

# How To Make a Silver Leaf Mirror

with a Silver Leaf Kit from [AngelGilding.com](http://AngelGilding.com)

A mirror is a layer of metal on glass. You can add the metal by chemical deposition using our mirroring chemicals or by applying metal leaf to the glass with a transparent gelatin size. Size is another name for glue.

The process is the same for all metals. Copper, aluminum and other base metal leaves are usually 5 1/2" square. Pure gold and pure silver leaves are 3 3/8" square. The Smith Tip is designed for gold and silver leaves but it works well with larger leaves.

## Coverage:

One book of 25 silver leaves covers 2.2 square feet of glass. One book of 25 aluminum leaves covers 4.8 square feet. Refill supplies are available at [www.angelgilding.com](http://www.angelgilding.com).

## Leaf Lines and Holes:

No matter how perfectly you apply the leaves, the lines between them will be visible. This gives the mirror its "antique" appearance. Rips, tears and holes (known as holidays) in the leaf increase the effect. To increase the antique appearance further, you can selectively dissolve the applied leaf with Silver Remover.

## Chemical Tarnishing:

Antiquing chemicals transform pure metal into chemical compounds on a molecular level. Metal leaf is eight times thicker than chemically deposited silver so it is difficult, but not impossible, to chemically antique a silver leaf mirror. See "Antiquing New Silver" for details.

## Safety:

Leaf mirrors are made with edible gelatin and pure metal leaf. There are no fumes and no chemicals to worry about. We suggest that you use distilled water to make your size. Tap water could contain chemicals that might tarnish the silver over time.

## Reclaiming Scrap:

When you burnish the glass you will see bits of silver leaf floating all over the place. While these bits (called skewings) are very visible, they are actually so small that it costs more to recycle them than they are worth.

## You will need to provide:

1. The glass to be mirrored
2. 1 gallon of steam distilled water
3. A clean saucepan and spoon to make the size
4. A stove or hot plate to heat the size
5. Double-sided sticky tape and a stick or pencil to lift the rouged paper
6. A single-edge razor blade or craft knife to cut off the book binding

## How To Make a Silver Leaf Mirror



### Step 1: Make the Size

Add 2 diamonds of gelatin to 1 cup (240 mL) of distilled water. Soak the gelatin for 10 – 15 minutes. Heat the size till it is steaming hot. Do **not** let it boil. Stir it well and let it cool to room temperature. Gelatin does not keep – make fresh daily.



### Step 2: Clean the Glass

Scrub the glass with hot tap water and powdered glass cleaner using a dedicated sponge or new paper towel. Rinse the glass under a running tap. Rinse it again with distilled water to remove the tap water.



### Step 3: Stand Up the Glass

Glass leaf gilding is done on a vertical surface. Stand the glass upright against a firm support. Place a towel under it to absorb excess size. It is ok to let the clean glass dry before you leaf it.



### Step 4: Assemble and Charge the Tip

Screw the brass handle onto the back of the Smith Tip. Rub a very light layer of Vaseline™ or hand lotion on your forearm (left arm if you are right handed) and lightly sweep the tip over it.



### Step 5: Cut the Binding Off the Silver Leaf Book

Using a single edge razor blade or a craft knife, cut the binding off your book of silver leaves. This makes it easier to keep the leaves flat and to lift them with the Smith Tip.



### Step 6: Lift the Rouged Paper Off the Leaf

Wrap the end of a stick (or pencil) with double-sided tape. Use the tape to lift the rouged paper off of a silver leaf. Replace the tape when it gets covered in rouge.



### Step 7: Place the Tip on the Leaf

Place the Tip squarely on the exposed leaf – loose hairs at the top. Leave a small strip of leaf showing above the Tip to help you position the leaf on the glass.



### Step 8: Size the Glass

Dip your size brush in the size and transfer a generous amount of size to the glass where you will be placing the leaf. You only need to wet one area at a time. The size should flow freely.

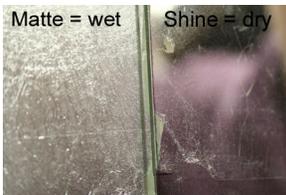


### Step 9: Place the Silver Leaf

Pick up the Tip with the leaf attached and bring it up parallel to the wet glass. As you bring the Tip close to the glass (about 1/16") the leaf will jump from the Tip to the glass. Do not touch the Tip to the glass.

### Step 10:

**Repeat Steps 6, 7, 8 and 9** Repeat sizing the glass and placing the leaves to finish your mirror. Keep the leaves as evenly spaced and as flat as possible. You can fill in any holes and tears in Step 13.



### Step 11: Dry the Glass

When you have covered the whole glass with silver, let it dry completely. Wet silver is matte, dry silver is reflective. You can use a hair dryer or heated fan to speed things up.



### Step 12: Burnish the Silver

When the silver is completely dry, buff off any loose pieces with your burnishing puff using a light touch. Clean the puff often to avoid scratching the silver.



### Step 13: Filling Holes and Gaps

Once the silver is dried and burnished, you can apply additional leaves to cover any holes or gaps. Just re-size and re-leaf the open areas. Dry, burnished silver does **not** lift off when you apply new size.

### **Step 14: Paint the Back**



Once the silver layer is finished, paint the back of the mirror with backing paint to protect it from tarnishing and scratching.

To create a silver image on clear glass, reverse your design. paint it on the silver and let it dry. Remove the extra unpainted silver with Silver Remover. Remember to reverse your design before you paint it so that it is the right way around when you turn the glass over.

### **Step 15: Admire Your Handy Work**



Now stand back and admire your handy-work. The process is very simple. Just like other manual activities, such as playing the piano, your skill will improve with practice.

AngelGilding.com  
October 31, 2008