

Copper Elephant



This is what my elephant looks like. Yours will be different because each elephant is unique!

What's in the kit?

- Bare copper elephant frame
- Two wire pieces for spirals
- 1.2 m of non-tarnishing wrapping wire (small coil)
- Bigger coil with three 50 cm lengths of non-tarnishing wrapping/beading wire
- Around 30 beads
- Pair of pliers
- Aluminium wire for practising
- Elephant template
- 20 cm paper ruler



Have fun making the elephant! Here's how

First, the spirals

To practise making spirals and getting used to the pliers, use the aluminium wire.

Aluminium is a lot softer than copper, so it is great to practise with. It wouldn't be good to use in the elephant's frame, as it doesn't hold its shape.



Grab the end of the wire with the tips of pliers.

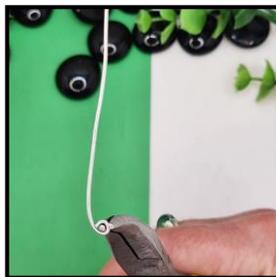


Wrap the wire halfway around one tip of the pliers.

Then let go.



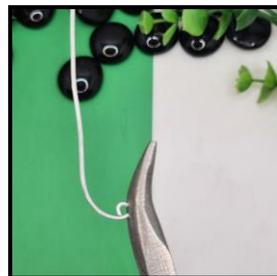
Grab the wire again inside the half-formed circle ...



... and complete the circle.

Let go.

To make the next loop, hold the circle in the bend of the pliers, with the jaws facing away from the wire.



I like keeping the pliers roughly vertical and use my other hand to move the wire into the desired curve.

Do a quarter turn, then reposition.



One spiral made!

Now do the same, starting with the other end of the wire

Try to make a spiral that's different from the first one, smaller or bigger, tighter or looser.



Here the spirals face the same way.

You can twist them, so they make an S-shape, rather than a C-shape.



Your choice.

Now, in copper



The copper wire is harder to work with, but you know what to do.

Do exactly the same as before with the aluminium wire, but use the short 1.25 mm copper wires instead. You'll find you need to use a bit more force, both in holding it and shaping the wire.

Two more spirals to go

The frame wire ends also need a spiral. This is 1.6 mm copper wire, so even stiffer to work with. This time you move the end of the wire away from the tip of the pliers' jaws to get a better grip. You will also create a bigger circle this way.

The aim is to create a tail with a little curl and a spiral that goes inside the frame. There needs to be an area where they are parallel to connect them. Use the template to make sure your elephant's shape is to your liking.

Once you've made the end curl and spiral, place the other copper wire pieces inside the frame in a way you like.

Adjust to make sure they can be attached to the frame or another set of spirals.

I find it useful to take a picture of my composition, so I have something to refer to. It doesn't mean I can't change my mind, but it's a handy reference.



Attaching the spirals (Method 1)

I have used a black electric cable (representing the frame) and a blue scooby (pretend weaving wire) to make the contrast clearer in this part of the instructions.

TIP

Copper weaving wire will want to kink! When you see or feel a kink, just straighten it out straight away.



Loop the middle of the wire around the outer loop of the spiral and the frame.

Go around both the spiral loop (to the right) and the frame several times. Quite tight.

Push the coils together with your thumb-nails so they are close together. Keep doing this all along.



You'll find there's space between the coils you've made.

Once the spiral is attached, continue with a series of single coils around just the frame (as in the picture) or just around the spiral.

Make sure there's enough tension to create tight coils.



Make a few coils at the other side (to the left) around both the spiral loop and the frame, followed by single coils around the frame.



Cut the wire (with cutters or an old pair of scissors) close to the frame, preferably at the back).

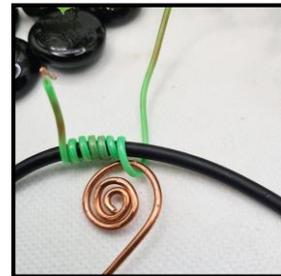


Squeeze the wire flat against the frame with pliers. This secures it in place and ensures you won't scratch your skin.

You shouldn't feel anything when you go over it with your thumb. It's a good idea to check this every time you do this!

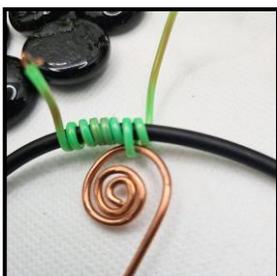
Attaching the spirals (Method 2)

This time start at around 3 cm (1.5") from the end of the weaving wire. This leaves you a 'tail' to hold on to when you start coiling around the frame.



