



Polishing Compounds & Buffs Fact Sheet

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Vocabulary

Compounds and Buffs – These two components are used to complete the process of polishing. Selecting the correct buff to complement the work that the compound is designed to do will speed the polishing process. Equally, pairing the wrong buff with the wrong compound will slow the process and perhaps damage edges and fine details.

Cutting and Coloring – These are the two processes that take place during polishing. Cutting is accomplished with the abrasive compounds of Black Emery, Graystar, Tan Bobbing, and Tripoli. Coloring is achieved with polishing compounds that have no abrasives.

Pre-polish – This refers to the preliminary smoothing that's done using a very coarse polishing compound and buffing. This will remove minor scratches left after sanding to smooth the surfaces, but it will not produce a bright polish. "Pre-polish" is also for component parts in an item that, if they cannot be reached after the item has been assembled, are polished prior to assembly.

Final Polishing – A final mirror finish is achieved by using harder compounds such as rouge. With rouge, there is almost no cutting action; it burnishes the metal, moving the surface layer around to smooth the fine scratches left from buffing.

Satin Finishing – This refers to a softer finish with low sheen. Scotch-Brite wheels are recommended for this; they should be used dry, without added polishing compounds. A satin finish can also be achieved with a magnetic pin finisher after a high polish has been achieved.

Safety Data Sheet (SDS) – All polishing compounds have health hazards associated with ingesting particles, no matter how small. Learning how to avoid ingestion altogether is the best option during use. Safety Data Sheets are meant to provide guidance to the user on what steps to take in protective equipment.

Cutting Compounds

Black Emery Compound – This is for difficult tasks that needs a great deal of effort to eliminate unpleasant surfaces or deep cuts. Will remove fine details and crisp corners very quickly. Pair with a stiff, stitched, wool buff for clean-up on steel or titanium. Tallow-based compound.

Graystar – This is considered a wide-ranging compound for general abrasive use. Greystar has an outstanding cut while providing an adequate coloring in all metals. Excellent results can be achieved when paired with a hard felt buff or on a “lap” polishing wheel. Tallow-based compound.

Tan Bobbing – This is a milder cutting compound than Black Emery or Graystar. Ideal to use as pre- polishing compound to prepare surfaces for final polishing. Tallow-based compound.

Brown Tripoli – Traditionally the first mild cutting compound used when polishing gold and silver jewelry.

Note: Tallow-based compounds have been loosely linked to an increase in stomach cancer among professional jewelry polishers (8+hours a day, 40+hours per week).

Polishing Compounds

Red Rouge (traditional tallow based) or **Water-Soluble Red Rouge** (vegetable based) – This provides a fabulous quality polished for use with silver, gold, other valuable metals.

Green Rouge – This compound is designed to give a high gloss texture to rigid and soft metals.

ZAM – This will not scratch delicate stones and leaves a high gloss texture without a residue.

Blue Magic or **Picasso Blue** – This compound was designed for platinum, but it provides a glossy polish to platinum jewelry as well as other precious metals, including gold.

White Rouge – This was developed for rigid metals like chrome and items that have been nickel plated.

Fabulustre – This compound is for one-phase fine cutting and coloring compound. Fabulustre quickly eliminates small scratches to produce a glass-bright coloring to your jewelry item. Can be used with an unstitched muslin buff to polish plastic.

Bufs (or Mops)

Sewn Bufs – The more rows of stitching, the stiffer the buf will be. Sewn bufes are typically used with a cutting compound (like Tripoli) at the pre-polish stage.

Loose Bufs – Loose bufes feature several sections of material with no stitching or a single row of it near the center. Most often used for the final polishing with rouge, they flare out to give wide coverage for those hard-to-reach places and provide a smooth polishing surface.

Bias Type Bufs – Excellent for both cutting power and flexibility, bias type bufes are typically used for intricate work that requires varied degrees of cutting and finishes.

Sisal Bufs – These bufes are typically made with strong cloth and used for aggressive cutting and polishing. They're most often used with stainless steel.

Hard Felt Bufs – Ideal for flat surfaces and sharp edges, these bufes maintain smooth lines. However, care should be taken when using for jewelry, as they can produce lines or crescents on pieces.

String Bufs – These soft bufes are used on precious metals or plastics.