

About Jump rings

Buy or Make?

Should you buy jump rings or make them? I recommend that you start off with buying what you need. This should ensure that the rings are well made with smooth cut ends that will fit together perfectly, and be the correct size and gauge for the weave you want to make. It also means that you don't have to invest in equipment and a supply of wire.

Time making rings is time not spent making jewelry. If you decide that you NEED to be able to custom make your rings, then that is when to acquire the equipment and invest the time to learn how to use it.

What Metal

What metal should I choose? The answer is: it depends. It depends on your budget. It depends on why you are making a project—is it for you, for a gift, or to sell? It depends on your taste—do you love silver, or do you prefer the colors available in anodized aluminum or niobium, or enamelled copper? Or bronze, or copper, or even gold-filled or rose gold. There's a world of choices.

Measuring Wire Diameter: TWO Gauge Systems—AWG, SWG

The most common method to measure the thickness of wire is a gauge system. There is the American Wire Gauge system (AWG) and the British Standard Wire Gauge System (SWG). The AWG system is typically used for precious metals and the SWG for ferrous metals. There are charts available online and in reference books that can tell you in mm or inches the thickness of specific gauges in either system.

The rings we make at Gardiner Design use AWG for all metals and gauges.

I often use 18 gauge jump rings, but be aware that 18 AWG and 18 SWG wire are **NOT** the same thickness.

In both systems, the lower the number, the thicker the wire—so 14 gauge wire is very thick, and 20 gauge wire is much thinner.

Measuring ring sizes or I.D.

To make a jump ring you wind wire around a metal rod to make a coil. Then you cut with a saw along the length of the coil—and all the jump rings fall apart. What's important in chain mail is the diameter of the rod that was used to make the rings. If a rod that measures 4 mm across was used, then the inside diameter (ID) of the resulting jump rings is 4 mm.

Imperial vs. Metric

Here's another quirk. When you make jump rings you can use rods that are measured in fractions of an inch, or you can use rods that are measured in full, half or quarter millimeters.

That means some vendors will sell rings that are 1/4" inside diameter. This converts to .25" or 6.35 mm. The problem is that there isn't a metric rod easily available in that size, so you would have to choose between 6.25 mm or 6.5 mm if you wanted to buy metric sizes sold by other vendors.

Buying rings for project tutorials

When you plan to use a tutorial you must start with the ring sizes and gauges that are specified if you want the results to be a success. You can't just substitute any ring you happen to have in your stash.

You can, however, do the math and change from one gauge system to another. Or, you can learn about Aspect Ratio (the relationship between a rings diameter and wire gauge) and deliberately choose to use a heavier or lighter wire than called for in the project. This will result in different ring sizes for the project.