

Tool Tips *from Arthur Skuratowicz*

Jewelers are only as good as their tools—but even the best tools need a little help now and then to overcome a challenging job. In the following tips, Arthur Skuratowicz of Anton Nash LLC in Colorado Springs, Colorado, offers some of his favorite tool modifications. A family- and formally trained bench jeweler, as well as a frequent speaker at industry trade shows and conferences, Arthur is also the co-author (with Julie Nash) of the forthcoming MJSA/AJM Press book, Working with Gemstones, due out in late fall 2005.

Lock and Load:

Modifying Tweezers to Hold Two Rings

One of the more routine requests that a jeweler will receive is to solder together the two rings of a wedding set. However, sometimes you might get a pair of rings that don't have much metal; try to file them to ensure a snug fit, and you might just file them away. If that's the case, you're going to need extra holding power—and with a little tool modification, you can have just that. Take a pair of inexpensive cross-lock tweezers and bend the tips so that each has two curves (1). You can now clamp the outside of the rings tightly, ensuring a tighter seam—without filing.



No Chips with This Dip:

Making a Brass Stone-Seating Tool



When setting stones, jewelers value any tool that gives them greater flexibility. One easy way to create your own "seating tool" is to take an $\frac{1}{8}$ inch pointed brass rod, mount it in a graver handle, and taper the rod's point flat. By applying a bit of adhesive such as sticky wax to the top, you can use it to hold and seat small stones more easily. But why stop there? To give you even greater control, use a tiny ball bur to grind out a hemispherical dip in the top (2). The softer edges of the dip will better cradle the table and crown facets of the stone, allowing for better positioning with less trauma to the facet junctions. The dip can also be packed with wax, so you can always have a sticky tip that will release the stone as needed.

Table Setting:

Creating a Staging Area for Stones

The bench pin is one of the most easily modified tools in the jeweler's repertoire. One basic adaptation is to create a small trough for findings and stones (3); by grinding out this small receptacle, you can keep from having small items roll around (or off) your bench. You can also create a trough with a center hole (4), enhancing its effectiveness:



It's now a staging area for small stones, with the center hole helping to align a stone in the table-up position for easy pickup with a wax stick. I call this modification one of my "Sanity Management" tricks, since it keeps me from chasing my stone around the benchtop while I try to pick it up by the table. It also serves as a perfect complement to the modified brass stone-seating tool described elsewhere on this sheet ("No Chips with This Dip").

Get into the Groove:

Filing Prong Holders in Bench Pins

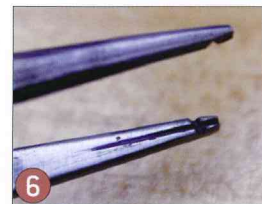


While on the subject of bench pins, here's another trick: file prong grooves into the side of your pin (5). This minor modification is especially useful when cutting prongs individually for large stones or fancy shapes: By taking the prong on which you're working and resting it in the groove, you can avoid wrapping the bur around neighboring prongs in the event of a slip.

Hold the Line:

Keeping Wire Secure in Tweezers

This modification is another one of my "Sanity Management" tricks. As any jeweler knows, it can be quite stressful to solder an earring post or prong in place, only to have the wire get slick from the heat of the torch. To keep the wire from slipping free, try this modification: File a groove or two into the points of your cross-lock soldering tweezers (6). The grooves, lengthwise and across, allow the jeweler to hold wire securely, without it moving under the heat of the torch.



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