Onyx Earrings

By Jurgen J. Maerz

This is a beginners project that will really help you with your precision sawing skills. Skills required are sawing, bezel making, piercing, filing and soldering.

The earrings are fun and the contrast between the silver and the onyx is very nice. Being both casual and elegant, these earrings can be worn for many different occasions, plus they are fun to make!

Materials List

- 1-1/4"x 2" 24 gauge sterling silver sheet
- 2 stones of your choice
- 1 pair of French hooks, or you can make your own
- Electrical tape

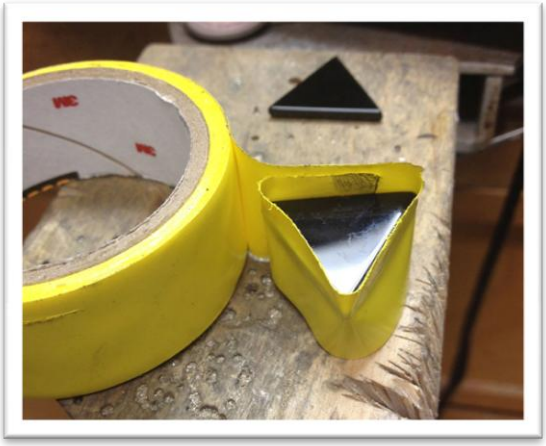
Tool List – Don't forget Safety Glasses!

- Jeweler's saw
- #3 sawblades
- Soldering setup
- #2 half round file
- Prong pusher
- Burnisher
- Chasing hammer
- Center punch
- Safety glasses
- Liver of sulfur
- WUBBERS Classic Chain Nose Pliers
- 1 mm twist drill
- Blue an pink (high polish) silicon wheels
- Flex shaft or Dremel
- Designer punches
- 1 set of dividers

Step 1

To begin the project, start with a bench trick.

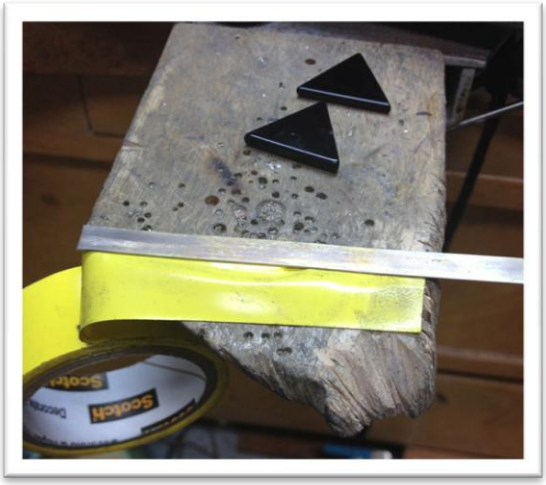
Wrap electrical tape around the stone and mark off where the ends meet. Electrical tape is uniquely suited for this purpose, as it is flexible, about 24 gauge thick and thus gives you pretty accurate measurements for bezel making.



Step 2

Cut about a ¼ inch strip from the 24 gauge sterling sheet. Cut it the long way. This will get you ¼"x 2" and should be long enough to make the bezel needed.

Lay the tape next to the strip and mark off the distance that was determined for the length of the bezel. Cut the strip there and square the ends for soldering.



Step 3

Roughly form the triangular bezel from the strip.

Use hard silver solder to solder the ends together.

Step 4

Once the strip has been soldered, fit the bezel to the stone, so that they comfortably fit with a little play.

Using the dividers, find the middle of the height of the bezel and mark it off all the way around. Gently split the bezel into two using the jewelers saw. Be sure they did not bend in the process and make adjustment as needed.

This will give you two identical bezels, which will work if there are two identically cut stones. You may also divide the bezels wire before soldering it down. You may find this easier.

Solder the two bezels to the 24 gauge sheet using medium silver solder.

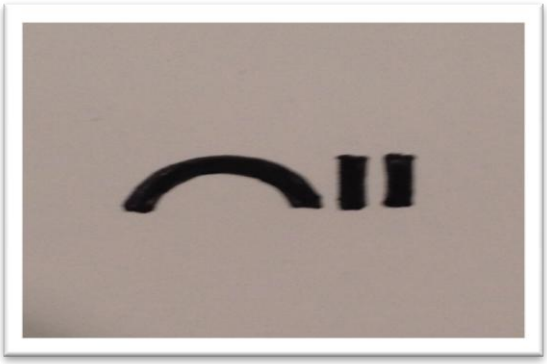
Step 5

Using the snips, trim the sheet close to the bezel all the way around. If need be, mark off the distance using a divider and then follow that line with the snips.

Step 6

File the edges all the way around. Check and be sure the stones still fit. Locate the center on the top and drill a hole using the 1 mm drill bit. Be sure to use the center punch to make a divot for the hole before drilling, so that you don't ruin the edge.

To save weight/metal, you may choose to cut the back of the earrings. Just leave enough rim material for the stone to rest on.



Step 7

Using the designer punch shown, create a pattern all the way around the earring.

Step 8

<u>Spacing is important.</u> If needed, mark off the spaces before punching the design.

Step 9

Using a round punch, refine the design by punching a dimple in each half round space. This will make the design more complex.

Step 10

Install the stone and push the bezel over using a pusher. Use even pressure all the way around. If need be, a setting punch or burnisher can be used to tighten the stones.

Bench Tip: It's easier to set the corners first if you are using a triangular or square stone.

Step 11

Remove all tool marks using the blue and then the pink silicone wheel.

Step 12

Antique the edge using Liver of Sulfur and insert the earring backs. After final polish and cleaning, the earrings are ready for delivery.

Review Questions

1) What is the advantage of using electrical tape to measure
    a) It is flexible.
    b) It is about the same thickness as the bezel and thus measurements are pretty accurate.
    c) It is thinner than most other tapes.
    d) It does not tear easily.

2) Why did we make the bezel so tall (¼")?
    a) This will give us two identical bezels when split.
    b) It is the material we had.
    c) To be sure the stone fits.

3) To solder the bezel to the sheet we used…
    a) Easy solder.
    b) Medium solder.
    c) Hard solder.

4) To set the stone we used a…
    a) Graver.
    b) Pusher.
    c) Hammer.

5) Other tools that could be used to to set the stone would be….
    a) Setting punch and hammer.
    b) Pliers.
    c) Epoxy.