Tipsheet… Making Dichroic Glass Jewellery

Dichroic glass can be used to make eye-catching pieces of jewellery. A simple method is to make a small fired glass piece known as a cabochon (or 'cab'). This can then be easily attached to jewellery findings to create interesting glass adornments including pendants, earrings, brooches, necklaces and rings.

Dichroic glass is easy to use and even if you are new to glass art, by following the tips in this guide you will soon be on your way to making good quality glass jewellery pieces.

What Is Dichroic Glass?

Dichroic glass has a shimmering metallic coating on one side that comes in a range of colours and designs. Dichroic glass has a transmitted colour and a completely different reflective colour; these two colours shift depending on the angle of view, adding interest and depth to your glass work.

Dichroic glass gives different finishes depending on how it is layered before firing.

Fire your piece with the dichroic coating face up to give a slightly textured and foil-like appearance ***(Fig. 1).***

Fire the dichroic glass capped (i.e. with a layer or clear glass on top or a clear dichroic with the coating face down) to give a glassy feel with the dichroic enclosed; it creates depth in the piece ***(Fig. 2)*.**

The 6mm Rule:

Molten glass likes to be 6mm thick. When you fire any glass in a kiln, make sure the total thickness of the piece is as close to 6mm as possible. This will ensure it keeps a good shape after firing.

If the design is thinner than 6mm, the glass will pull in during firing causing the piece to distort; this is called dog-boning ***(Fig. 3).***

If the design is thicker than 6mm, the glass will flow out in the kiln and again distort any patterned dichroic you have used ***(Fig. 4).***

Fig. 1 *– Dichroic face up*

Fig. 2 *– Capped Dichroic*

Fig. 3 *– Less than 6mm*

Fig. 4 *– More than 6mm*

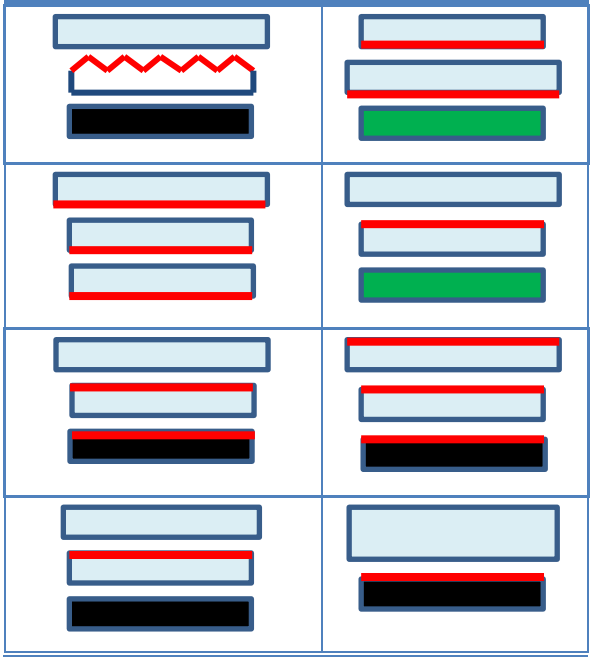
Layering your piece:

Layering different combinations of glass together creates depth and interesting visual effects in your final piece. Dichroic glass comes in 2mm thick sheets, so it is best to use three layers of 2mm glass to build your piece in order to obtain a 6mm thick design.

When layering it is best to make the top layer of your piece slightly larger than the bottom layers (about 1mm larger on each edge), this will encourage the edges of the top layer to fold down during the firing and neatly enclose all of the dichroic coating.

Important! *Never layer two pieces of dichroic glass face to face. The dichroic coating will not stick and the piece will become rough and jagged in the firing.*

Suggested Layering Combinations



Key:	
	Clear Glass (2mm)
	Clear Glass (4mm Tekta)
	Coloured Glass (2mm)
	Black Glass (2mm)
	Dichroic Glass (2mm) Red line = dichroic coating
	Textured Dichroic Glass (2mm)

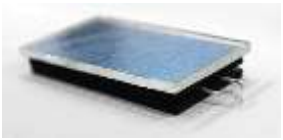
Hanging your Piece:

Bails:

We sell a range of glue-on bails which can be attached to the back of your piece with strong epoxy glue (we recommend using DP460 Epoxy Glue):

Wire Loop:

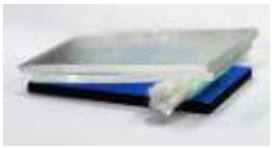
Instead of using bails, you can make a loop of silver wire and layer it into your piece to create a hook.



Holes:

Holes can be drilled in glass using a Dremel tool *(Fig. 6)*. You can then fire polish your piece with either some rolled up thin fire paper or some pencil graphite through the hole to prevent it closing up again. This will give you a nice clean hole through your piece.

Alternatively you can create a lateral hole through your piece with some fibre rope. Make sure your top layer is larger than the bottom piece and the rope is at least 2mm from the top of the piece to ensure the top layer is able to fold over and attach to the bottom layer in the firing. Experiment with using one, two or three strands of the rope to create the desired hole size.



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Firing Schedules:

Here are some useful firing schedules. Use the basic full fuse when making your cabochons. Try firing to 760°C (instead of 804°C) to get a squarer edge to your cabochon.

The fire polish schedule is useful to remove any sharp edges after drilling any holes in your glass.

Basic Full Fuse:

Basic full fuse Run time = 12 hrs	Rate	Temp	Hold
Segment 1	222°C hr (400°F)	677°C (1250°F)	30 min
Segment 2	333°C hr (600°F)	804°C (1480°F)	10 min
Segment 3	999°C hr (9999°F)	482°C (900°F)	60 min
Segment 4	83°C hr (150°F)	371°C (700°F)	End

Fire Polish:

Fire Polish Runtime = 12 hrs	Rate	Temp	Hold
Segment 1	222°C hr (400°F)	677°C (1250°F)	30 min
Segment 2	333°C hr (600°F)	732°C (1350°F)	10 min
Segment 3	999°C hr (9999°F)	482°C (900°F)	60 min
Segment 4	83°C hr (150°F)	371°C (700°F)	End