

A silver chain with a decorative tag featuring a starburst design. The chain is made of interlocking links and is attached to a pentagonal tag. The tag has a central hole and a starburst pattern of radiating lines. The background is a dark, textured surface.

Silver tag

Paper punches make short work of cutting metal-clay sheet into a decorative ID tag.

by Linda Augsburg

Metal-clay sheet has a much lower moisture content than its lump-clay counterpart. In fact, its dryness makes it feel like a thin piece of leather, which lends itself to usages not employable by traditional clay, including using paper cut-out punches. The medium's ease in handling led to this necklace's creation being featured on an episode of *Beads, Baubles, and Jewels*, a new jewelrymaking series appearing on PBS stations in January 2005. The bright lights used for filming didn't dry the sheet as they would have lump clay, and, with the handy paper punches, the project was completed in the 6½ minutes allotted for the segment. What could be simpler for the beginning metal-clay artist?

The addition of a double jump-ring chain gives this piece a relaxed feel, though a simple leather cord would be equally appropriate. This project is also appealing to men and could be embellished to resemble military ID tags.

[1] Layer the clay sheets. Using a small paintbrush, apply a thin layer of slip to one piece of sheet clay. While the slip is still damp, press the second sheet on the slip-painted surface, aligning the edges. Too much slip, or slip that is too wet, will cause the sheet to disintegrate, so apply sparingly. Allow the sheets to dry thoroughly before proceeding to the next step.

[2] Punch out the tag shape. With the paper punch wrong-side up, slide the layered sheets into the slot. Make sure the sheets are properly positioned left to right, top to bottom, so that none of the shape's edges will be omitted when the image is cut. Stand over the punch to apply even pressure and press

tips

Work with the punch window-side up so you can make sure that the shape will be complete and that you won't lose a corner or point of something to misaligned clay.

When joining multiple layers for punching, make sure you let the slip that joins the sheets dry thoroughly before pressing the punch. If not dry, the multilayered sheets can get caught in the punch or slip apart.

down firmly. Gently remove the shape and the remaining clay from the punch.

[3] Make the appliqué and attach it to the tag. Using a single layer of sheet, punch out the appliqué shape in the same manner as you did the tag. Brush slip on one side of the appliqué and place it on the tag. Let dry.

[4] Make a hanging hole. Using a 2mm-diameter straw, press through the sheet at the top of the tag to make a hole for hanging.

[5] Add syringe work. Remove the cap from your clay syringe, but do not put the fine tip on the syringe. Form a dot of clay on the appliqué without using the fine tip. Let the piece dry.





[6] Fire and polish. Follow the manufacturer's instructions and fire the tag on a piece of kiln fiber board to keep it flat. Polish the piece using a polishing cloth, tumbler, stainless-steel brush, or a combination of these three. If you desire, patina the piece with liver of sulfur following the manufacturer's directions. Use a polishing cloth to bring out the details.

[7–9] Make a chain. Open three 5mm jump rings and at least 200 3mm jump rings for a 17-inch (43.2cm) necklace. Link one 5mm jump ring through the tag's hole and close the jump ring. Close four 3mm jump rings. Take a second 5mm jump ring, link it through the first 5mm jump ring and the four 3mm jump rings, and close the ring; link the third 5mm jump ring through the same five jump rings.

Separate the four 3mm rings attached to the 5mm rings into two pairs. One at a time, link two 3mm rings through one pair of rings. Continue linking two jump rings through the previous pair to create a 2x2 chain. Work on one side until the necklace measures approximately half the desired length. Repeat the process on the remaining pair of 3mm rings attached to the 5mm rings.

Check the length, allowing for the clasp, and add or remove 3mm rings as needed. Use a single jump ring to attach each half of the clasp to the last pair of rings on each end. See *Primer, page 90*, for basic wireworking techniques. **A**

materials

Tag

- 2–3 sheets of metal clay
- Metal clay slip
- Metal clay syringe
- Liver of sulfur (optional)

Chain

- 1 troy ounce of 18-gauge 3mm sterling-silver jump rings
- 3 16-gauge 5mm sterling-silver jump rings
- Clasp

tools

Tag

- Small paintbrush
- Tag-shaped paper punch
- Star-shaped paper punch
- 2mm-diameter straw
- Kiln with fiber board
- Polishing cloth, tumbler, or stainless-steel brush

Chain

- 2 pairs of chainnose pliers or 1 pair each of chainnose and bent chainnose pliers

note on durability

Two layers of sheet, such as used for this dog tag, will be malleable even after it's fired, so don't use this item where it would get excessive use, such as a key ring, or it will bend or get damaged. This thickness of metal-clay sheet is better used as a pendant than on a charm bracelet.