

TOOLS

If you love tools, there's no limit to what you can buy. The jewelry-making world keeps finding more and better ways to create beautiful pieces. The essentials that you absolutely have to have are pliers and cutters. We've included some of the more fundamental tools here, but when it comes to advanced tools, such as torches or rolling mills, it's best to do research and find the equipment that matches your budget and needs.

Pliers

Pliers are necessary for most wire working tasks, including gripping and bending wire, and creating loops. There are also many specialty pliers, such as stone-setters, ring openers, and combinations that might be perfect for your needs. When purchasing pliers, inspect the jaws to see that they are smooth and even, look for a solid joint with a little give or wiggle, and try out the

handle. When you spend a lot of time with tools in your hand, comfort becomes increasingly important. Here are some of the basic types of pliers and what they do.

Chainnose pliers have flat inner jaws, great for gripping wire to shape it, or working in conjunction with another type of pliers, to make loops or to open and close jump rings.

Flatnose pliers are similar to chainnose pliers and can be used in the same manner, but have flat outer jaws, making it easier to make sharper bends in the wire.

Bentnose, or bent chainnose pliers, are also close to chainnose pliers, but have a slight bend near the tips. Many jewelry makers prefer these pliers because they find them easier to use than the straight chainnose variety.

Nylon-jaw pliers are another relative of chainnose pliers. These pliers feature replaceable nylon lining on the jaws, which protects wire from marks left by tools and is useful for straightening wire. You can achieve similar results by covering your pliers with tape or Tool Magic, but eventually wear and tear will affect the protection those aids offer. These are particularly useful with wires that have a thin coating of color that could easily scratch off, such as niobium.

Roundnose pliers are critical for making loops and bends. These pliers have conical jaws, perfect for shaping wire.

Saws

Jeweler's saws have two components, an adjustable U-shaped frame with a handle, and a blade. You can use a variety of different blade sizes or thicknesses in the saw; use stronger blades for thicker metal. Saws are great for cutting shapes from metal and sawing through coils to make jump rings.

