

Just Jewelry

Items of jewelry are some of the oldest artifacts that have been found among the ruins of ancient civilizations. In addition to being merely decorative, jewelry has, through the centuries, signified status and wealth, expressed religious beliefs, and held symbolic meaning. Try your hand at creative expression by designing and making jewelry for yourself or others. Be imaginative and innovative. For example, you can recycle old items into jewelry.

Skill Builders

1. **Activity#1 is required before doing other activities in this section.** Renderings or sketches of jewelry are usually the important first step in developing an item of jewelry. Look through magazines, browse through stores and notice what others are wearing. Collect a sampling of photos, ads, or sketches of jewelry styles that appeal to you. Then draw an item of jewelry that you would like to have. Draw the piece of jewelry to size and indicate the materials that you will use. Use this rendering to execute a design in one of the other skill Builders activities.
2. Put together a toolbox of equipment that you will need to make jewelry. Consult a craft book or talk with someone who works with jewelry to learn about some handy tools. Here are some items to consider: super glue, white glue, polymer clay, assorted wire paper, pencil, polishing cloth, sandpaper, assorted threads and cording, paints, varnish, wire cutters, small needle-nose pliers, metals snips, and jewelry finding. (See activity #3.) Your kit will vary depending on the kind of designs you will do.
3. Learn about jewelry findings. These are jewelry elements such as the clasps that close a bracelet or necklace, the settings for stones, and the backs for pins or earrings. Investigate the different types of finding that you have on your own jewelry. Expand your search to include what friends may have or what you see on items sold in stores. Find at least five different types of clasps used on bracelets or necklaces. Investigate where you can buy simple, inexpensive finding or select a type (for example, a necklace catch) that you can make. If you do not have ready access to material, think of at least two ways to improvise a finding with items in your home. Make an item of jewelry using findings.
4. Although jewelry is often crafted from precious metals and gems, it can also be made from inexpensive or easy-to-obtain material. Use your imagination to craft a piece of jewelry from a commonly found item. Here is a list of common items that can be crafted into jewelry: buttons, safety pins, shells, nuts, paper clips, wood pieces, heavy foil, paper, stones, sea glass, pottery fragments, fabric pieces, bottle caps, bolts, or washers. You can decorate materials with paints, nail polish, pens and markers, glitter, or sequins. Mix and match materials.

5. Beads have been one of the most common jewelry elements from past or present. Assemble a collection of beads. Recycle beads from old necklaces and bracelets into new designs. Make your own beads using a variety of materials such as polymer clay that can be baked in a home oven, papier-mâché, self-hardening clay, or some other material that can be formed into beads (for example, coiled wire). Make a necklace or bracelet from your bead collection.
6. Make a pin or pendant using a combination of at least three different materials. For example, you can embroider a design and sew some small beads or buttons on a piece of heavy fabric, or paint and glue seashells on a piece of wood.
7. Do some research on the history of jewelry or find out more about jewelry of a particular culture or period. Display what you have learned in an attractive way.

Technology

1. Professional jewelers use many tools and techniques to complete their work. Work with a jeweler or knowledgeable person on a piece of jewelry using one or more of the following techniques: soldering; mold making; forming metal by twisting, hammering, pulling, and heating; casting metal; stone setting; metal engraving.
2. Learn about metals commonly used in jewelry making: copper, brass, silver, gold and platinum. Compare the characteristics of each and determine why particular metal might be used over another. Some terms to consider are: ore, malleability, tensile strength, melting point, oxidation, tarnish, and hardness. Select an item of jewelry that you own or would like to own and find out more about its metal composition.
3. The colorful stones and gems used in jewelry are minerals and crystals selected for their looks, color, luster, ability to reflect or tract light, hardness, and durability. Arrange a collection of 20 or more stones, minerals, gems, or crystals that are used in jewelry making. Select photographs, illustrations, or, when possible, actual samples of the minerals. Become familiar with the properties of the stones, mineral, etc. Don't just consider the gems that may be familiar. Chalcedony, jade, hematite, lapis lazuli, opal, carnelian, onyx, jasper, agate, chrysoprase, turquoise, malachite, and beryl are all used in jewelry.
4. Find out about technological advances that have occurred in jewelry composition and manufacture. Synthetic stones, new metal alloys and, electroforming have resulted in items of jewelry not possible years ago. Find example of jewelry created through these new techniques and compare them with piece done years ago.

Service Projects

1. Contribute an item of jewelry you have made for a troop money-earning project of some similar worthy cause.

2. Help a group of younger girls with a jewelry craft project. Design your own activity or consult with a leader on the type of project. Design your own activity or consult with a leader on the type of project that would work with the group.
3. Help a group of younger Girl Scouts earn the Jeweler badge or the Art to Wear Try-It.
4. Many jewelers belong to craft guilds or art leagues. Find out if there is an association for artists or jewelers in your area. Contact it to find out more about how members help each other. Volunteer to help.

Career Exploration

1. Jewelry making can be as simple as one artisan crafting and selling her own work, or a huge business that involved industrial mining, or large retail operations. Identify 10 or more careers related to jewelry making. Learn about a career that interests you.
2. Start a business selling jewelry you have made. Create a display and determine what your pieces should cost. Do not forget to factor in the time it takes to make each piece, as well as the cost of materials.
3. Find out about schools that offer courses in jewelry crafting and related fields. Write and get a course catalog that outlines the different classes available. Keep this for future reference.
4. Interview a professional jeweler. Develop a short profile of the training and experience that led to her current job. Find out what are the most rewarding aspects of the work as well as the negative aspects, if any.

And Beyond

VISIT JEWELRY STORES AND MUSEUM TO view gem collections and craft exhibits. If you love designing and making things with your hands, try these related interest projects:

- Fashion Design
- Visual Arts
- Textile Arts
- Paper Works
- Artistic Crafts
- Folk Arts

Also try collecting and Women Through time. For career moves, Your Own Business, Public Relations, and Dollars and Sense are valuable!