

Solder, What's the Best Kind?

What's the best kind of solder? It depends on what you're using it for.

- Because 50/50 solder melts flatter than 60/40, it's often preferred for lead.
- Because it sets quicker, 60/40 is easier to form into a curved dome so it's often preferred for solder beads on lead foil.
- Because it sets quickly, 70/30 solder is often used for decorative soldering where sculpted forms are created in the solder.
- Some artisans use 50/50 for lead and 60/40 for foil, but most find switching is a nuisance. A steadily increasing number of artisans just use 60/40 for everything.
- Because lead-free solder costs considerably more than solder containing lead, and it melts erratically, it's usually reserved for use where it will be in regular skin contact – as for jewelry.
- There's really no difference between brands of solder. Other than some imported solder which may have been made from recycled lead instead of pure material, all brands are the same. The best choice is the brand that costs the least.