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## WASHER WONDERS

by Deborah Prokop

I love a good hardware store. Growing up, my dad was constantly finding boards loaded with nails because I needed to practice my hammering skills. I loved going with him to the hardware store and slowly turning the giant metal bins of nails, washers, and nuts. Everything was so shiny; I loved the different shapes and sizes, even the smell of the store was comforting and familiar.

It was natural for me to seek out the hardware store when I was looking for new jewelry components. I had been playing with covering and painting some capacitors and resistors my husband had given me. They were interesting and unconventional, which was ultimately what I'd been looking for; but I wanted something with a little more surface area to embellish, which was what sent me to the hardware store. I remembered those shiny bins and immediately knew that a washer had the surface area I wanted and the hole in the middle I needed to make it a "bead." From there I learned to cut and drill and then mill them into the shapes I wanted.

I challenged myself to create a visual concept that would completely repurpose this hardware into something different in appearance and function. I covered them in nature to give the wearer something familiar, interesting, and beautiful. When a metal washer is embellished with the feathery pattern of a bird, or the swirling of a flower, it becomes alive with color and meaning, each one slightly different. Paint little capacitors with nail polish and suddenly you have a little "purse" bead. The colorful delicate patterns on resistors don't need embellishment; but when mixed with glass beads, they become a chain to hang a pendant. Wearable art is a statement of individuality; I am unique, I like being different. So with that in mind, it's important to me, as a designer, to never copy or replicate a piece. Each one is an individual and unique like its wearer.

### TOOLS & MATERIALS

- Craft knife
- Drill press
- Embellishments
- Enamel
- Endmill
- Grinder/buffer wheel
- Metal band saw
- Mod Podge
- Paintbrush
- Paper clips: metal
- Paper towel
- Patterned paper
- Pencil
- Scissors
- Template: circles
- Washers

### TECHNIQUE

Use a circle template with a slightly larger diameter than the washer you want to cover. Trace template on patterned paper, and cut out. Apply Mod Podge on one side of a washer, and adhere paper. Turn the washer over, and repeat on the other side. Trim excess paper from around the edge. Apply Mod Podge on each side of the washer, allowing time for each side to dry. Carefully cut out the hole in the middle of the washer. The washer is now ready to be dipped in enamel.

Bend a paper clip, so you can hang the washer from one end. Dip washer in the enamel, removing any drips with a paper towel, and then hang to dry; repeat this procedure two or three times to give the washer a protective coating and shine. Allow two or three days to completely dry and harden before using. Add embellishments. \*

### TIPS

- Do this outside or in a well-ventilated room.
- Hanging the washers to dry takes some imagination. They need to hang free and not touch each other. The paper clips only "touch" the inside edge of the washer. I made a hanging platform from a piece of thick wood and wire hangers.
- Cutting, milling, or drilling needs to be done before you treat the washers with embellishments. Buff or sand the edges and any burrs left from cut work.
- After each dip into enamel, clean out the holes with a needle after they've dried to the touch.
- I like to use colorful and interesting pages from magazines to embellish my washers. You can print any design or pattern you want, or paint them with nail polish.

Deborah Prokop is a self-taught jewelry designer who lives in Washington, with her husband, three dogs, and a family of 12 geese. You can find her jewelry at [hardwareartwear.com](http://hardwareartwear.com). She welcomes email at [hardwareartwear@hotmail.com](mailto:hardwareartwear@hotmail.com).

