



Bronze Metal Clay Jewelry

Instructor Kris Kramer

thesilverpendant@icloud.com

gvrlapidaryclub.org

Supplies to Bring

- Photographs of Metal Clay Jewelry you admire
- Reading Glasses or Other Opticals

Materials to Use, Provided by Lapidary Club

- See at the end of this document

About Bronze Metal Clay

Metal clay comes in various types, made from both precious and base metals. Working with bronze and copper clays is similar to working with silver clay. The Metal Clay Handout for working with bronze and copper clays. The inserts in the product package provide essential, specific information, such as the firing schedule.

Safety is a top priority. Participants should wear closed-toe shoes, aprons, and eye protection, particularly when working with electric tools or chemical solutions. Always be mindful of heat and fire safety as well.

The metal clay creation process involves six key steps.

- 1 Design
- 2 Construct
- 3 Refine
- 4 Fire
- 5 Finish
- 6 Assemble

1 Design

That which applies to silver clay applies to bronze and copper. Base metal clays tend to take up slightly less detail. And because they are inexpensive, one tends to make larger or thicker pieces.

2 Construct

Shaping, cutting out clay, drying the clay, refining the parts, and layering on additional pieces is the same as with silver.

Joining dry-to-dry pieces requires even more water because bronze and copper absorb water more readily than silver.

Some brands of bronze or copper require a lower temperature when accelerating the drying step. Thicker pieces take longer to dry.

3 Refine

Interestingly, the final beauty and polish of your piece depend greatly on this step. Refining involves filing, sanding, carving, and making subtle adjustments to enhance both the appearance and function of your creation.

Drilling holes, carving, beveling their edges, smoothing straight or curved sides, removing burrs and ridges from carved sections, sanding away cracks or imperfections, and deepening certain areas to add dimension are the same as working with silver.

4 Fire

Firing is where silver and base-metal clay differ immensely. Base metals consist of binder and metal particles, just like silver. The binder needs to be burned off first; the metal needs to be sintered second. The sintering process needs to occur in an oxygen-free environment.

Thus, base metals require a two-step firing process, special equipment, and often a slower ramp than full or 1,800° per hour. Refer to the product insert not only for each metal but more so for each brand.

Brass or steel brush after firing. Tumble in steel shot, if desired, to work harden.

5 Finish

The patina step is far more particular than with silver, and again depends on the metal and brand.

Do **not** use JAX or and Black Max. Liver of Sulfur works well for soem bronzes. There are patinas on the market for bronzes and coppers; however, look into their toxicity and disposal prior to purchasing and using.

6 Assemble

Add or use bronze or copper findings, ear wires, chains, or other aesthetically pleasing components.