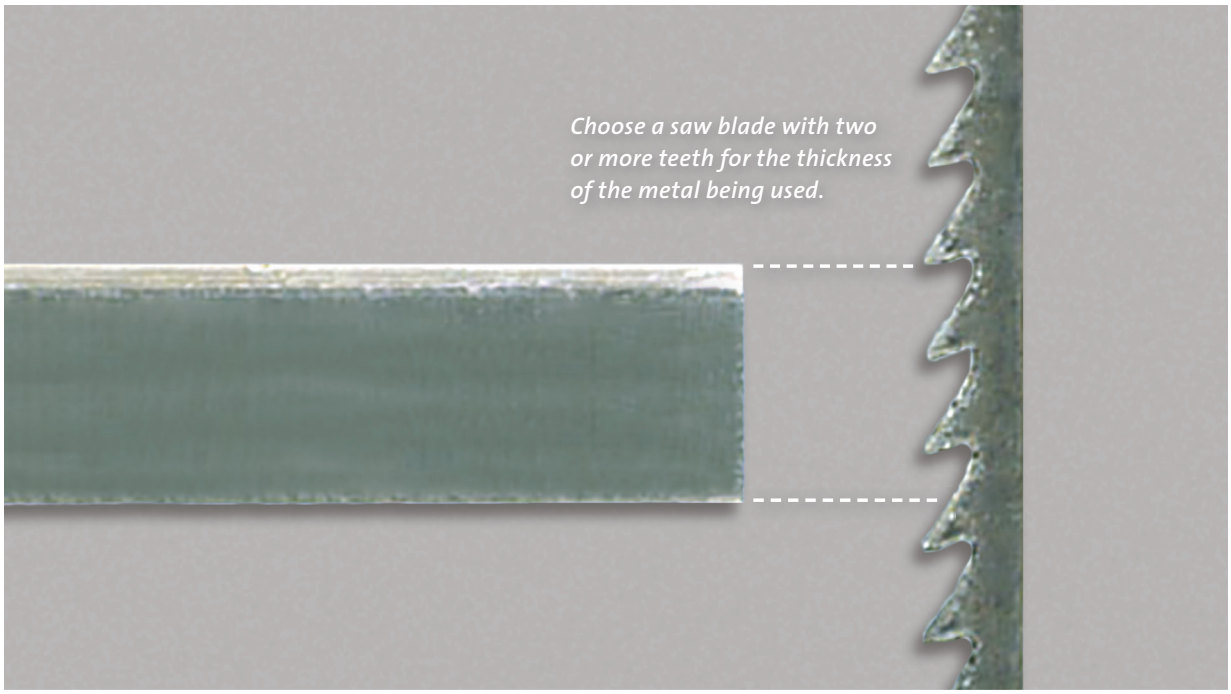

TEXT AND PHOTO BY ALAN REVERE

BLADE SMARTS

Tips for selecting the correct saw blade

Sawing is a fast and easy way to cut and sep- arate a piece of metal into two (or more) parts. The goal of sawing is to use the hard steel teeth of a blade to chip away a groove in a softer metal. This is accomplished by the row of little chisel tips, or teeth, that remove tiny particles from the metal sheet.

One of the most important parts of sawing metal is selecting the correct size blade for the job at hand. Saw blades come in a range of cuts, depending on the distance between the teeth, or teeth per inch. Jewelry tool suppliers offer blades ranging from the finest, #8/0, then #7/0, #6/0, etc., to 0 and larger blades (#1, #2, and beyond for the largest sizes). Finer blades are easier to use, but slower. Coarser blades cut faster but remove a wider path. The best guideline for deciding on blade thickness is to choose a saw blade with two or more teeth for the thickness of the metal being sawed. If you use a coarser blade with fewer teeth, it will bind and be difficult to use.

In addition, it's important to remember to lubricate your blade frequently, use the whole length of the blade when sawing, and guide the blade forward with very light pressure. If you are sawing a long straight line, tilt the blade forward for better alignment.