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JEWELLERY SOLDERING COACH

Which Torch Should You Actually Use?

A diagnostic guide for home-based makers, on picking the right flame for what you're actually making.

Before You Buy: The Question Isn't "Which Torch Is Best"

The amount of times I see the same question asked in forums and on YouTube. It's not that the advice out there is wrong exactly, it's that it doesn't take into account your skill level or your setup.

If you're working from home, there's a practical thing most guides never mention: check with your home insurer what they're happy for you to use. A butane micro torch and a more powerful MAPP-gas handheld torch (GO System is a common example) are both commonly fine, but it's worth confirming with your own insurer rather than assuming, since policies vary and it's your responsibility to know where you stand.

The good news is a butane micro torch is all you need to solder the vast majority of jewellery you'll actually want to make, pendants, earrings, rings, bezels, most of what home-based makers are working on.

What no one tells you is that the torch was never the main variable. Flame control is. Without it, no torch, however strong, will get your solder to flow properly.

What This Guide Actually Answers

Whether the torch you've got, or the one you're about to buy, is capable of bringing your specific piece up to flow temperature. That's it. That's the whole question, and once it's answered you don't need to go back to a forum and ask again.

When that question isn't answered first, the advice from other makers sends you round in circles, buying a new torch, still wondering why the solder won't flow, because the torch was never the actual problem.

The Real Dividing Line: How Much Metal Needs Heating

It's not the torch that matters first. It's three things:

What do you want your flame to do?

Is your torch capable of doing it?

Do you have the flame control to bring the piece up to the correct temperature so the solder actually flows?

For most jewellery, pendants, earrings, rings, standard bezels, a butane micro torch has the flame capacity to get there. The one place it genuinely struggles is when there's a lot of metal

mass to bring up to temperature at once, something like a chunky, heavy bangle. That's when a hotter, more sustained MAPP-gas torch earns its place.

That's genuinely the whole decision for a home-based maker. Micro torch for the vast majority of what you make. A stronger torch only once the piece itself demands more heat than a micro torch can sustain.

What Actually Goes Wrong: The Mistakes I See Most

× **Assuming the reason why the solder didn't flow into the join means bad solder or flux**

Often the real issue is the piece never got up to temperature evenly in the first place, usually a flame control issue, not a torch or materials issue.

× **Upgrading the torch before learning flame control**

A stronger torch in untrained hands doesn't solve a flow problem, it just makes the same mistake happen faster and with more risk of overheating the piece.

× **Not accounting for how differently metals behave under heat**

Mixed-metal work like copper and silver don't heat or hold heat the same way, and a flame setup one alone can catch the other out.

× **Working in bright light and losing the flame's real colour**

Flame and metal colour are some of the best diagnostic signals you have. Too much ambient light and you lose the ability to read them accurately.

Still Not Sure? A Quick Note on the Other Torch Types

If you've read all of this and you're still wondering about propane or oxy-fuel/acetylene torches, here's the short version: for home-based jewellery making, you almost certainly don't need them.

Propane and oxy-fuel setups exist for studio-scale work, melting large amounts of scrap, or advanced techniques needing sustained high heat. They also come with their own setup, storage and ventilation requirements, so if you ever get to the point of considering one, check with your insurer first.

Unless you already know you're working with heavy metal mass regularly, chunky bangles being the main example, a butane micro torch and proper flame control will take you further than a bigger torch ever will.

Not Sure If Your Setup Is the Problem?

The Home Setup Audit looks at your actual torch, workspace and equipment — and gives you a written, specific answer, not a generic guide.

Book the Home Setup Audit — £70

Fully credited off Jumpstart or the full programme if you upgrade within 30 days