

# The Top 10 Tools You Need to Solder Sterling Silver!

*"Soldering sterling silver is so much fun! Plus you'll find you can create much more unique jewelry, which will make your handcrafted pieces stand out from the others!"*

Laura Hagan

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# Tools You'll Need to Get Started



# 1. Soldering Board

Setting up for soldering requires a heat-safe surface. Safety is key... make sure you have the proper surface!

I use 2 stainless steel wire mesh stacking kiln shelves with 1 soft fiber kiln shelf on top.

I find it easier to use these shelves as they don't leave black marks on my hands and tools like the typical soldering charcoal block, plus they double as my kiln shelves and don't take up much room.

I purchased these shelves from [www.metalclaysupply.com](http://www.metalclaysupply.com) for a mere \$6 - \$9 per piece.

## 2. Sterling Silver

If you're going to solder sterling silver, you need some sterling silver!

For most of my earwires and jumprings, I use round sterling silver wire, 20 or 22 gauge.

I purchase most of my silver wire from [www.artbeads.com](http://www.artbeads.com) for approximately \$30 per 1 troy ounce = 19 feet. (Cost depends on current silver prices of course.)

\$30 may sound like a lot, but 19 feet goes a long way... I love this stuff!

You can purchase 1/2 ounce spools of wire if you're just starting out and need to keep your costs down

# 3. Silver Solder and Flux

In wanting to keep my process simple and cost efficient, I've found a marvelous product that includes both solder and flux, silver solder paste.

I started out using "easy" paste, which melts at a lower temperature and will be all you need to solder 20 gauge wire.

I purchase my silver solder paste from [www.cooltools.us](http://www.cooltools.us) for \$16 per 1/2 ounce tube. Only using a tiny pea-size blob on each soldered joint, this stuff goes a long way!

This paste is so easy to use, and doesn't create a mess when soldering. Plus you don't have to add a separate flux when you're soldering, which makes it that much easier!

## 4. Torch and Fuel

You need a heat source to solder silver. I use a pencil torch with refillable butane fuel.

I chose the smallest torch I could find as it's easier for me to handle, lightweight and easy to store. Not to mention I was nervous to purposefully start an open flame in my house, but with much practice and my kitchen extinguisher close by, I'm not afraid of the flame at all now!

I purchased my pencil torch from Walmart for \$18 plus \$3 per can for the refillable butane. I may soon upgrade to a larger "kitchen" torch, but in starting out, the smaller torch works well.



## 5 & 6. Fire Coat: Boric Acid & Denatured Alcohol

Before soldering, you need to prep your silver as to not allow any "burns" on your metal. I use a half and half mixture of boric acid and denatured alcohol in a glass jar with an air-tight lid. (Caution: flammable! So keep that lid on tight when not in use!)

Using metal tweezers, simply swish your silver in the fire coat, then flame off with a lighter or match.

I purchase boric acid (powder form) from [www.cooltools.us](http://www.cooltools.us) for \$6 per 4 ounce jar, and denatured alcohol from Walmart \$5 (in the paint thinnner section).

Ps... Keep a fan running or open a window in your studio when fire coating and soldering so as not to inhale any fumes.

# 7. Lighter or Matches

I use a fireplace or a camping lighter to light my torch and to flame off the fire coat while prepping my silver.

You can purchase these just about anywhere, I find mine at Walmart for just a dollar or two.



# 8. Tweezers

Tweezers come in very handy when soldering, they help you hold your silver pieces in place when they're too hot to handle.

I chose to work with cross-locking fiber grip steel tweezers as they offer a heat-resistant grip and a curved tip, which makes picking up silver pieces off my soldering board a bit easier. Plus, I really enjoy the cross-locking feature because I don't have to keep a steady "squeeze" on the handle, they hold my silver for me!

I purchased my tweezers from [www.cooltools.us](http://www.cooltools.us) for \$5. I love this pair, and I most likely will purchase a few other styles in the near future!

# 9. Silver Prep or "Pickle"

After soldering your sterling silver, you'll need to remove the oxidation (darkening) that's left behind on your pieces in order to make your sterling silver shine.

I use Silver Prep (powder form) from [www.cooltools.us](http://www.cooltools.us) for \$8 for an 8 ounce jar. I enjoy using this pickle mix as it is natural and non-toxic!

Using 1 tablespoon per 1 cup distilled water, this powder goes a long way. Soft boil distilled water in a small cooking crockpot that you'll use only for your silver prep pickle mix... don't cook food in this pot after pickling!

After pickling, you can polish your silver to a nice shine.

# 10. Steel Block and Hammer

Anytime during your soldering process, if you want to flatten any part of your silver, you'll need a steel block and a small hammer.

I found my steel bench block (4" x 4" x 3/4") on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) for \$19. You can purchase larger blocks for more.

If you're wanting to shape your silver into rings, bracelets, or necklaces, you'll need steel mandrels for each, which can run from \$20 on up.

Thanks for checking out the top  
10 soldering tools I can't live  
without!

Now... GO GET SOLDERING!

For more silver jewelry  
tips and tutorials check out...

[www.makesilverjewelry.com](http://www.makesilverjewelry.com)

*Have a happy day!*  
*Laura Hagan*