

Part One - Beginners Guide to Grinding, Sanding and Polishing Gemstone Cabochons

By TaoGem

Dated: Oct 21, 2008

The single most important hurdle for a beginner is getting at least somewhat of a handle on the graduated stages from grinding, sanding and a nice polish.

Part One of Two Parts.

To view this with images:

<http://gemstone.smfforfree4.com/index.php/topic,483.msg1663.html#msg1663>

To view examples of finished gemstones that are used in gemstone jewelry designs:

http://taogem.com/taogemst_myzencart/

The single most important hurdle for a beginner is getting at least somewhat of a handle on the graduated stages from grinding, sanding and a nice polish.

Believe me.. I remember all to well. Bought my first combo unit. A Highland Park. It came with one course 80 , and 400 grit diamond sintered wheels. Then on the end of the unit I can attach either a flat metal disc with felt padding and a leather pad over the top. Then I have two other flat rubber padded discs that I can place silicon papers on. I have to use a spray glue that comes in an spray can. I found myself using a 400 grit on one, and a 600 grit on the second.

I also decided to bring home a double sided arbor that I placed expando type wheels on. This let me have the ability to have another 80 and 220 grit silicon carbide papers as well.

Here is my start up equipment, and I still use them every day.

The basic idea was to the best of my ability have some sort of progression of grits and work them to the best of my ability with this limited equipment that I was limited to because of cost.

This combination worked excellent through my first year of cabbing. Truth is I have added a few additional arbor type set ups. The only real reason is for convenience. I do not do anything any differently in regards to progressions between grits now than when I first started except that now with the additional arbors, I can move easily between a greater variety of papers abrasives.

If you can not invest in an additional arbor as I was able too, then you will simply need to spend a little more time removing and replacing various grits of paper out on the one or two wheels that came with your combo cabochon trim saw unit.

We have had several folks join the forum who are in the beginning stages of setting up shop. Like yourselves, I remember all too well having brought my new toys home, preparing a work area, and bolting the equipment to a workbench. I was eager to get started, but just had limited knowledge about how to cab.

One thing you will find, is that you will be working differently with various minerals. I would like to share the most basic steps with a couple of most basic minerals based on hardness.

Again..... this is very basic and there are a great many types of minerals varying in hardness on MOHS

scale of hardness from one to ten. Ten being the hardest.

I thought would use a basic Jasper as well as a run of the mill agate for the following guide.

The jasper being about a 5 in hardness and the agate upwards of about an eight. The difference and reason I decided to use the two is because as an example, an 80 grit will leave heavier scratches or a courser surface on a Jasper than will it on an Agate.

Bypassing the entire process of cutting out your preform, and shaping it we are going to get right into the initial grinding. Although, it is important to note the importance of creating at least a slight dome to the surface of your cab. Otherwise you will not be able to polish the cab completely. A completely flat cab will not polish at the center of it's surface.

Here are the surfaces of both the Jasper and Agate right off a 80 grit diamond sintered wheel. Your initial course grinding tool may be any number of things. From carborundum, diamond, sintered diamond, or maybe your limited to silicon carbide. No matter.....

The surface is going to be rough and will show lines created by the heavy, course grit. One thing to remember as you proceed through the stages of grinding and sanding as well, is that there is no need to press hard against your wheels or paper. Your just going to wear your wheels out sooner and replace your paper out every other day. You will find yourself spending a lot of wasted money on paper belts that should have lasted a long time.

Let each and every grit grind as it will with hardly any pressure applied. I do not work with diamond paper. I am told this is especially true with it though. Other wise a person will spend about 50 bucks a belt real fast if pressure is applied instead of just letting the diamond cut at it's own pace. Pressure makes absolutely no difference at all.

Now take a close look at your cab prior to moving on to your next grit. I took the agate cab to a 220 grit silicon carbide belt, and the jasper to a 400. The jasper is softer and find that as with a lot of minerals we can skip a grit sometimes. I do not want to remove any more material than I have too.

End of part one. To view part two:

<http://>

www.prlog.org/10131102-part-two-beginners-guide-to-grinding-sanding-and-polishing-gemstone-cabocho ns.html

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