

SURFACE FINISHES

TEXTURED OR SMOOTH?

A textured finish is more forgiving but needs to be worked into the design process. At what stage in the process will you apply your texture? How will you apply the texture – hammers? Stamps? Rolling mill?

If you want a very smooth finish try to work as lightly as possible to avoid adding in too many making marks which you will then have to polish away.

SHINY OR MATTE?

For a super shiny finish work through the filing, emery and polishing steps in order (see worksheet). You can stop the process at any time when you are happy with the result.

Stopping at the emery stage can give a nice rough matte finish. For a finer finish, follow the process right through to a high shine and then rub the surface back with steel wool or a small steel wire brush in a pendant drill to rematt the surface. Going up to a high shine means it's easier to see any places you've missed.

DARK OR LIGHT?

For a dark finish a process called oxidisation is used. This tarnishes the surface of the silver and can be used to create a range of browns, greys and blacks. Make sure you have good ventilation and are as far away from other students as possible – it stinks. Fill two glass jars with hot water. Mix a teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda in one and immerse your piece in the other. Add a few drops of oxidising solution to the jar containing your work and mix. It takes a few minutes to work. Once you are happy with the colour, remove with tweezers and place into the jar of water and bicarb to neutralise the solution. Rinse the piece in clean, cold water and give a gentle polish with a cloth. To dispose of the solution add a teaspoon of bicarb to neutralise and pour down the loo.

For a white silver finish you can matte the surface and then repickle the piece. This gives a whiter look to the jewellery as the copper is removed from the surface.

What ever finish you choose, remember silver is a relatively soft metal and if a piece gets a lot of wear the surface will revert to the classic burnished silver look.