

Wire 101

When you order wire for your projects there are some factors that you need to consider. These factors are:

1. Temper (hardness)
2. Material
3. Size
4. Shape

Temper: When wire is worked in any way it gets harder and more brittle. Each time you touch wire you harden it. Wire comes in three degrees of hardness, dead soft, half hard and full hard:

1. Dead Soft (DS) has not been worked very much and can be bent and molded. This is used in wire sculpturing. I also use this to coil and cut jump rings. It coils nicely since it is so soft.
2. Half Hard (HH) has been worked some and is good for holding shapes but it is still very bendable. We use this in wire wrapping. Half hard wire becomes full hard when twisted.
3. Full Hard (FH) is wire that has been worked and can be very difficult to work with but it tends to keep its shape. You can use this in making your own French hooks and other findings. If over worked it will become brittle and break.

Material: Wire also comes in different materials. Some of them are gold, sterling silver, copper, brass and craft wire:

1. Gold is used in artisan jewelry making. We usually use gold filled. Gold filled consists of many layers of gold over a metal core. It is not anything like gold plated. Gold filled can be just as precious and beautiful in jewelry if taken care of properly. It is quite expensive.
2. Sterling Silver is the most common precious metal used in jewelry. There is also fine Silver which is much more expensive and a lot softer. The price of sterling has shot way up in the past two years.
3. Copper is a good wire to practice with. It is easily found and is not very expensive. It makes some beautiful jewelry.
4. Brass is a material that is gaining popularity. Some use it for practice but it is being more widely used for jewelry.
5. Craft wire is also good to practice with. [Paramount Wire](#) in NJ is a great source of craft wire! They are making it tarnish-resistant now so it makes very nice jewelry.

Size: Wire sizes are important for various projects. The larger the number the finer the wire is. The smaller the number the larger the thickness is. For wire wrapping we usually use between 20g and 22g. If you made your own ear wires you might use 22g or 24g. 28g and 30g wire is being used for wire crochet. Combined with beads this technique makes really different jewelry.

Shape: There are four shapes of wire commonly used in jewelry making. They are square, round, half round and triangle:

1. Square (SQ) This is the most commonly used wire for wire wrapping or wire sculpture.

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2. Round (R) I use round for making my jump rings and findings. This can also be used in wire wrapping.
3. Half Round (HR) This wire, to my knowledge, is only used for wrapping. It is usually dead soft.
4. Triangle (T) I have not had any experience with this shape wire.