

HOW TO MAKE A METAL LEAF MIRROR

A mirror is a layer of metal on glass. You can add the metal by chemical deposition using our mirroring chemicals or by applying metal leaf to the glass with a transparent gelatin size. Size is another name for glue.

The process is the same for all metals. Copper, aluminum and other base metal leaves are usually 5 ½" square. Pure gold and pure silver leaves are 3 ⅜" square.

COVERAGE

One book of 25 silver leaves covers 2.2 square feet of glass. One book of 25 copper or aluminum leaves covers 4.8 square feet. Refill supplies are available.

LEAF LINES AND HOLES

No matter how perfectly you apply the leaves, the lines between them will be visible. This gives the mirror it's "antique" appearance. Rips, tears and holes in the leaf increase the effect. To increase the antique appearance further, you can selectively dissolve the leaf with Silver, Copper or Aluminum Remover.

CHEMICAL TARNISHING

Antiquing chemicals transform pure metal into chemical compounds on a molecular level. Metal leaf is eight times thicker than chemically deposited metals so it is difficult, but not impossible, to chemically antique a silver leaf mirror.

SAFETY

Leaf mirrors are made with edible gelatin and pure metal leaf. There are no fumes and no chemicals to worry about. We suggest that you use distilled water to make your size. Tap water could contain chemicals that might tarnish the leaf over time.

RECLAIMING SCRAP

When you burnish the glass you will see bits of leaf floating around. While these bits (called skewings) are very visible, they are so small and thin that it costs more to recycle them than you could sell them for.

STEP 1 – MAKE THE SIZE



1. Add 2 diamonds of gelatin to 1 cup (240 mL) of distilled water. Soak the gelatin for 10 to 15 minutes.
2. Heat the size till it is steaming hot. Do not let it boil. Stir it well and let it cool to room temperature.

Dissolved gelatin does not keep. *Make fresh daily.*

STEP 2 – CLEAN THE GLASS



1. Scrub the glass with hot tap water and powdered glass cleaner using a dedicated sponge or new paper towel.
 2. Rinse the glass under a running tap.
 3. Rinse it again with distilled water to remove the tap water.
- We drew center lines on the face of the glass (the non-leaf side) with a felt tip pen to help us place the leaf. They will be cleaned off when we are done.

STEP 3 – STAND THE GLASS VERTICALLY



Glass leaf gilding is done on a vertical surface.
Stand the glass upright against a firm support.
Place a towel under it to absorb excess size.
It is ok to let the clean glass dry before you leaf it.

STEP 4 – CHARGE THE TIP



1. Rub a small amount of Vaseline™ or other heavy lotion on your non-dominant forearm.
2. Rub the Tip lightly over your forearm to pick up a small amount of the lotion.

This helps heavier metals like copper or aluminum stick to the Tip.
It may not be necessary for gold leaf.

STEP 5 – FOLD BACK THE ROUGE SHEET

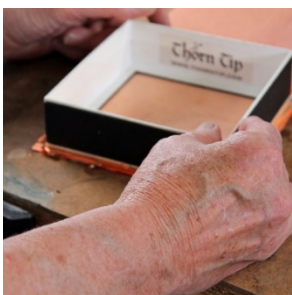


Use a clean **dry** watercolor brush to lift off the rouge sheet.

Fold back the sheet to expose the leaf.

A small paint brush is a handy way to manipulate fragile metal leaf. The brush must remain **DRY**. A wet brush will stick tight to the leaf.

STEP 6 – PLACE THE TIP ON THE LEAF



Place the Tip down flat on the leaf and gently raise it up. The leaf should stick to the Tip.

If the leaf does not stick, replace the Tip and rub the screen down onto the leaf with a **DRY** finger.

STEP 7 – WET THE GLASS WITH FLOWING SIZE

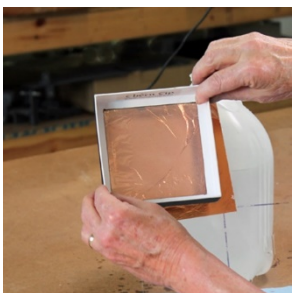


Dip your size brush in the size and transfer a generous amount of size to the glass where you will be placing the leaf.

The size should flow freely down the glass. It doesn't matter if it flows over leaf the you have already placed on the glass.

You only need to wet the area where you will place the leaf. Be sure that the area you wet is bigger than the leaf.

STEP 8 – PLACE THE LEAF ON THE GLASS

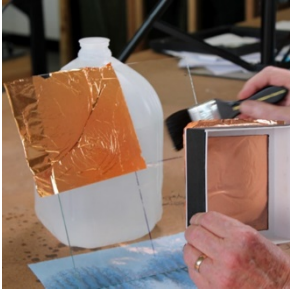


Pick up the Tip with the leaf attached and bring it up parallel to the wet glass.

As you bring the Tip close to the glass (about 1/16") the leaf will jump from the Tip to the glass.

Do not let the Tip touch the glass. If the Tip does get wet, dry it carefully before picking up another leaf.

STEP 9 – CONTINUE PLACING LEAVES

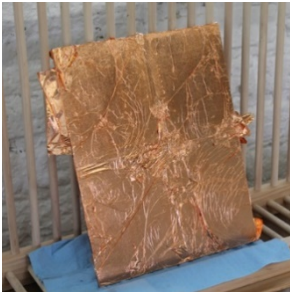


Repeat Steps 6, 7 and 8 to continue leafing the glass.

Keep the leaves as evenly spaced as possible.

You can use loose bits of leaf to fill in any holes now or you can fill them in later.

STEP 10 – LET THE LEAF DRY COMPLETELY



When you have covered the whole glass with leaf, let it dry completely.

Wet leaf is matte, dry leaf is reflective.

You can use a hair dryer or heated fan to speed things up.

STEP 11 – BURNISH THE LEAF



When the leaf is completely dry, buff off any loose pieces with your burnishing puff using a light sweeping motion.

Clean the puff often to avoid loose leaf scratching the applied leaf.

STEP 12 – FILLING HOLES AND GAPS



Inspect the glass and fill in any holes or gaps with size and leaf. You can do this before or after the leaf has dried.

Burnishing can rub off loosely attached leaf. We recommend you fill in the holes after burnishing.

Just re-size and re-leaf the open areas. Dry, burnished leaf does not lift off when you apply new size.

STEP 13 – PAINT THE BACK



Once the leafing is done and dry, paint the back of the mirror with backing paint to protect it from tarnishing and scratching.

To create an image on clear glass, reverse your design, paint it on the leaf and let it dry. Remove the unpainted leaf with Silver, Copper, Aluminum or Gold Remover.

Remember to reverse your design before you paint it so that it is the right way around when you turn the glass over.

STAND BACK AND ADMIRE YOUR HANDIWORK!



A metal leaf mirror is very different from a chemically deposited one. The wrinkles and lines between the leaves give it a unique character.

The process is very simple. As with other manual activities, such as playing the piano, your skill will improve with practice.

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