

## The Use of Silver for Jewelry and Ornaments

Silver is a white metal that is soft, which makes it highly malleable. It is easy to draw out into thin wire or made into different shapes. It is very attractive when used in jewelry because it can be polished to a high shine that will reflect 95% of the light that shines on it. The use of silver for jewelry and ornaments has existed in the world since the time of the ancient civilizations. Egyptian writings dated about 3000B.C. referred to the use of silver jewelry and in 77 A.D. Pliny the Elder, a Roman writer, actually described in his writings the process by which the silver jewelry was made. The discovery of large silver deposits in Central and South America during the 16th and 17th centuries sparked the quest for silver in the New World. In fact, there were large silver mining operations in place in Mexico and Bolivia as early as the middle of the 1500's.

Pure silver is not used in the manufacture of silver jewelry because it is too soft. Silver jewelry usually contains alloys because they are harder and resist tarnishing much better than pure silver. The silver alloy that most people are familiar with is sterling silver. Sterling silver jewelry contains approximately 93% silver and 7 % copper. Silver and copper are closely related and when they are combined, the silver does not react when it is exposed to the air. Some other kinds of silver jewelry contain a higher percentage of copper and also have traces of gold.

Silver jewelry is not as expensive as gold jewelry, perhaps because silver itself is fairly inexpensive. Many people prefer sterling silver jewelry to gold because of the price and the fact that it often looks to be shinier gold and therefore is more noticeable.

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### About the Author

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