

5 Tops Tips



Stephen M Goldsmith FIPG – MBGG- KCHS began his craft at the Rochester College of Art (KIAD) in 1971 and went on to become a Master Polisher. In his 40 year career he has worked for clients from Garrard's the Crown Jewellers to celebrity jewellery designer Theo Fennell and restored the silverware of many eminent patrons including the Royal Household, The Royal Society and the Ministry of Defence.

Stephen has also been responsible for maintaining the mirror shine on most of the major sports trophies including the Premier League, Davies, Heineken, Wimbledon and Dubai cups, The World Snooker, The World Cricket Trophy and The Masters. (He is often still seen polishing the Premier League Cup on Sky sports!) Other notable pieces of metal-ware that have been entrusted to his skills include the Brit and Pride of Britain awards, the chalice of Cardinal John Henry Newman which was used by Pope Benedict XVI during his 2010 visit to the UK and the ceremonial mace which rests in the House of Commons.

Stephen is a Freeman of The Worshipful Company of Goldsmith's and was granted the Freedom of the City of London in 1975; he is also a Fellow of The Institute of Professional Goldsmith's. He has had the honour of winning The Goldsmith's Company Award twice and has served as a judge for the last few years on behalf of the Craft's Council Awards.

A Short Course Tutor to the Birmingham Jewellery School, Irish Craft Council and Vantol & Breet Academy in Den Bosch the Netherlands.

A Judge for the Goldsmiths Company Crafts Council and the UK Jewellery Awards
Polishing is often considered the Cinderella of the trade but it is never appreciated how much this craft can make or break a piece so easily.

1. Silver has been a metal that designers like to make jet black, but to be honest I have only achieved a semi dark black by oxidising with different chemicals; some give you colours of the rainbow but nothing can be consistently controlled. "Platinol" Oxidising Solution is very good and widely available - I have discovered some very nice finishes with this product, one is with a frosting brush used afterwards. However, beware as it will stain your fingernails until it grows out, so use protective gloves and goggles. I like to warm the piece up first with a flame or very hot water. You will see an instant result, if you don't bother to warm up, it takes longer and the result is not the same. Rinse off

thoroughly in cold water, otherwise it will contaminate your gloves and if you touch another piece you do not want oxidised, that will go black too. Don't wash off in the ultrasonic for the same reason, you might not be very popular if your fellow craftsmen end up with their jobs all black as well!

2. Good preparation is the key to a nicely finished job, so always make sure your bench is clean as well as your tools; ensure that your mops are always raked out. Clogged up mops will do more harm than good. (Here is a tip within a tip! Try reversing your mop and raking it). Rakes are readily available and are made from blocks of wood with steel pins, just like a wire brush but made for the job. I make my own: take a block of wood about 6" long by 2" and soak it in water for 24 hours. Use at least 12 nails, long enough to stick out a good inch or so. Before you bang the nails in, tap the sharp end with a hammer, just to blunt it to stop it from splitting the wood. Try and get the nails as close as possible in the middle of the wooden block.

Do not to mix and match your tools, for example, use the tools for silver on silver only. If you use a mop that has polished silver and then polish gold it will appear lighter, as each mop picks up the metal and transfers it on to the next object.

3. A problem I am frequently asked about is the appearance of smears of composition on the metal. The answer to this is you are not working hard enough! You need to keep the metal hot otherwise the wax just does not melt and ensure that you rake the mop out as there may be too much composition on it.

4. When polishing jewellery I make up a small pot with cotton wool, dampen with paraffin and dip the rouge into the pot before applying to the mop. It keeps everything much cleaner.

5. Make sure when you are polishing that you wear eye protection and a mask if needed. Never wear gloves or rings (as you might just lose a finger) loose clothing or long untied hair. It is amazing how quickly things can go wrong at 3000 revs per minute: it's the equivalent of the power of 2 horses!

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