

**Crafts Council
Education
Craft Careers**

How to become a Chain Maker



What does a chain maker do?

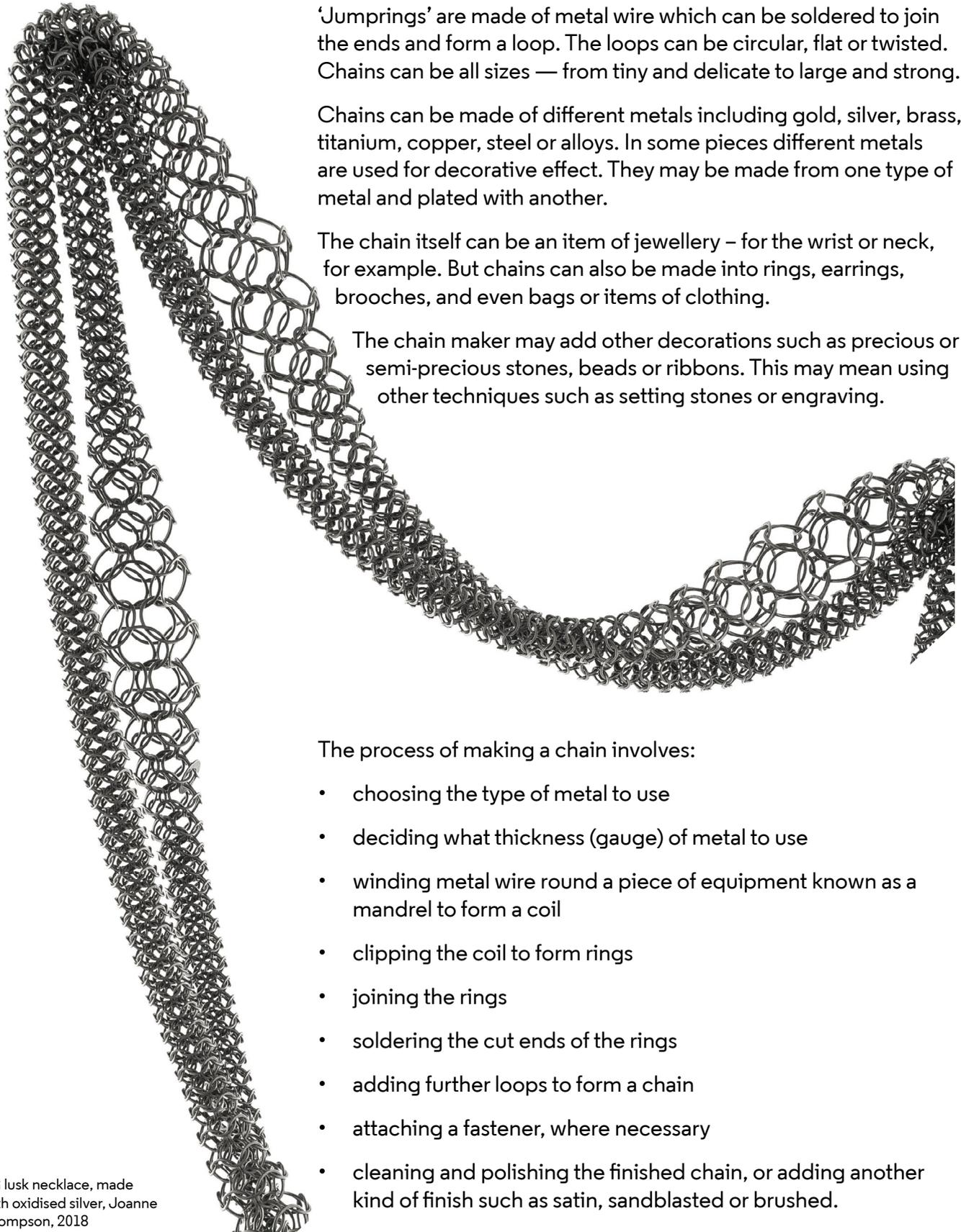
Chain making is a metalsmithing technique in which metal rings are joined together to form a chain. They can be joined singly to make a simple chain or in more complex patterns. A jeweller may specialise in chain making or it may be part of a larger repertoire.

