

## Maintain your studio in good working order!

by Susan Eisen, GG, Master Gemologist Appraiser, ASA



For those of you who are not goldsmiths, keeping up with your store's equipment is something very important for your bench jewelers to do. Keeping the machines you have in your workshop in good condition not only helps them produce high quality work, but also makes them last longer. As a goldsmith and designer who loves working in the shop, it is important to know what should be done on your equipment on a regular basis. Kudos to Stuller for answering my questions on maintenance when I called to get the information on some of the various machines I buy. Here is the information I have received from them and various other sources:

**Ultrasonic cleaners** - It's best to clean the liquid you use on a regular basis, either daily or every few days depending on how many pieces of jewelry you are cleaning. Keeping the liquid no more than one inch below the top of the unit keeps the motor from overworking itself and turning the unit on and off with the switch instead of the timer keeps the timer from breaking.

**Steam cleaners** - Depending on how much use your steamer has, the most important tip for keeping it working well for you is the condition of the water you put in. Some jewelers only use distilled water, but that can be costly and inconvenient. Others have told me they use a steamer powder sold by the various supply

houses once a week. Another chemical to use is vinegar every time you fill it up. It all depends on the reservoir in your cleaner and how often you use it.

**Torch handles** - In school I was trained to release the oxygen and gas out of the hand piece after you close down the cylinder. This eliminates malfunction of the gauges on your tanks and allows them to last longer.

**Flexible shafts** - Most manufacturers will recommend that you take everything apart except for the motor assembly and lubricate it periodically. The supply houses sell the grease you can use. Not only does it clean the parts but it also helps them run better.

**Planishing Hammers** - I learned in my metals classes to always keep them impeccably polished so that each time you use them they leave a very clean, bright, smooth finish. This applies also to the stakes and the anvils you use. Otherwise, every little dent on the hammer shows through on the precious metal you are working on. Everyone has their tricks on how to keep them polished, but I have found various grits of sandpaper and abrasive compound works the best.

**Rolling mills**-The most important things about rolling mills is keeping dust out of them and keeping them lubricated. Just as marks on hammers travel to the jewelry you are working on, every piece of dust or debris can add to the surface of the rollers and cause you major problems later on.

One of the main things I learned in my art metals classes was to buy quality tools, and respect and take care of your tools as you use them. I still use many of the tools I purchased 40 years ago and they are part of my history as a jeweler.

If you have any times to share with other Texas Jewelers, please send them to me ([orders@susaneisen.com](mailto:orders@susaneisen.com)) so I can include them in my Texas Two Minute Tips I send out often.

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