

# MAKE IT YOURSELF - OR NOT!



**B**efore you agree that it's better to make every little thing about a piece of jewelry "yourself," ask your very own self just what you mean by "better" and "yourself." The answers might surprise you. Take making your own findings. If you're designing a highly individualistic collar in high-karat gold, I'd agree that you should take as much care in the design and creation of the clasp as you do in the more visible part of the piece, echoing or complementing in the closure the metal's rich texture, color, and luster and the form's sinuous shape - instead of attaching a plain, 14K high-polish lobster claw to finish it off.

Then again, if you just want to whip up a simple sterling pendant to wear next weekend, why shouldn't you hang it from a commercially available sterling chain? Even if you know how to make the box chain you have in mind, why spend the time on it if what really excites you about being a jewelry artist is planning out your next piece and getting to it?

Go ahead, attach your pendant with a ready-made jump ring ...and use commercially manufactured pliers to do it, just as you would for a more elaborate piece. Feel free to use a flex-shaft for the final polish - and don't feel you need to build the flex-shaft yourself. By all means buy sterling sheet or 22K wire: you don't have to alloy your own stock, or mine or refine your own metal ore. Support the gem cutters in your midst by buying a gem they've cut - most likely from purchased rough.

None of that is slacking or being less of a maker; on the contrary, it's showing very good sense. On whatever occasions your design demands that you create your own parts or tools, or whenever you feel like doing it just to meet the challenge, go for it and bravo for you. Otherwise, there's no reason to make yourself crazy trying to be such a purist.

If you're a jewelry maker, wanting to make it yourself is a given, but it's only one of several givens. You also want the piece to be attractive and wearable, perhaps affordable for others, certainly affordable for you to make and something you could finish in your lifetime - if not a lot sooner. Like everything else in this world, making your own jewelry is full of tradeoffs, and you probably want to trade off some of that theoretical satisfaction of doing it all yourself for the greater satisfaction of producing a body of work that is not just yours but is also well designed and well crafted, and that pleases you and makes you proud.

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