

FAQs About Sterling Silver Jewelry on OldMaidCatLady.com



What is “sterling” silver?

Silver called sterling is an alloy of 92.5% silver and 7.5% other metals. You may sometimes see the hallmark (imprint) of “925” or “.925” on sterling silver, indicating that it contains 92.5% silver. It may also be marked “sterling”, “sterling silver”, “solid silver”, or

“Ster.”

Why isn't pure, 100% silver used in jewelry?

Pure silver is too soft for use in jewelry, and must be alloyed with another metal for strength.



What other metals are combined with pure silver to make sterling silver?

The industry standard is copper. Others include germanium, zinc, and even platinum. Additional additives may include silicon or boron. The alloys used vary the metal's ability to resist firescale and tarnish.

What is firescale?

It's actually a type of oxidation known as cupric oxide that forms when oxygen reacts with mixtures of silver and copper at the high temperatures used in shaping sterling silver. It often forms during soldering, for example when attaching bales onto pendants, and must be removed through intensive polishing.

What if I have a jewelry allergy; can I wear sterling silver?

Probably. Most people who have this condition are allergic to nickel. Better quality sterling silver is alloyed with copper, so unless you have a sensitivity to it, you should be fine. Some sterling pieces are also coated to keep them from tarnishing, so this may also protect your skin from any allergic reaction.

Why does sterling silver tarnish?

Tarnish is a chemical reaction between alloy metals and oxygen in the air. What we see as tarnish is actually a compound called silver sulfide on the surface. Pure silver does not easily tarnish. So the higher the silver content in the piece, the less its likelihood of tarnishing. In silver pieces with fine detail work, tarnish in the grooves of the piece can actually enhance visibility of the design.



Will tarnish rub off on my skin?

If it's bad, it can. Keeping your silver jewelry polished regularly will keep this from happening.



See all our sterling silver cat jewelry at www.oldmaidcatlady.com/sterling_silver_jewelry



How should I care for my silver jewelry?

Storing your jewelry in an airtight jewelry bag will help diminish tarnishing and scratching. For pieces with a lot of detail, gentle wiping with a silver cloth will bring out the shine on higher-relief parts to enhance the contrast and better reveal its detail. Avoid chemical cleaners, toothpaste, or harsh polishing to keep from wearing down the surface. Remove your silver jewelry before bathing or swimming, as well. Regular polishing will make the tarnish easier to remove.

Is it true that silver is antibacterial?

Silver is actually *aseptic*, meaning that it does not harbor microbes. This property was one of the advantages that caused most surgical instruments to be made from it as far back as the Greek and Roman empires into the 20th Century. But it does not actually kill bacteria.

What is the “lost wax” method of silver jewelry making?

This is a multi-step process where a wax mold of the piece is first created by the artist. It is affixed to a base and an outer mold is placed around it. Plaster is then poured into the outer mold, over the wax piece within. Once hardened, the mold is heated in a kiln to remove the wax from inside. Then molten silver is poured into the plaster mold. After cooling, the piece is removed from the mold, filed and polished to finish it. The lost wax method has been used by jewelry artisans worldwide since the time of Mesopotamia and the pre-Columbian civilizations in the western hemisphere. Many beautiful Art Nouveau silver pieces were, and still are, made using this method. It is especially good for creating jewelry pieces with fine detail.



Here are just a few of our lovely silver cat jewelry items:



See all our sterling silver cat jewelry at www.oldmaidcatlady.com/sterling_silver_jewelry