When you've made around 7 or more tight coils (as before), attach a spiral loop.

For variety create a pattern. I like to go once around both the spiral loop and the frame, followed by a single coil around the frame (or loop, your choice)



Continue this way (double, single, double, single, etc) till the spiral is firmly attached, then continue with single coils.

This is the pattern I will use throughout this project.

Cut off excess wire near the frame.



Squish the ends of the weaving wire flat against the frame.



For real with copper

Undo the smaller coil of wire and you'll have 1.2 m wire that needs to be cut into six 20 cm long weaving wires. You can use the paper ruler provided

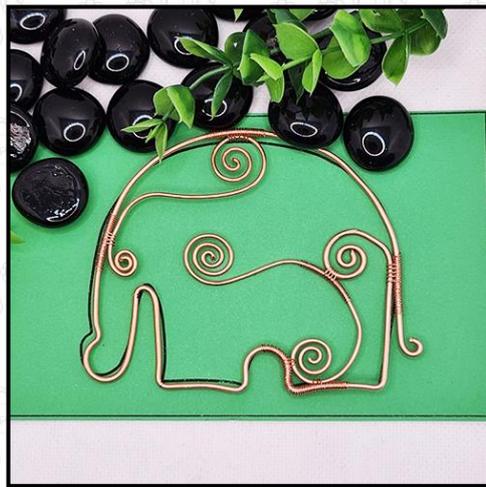


Using one of the methods above, start attaching the spirals to the elephant frame.



The dark dots are the points where the spirals need to be attached to the frame for my elephant.

All connected



Beading



Looking great, but it needs some colour to bring it all together.

Using scoobies and big beads, I'll illustrate how to make sure the beads will 'float' where you want them to be.



Attach the wire starting near the end. Leave a tail.

Do a series of single coils, then cut off the tail near the frame. Use pliers to flatten the wire in exactly the same way as before.



Thread a bead on and decide where you want it to be.

Go through the bead again and tighten, while holding the bead firmly in place.



If you have space to attach another bead, make sure to leave some space in between them.



Now with the small beads and copper wire

Undo the bigger coil for the three 50 cm beading wires.



Attach the wire from one end with tail and start adding beads.



Use both the frame and the spirals to attach the wire with the beads.



One beading wire finished.



I'm happy with using just two of the beading wires and not all of the beads. You do you!



Copper elephant complete



Patinas

You can leave your elephant as it is now. Over time the copper frame will change naturally due to oxidation. The weaving wire, as it is non-tarnishing, will stay shiny and create a lovely contrast with the frame and spirals.

This is what happens over time:



The patina that develops on copper is different from rust on iron. Rust corrodes the iron,

but the patina protects the copper.

If you don't want to wait that long for the change in colour, you can create a patina yourself with materials you most probably have at home instead of buying chemical substances.

The SMELLY Way



I used this method on a copper pendant.

You will need one or two hard boiled eggs, an airtight container and a smaller bowl that fits inside. I used the bottom of a plastic bottle to put the copper elephant in and placed it in the airtight container.

Peel the eggs and crush them. Put the crushed eggs in the container so that they don't touch the copper. Close securely!



WARNING

Leave in the container for a few days, then check if you like the result.

DO THIS OUTSIDE

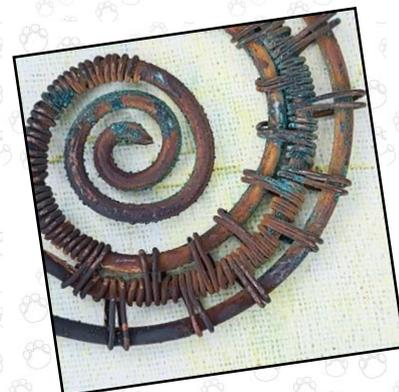
It really, really stinks.

If you want the copper darker, leave it longer.

Have a bowl with soapy water ready to put the patina-ed copper items in and a plastic bag to dispose of the rotten eggs.

To create the contrast between shiny and dark copper, use fine gritted sand paper to remove some of the patina (not done in the pictures).

For the pendant here I used bare copper for both the frame and the wire. Your weaving wire (unlike the weaving wire in the picture) wire will stay bright as it is non-tarnishing!



Miracle Gro

A less noxious way is to use Miracle Gro.

To get a blue patina brush a solution of one-part Miracle Gro to three parts of water onto your elephant. For a green effect use vinegar instead of water.

You will see a patina forming within 30 minutes.

After a day, brush off some of the crystals, sand off excess and seal with a varnish.

I hope you've enjoyed making the elephant.

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Colourbuzz

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