‘Jumprings’ are made of metal wire which can be soldered to join the ends and form a loop. The loops can be circular, flat or twisted. Chains can be all sizes — from tiny and delicate to large and strong.

Chains can be made of different metals including gold, silver, brass, titanium, copper, steel or alloys. In some pieces different metals are used for decorative effect. They may be made from one type of metal and plated with another.

The chain itself can be an item of jewellery – for the wrist or neck, for example. But chains can also be made into rings, earrings, brooches, and even bags or items of clothing.

The chain maker may add other decorations such as precious or semi-precious stones, beads or ribbons. This may mean using other techniques such as setting stones or engraving.



SG lusk necklace, made with oxidised silver, Joanne Thompson, 2018

The process of making a chain involves:

- choosing the type of metal to use
- deciding what thickness (gauge) of metal to use
- winding metal wire round a piece of equipment known as a mandrel to form a coil
- clipping the coil to form rings
- joining the rings
- soldering the cut ends of the rings
- adding further loops to form a chain
- attaching a fastener, where necessary
- cleaning and polishing the finished chain, or adding another kind of finish such as satin, sandblasted or brushed.



Chain by Joanne Thompson, 2018

Chains can be made in a whole range of decorative designs, many of which have several jump rings joined through the same loop.

Chain makers work with tools which include:

- pliers of different types and sizes
- tweezers
- hammers
- cutters
- files

They may use chemicals for cleaning and treating metal.

Chain makers work in a studio. This may be at home or elsewhere, and they may share the studio with other makers.

Many chain makers are self-employed. They may combine chain making with other types of jewellery making.

Customers may come to the studio to discuss designs and buy jewellery.

Chain makers may go to craft fairs and events in the UK and overseas, so they can meet other makers and suppliers and promote their work.

Many chain makers have websites and social media accounts to promote and sell their work.

Skills.

You need to be:

interested in working with metals

able to pay attention to detail

good with your hands and able to handle tools

As well as being creative, you need to be able to do routine repetitive work to create the rings to form a chain.

If you are dealing with the public, you need to have customer service skills. If you are designing bespoke pieces, you need to be able to explain your creative ideas to customers.

If you are self-employed, you need business skills so you can market your goods and services, deal with finances and develop your business.

Qualifications.

Short courses

There are short courses in chain making and soldering. Providers include:



Joanne Thompson, 2018

- [City Lit](#), the [London Jewellery School](#) and [Morley College in London](#)
- [Mid-Cornwall School of Jewellery](#)
- [Fluxnflame, Dorset](#)
- [Artshed, Hertfordshire.](#)

Other courses are run by practising craft workers in their own studios.

Some of the providers of chain making courses also offer longer metalworking and jewellery courses, so that you can learn more about jewellery design.

Providers of BA and MA Degree courses in Jewellery, Gold/Silversmithing and Jewellery Design, which may include chain making, include:

- [School of Jewellery, Birmingham City University](#)
- [Plymouth College of Art](#)
- [Central Saint Martins, London](#)
- [Glasgow School of Art](#)
- [Edinburgh College of Art](#)
- [Royal College of Art, London](#)

[British Academy of Jewellery](#) offers Diplomas in Jewellery Manufacture at Levels 2, 3 and 4 which may also be available through an [apprenticeship](#).

Some courses have entry requirements, such as two A levels (or equivalent) for degree courses. You will also need to show a portfolio of your work.

As well as English and maths, art and design or design and technology are useful subjects. Business studies or enterprise are useful if you want to run your own business.

Featured Maker.

[Joanne Thompson](#) is an Edinburgh-based jeweller who makes special everyday wearable pieces and extraordinary three dimensional necklaces and bracelets which are comfortable, elegant and easy to wear.

Craft Careers

Craft generates £3.4 billion for the UK economy each year, with the contribution of the wider creative industries now growing at twice the rate of the UK economy. British craft has never been so sought-after and craft skills are revolutionising industries from aerospace to architecture.

To learn more about craft careers visit:
www.craftscouncil.org.uk/learning/craft-careers

