & Silver—offer some of their favorite tricks. When they're not sharing information with AJM readers, Gregg and Greg work for Stuller Inc. in Lafayette, Louisiana. Stuller provided the materials and equipment used in illustrating these tips.

Pick and Stick:

Holding Small Heads in Place

Holding small heads in position while soldering can often be difficult. To make this job easier, try the following tip. First, place the solder on the mounting and flow it just enough to accept the head. This will free up your solder pick for an alternative use: to hold the head. Solder the pick to the head in a convenient location—for example, the tip of a prong (1). You now have a secure handle that will not allow the head to twist or slip out of position, and you can position the head onto the mounting with ease (2). After soldering the head to the mounting, remove the pick by heating its tip and flowing the solder around it. (To be safe, make sure the solder on the pick has a lower melting point than that used for the mounting.) Any residual solder on the head can easily be removed prior to stone setting.



Snip Shape:

Cutting Solder Chips

When jewelers first begin bench work, one of the "tricks" they may learn is to make a series of parallel cuts along one side of a solder sheet, then cut across them to produce a number of chips. The problem is they often end up with too many pieces of solder that aren't the right size for their needs. They also find it difficult to store those extra pieces and keep track of them throughout the day.

To remedy this, you can cut a thin strip along the length of the sheet and leave it attached at one end (3). This will allow you to cut off as much or as

little solder as needed for any application. Not only will this reduce your solder consumption, but you will also find it much easier to use that last little bit of the sheet, since the strip is much easier to hold than the irregular shape created by the other method.

Seating Arrangements:

Positioning Stones for Setting

When setting multiple stones, you want to make sure that, between the initial layout and cutting the seats, you keep them in the correct order. To help with this, try creating a "stone tray" from sheet brass, a parts tin, or a small jar lid. Simply melt some sticky wax, such as sculpture wax or beeswax, and pour it into the "tray" to cover the bottom. After the wax has cooled to room temperature, you can place any stone or stones in the proper sequence (4) and have them remain that way, even if your bench is bumped or banged in the setting process. To ensure the setting isn't inadvertently spun around, changing the stones' positioning, "paint" one side of it with a permanent marking pen (5); by keeping the mark facing you at all times, you can avoid unnecessary problems. (The ink can be easily removed later with alcohol.)



On the Rack:

Storing Tweezers and Pliers

Having the correct set of pliers or tweezers ready at your fingertips is a great time saver. Unfortunately, most jewelers simply allow them to accumulate in their bench trays. To avoid time-consuming searches, try this. First, take a length of $\frac{1}{8}$ inch brass or steel rod, between 10 and 12 inches long. Make a right angle bend in each end of the rod (about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches to 3 inches from each end) to form a "U" shape. Now drill two $\frac{1}{8}$ inch diameter holes in the interior side of the workbench, about $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch deep. Insert the ends of the rod into the holes, and you now have a wire holding rack for your pliers and tweezers (6). This will keep your pliers and tweezers out of the bottom of the bench tray. Best of all, the tips of the pliers will face upward so you can see them, further saving time spent hunting for the right pair.

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