

The Skill of Drilling Holes in Glass

I'm as far from an expert on this subject that one could be! I've just come from the Bead & Art Glass Expo in Orlando, FL where I took a class in hole drilling in glass, shells, rocks, etc. I'm jotting down all the points that I've learned today and will be sharing them with you. The teacher was Jim Goldstein and he did not give handouts in this class so I'm relying on some notes that I took along with my less than perfect 65 y/o memory!

Supplies:

Safety Glasses

Plastic plate

Water

Dremel with a flex-shaft attachment and a 1/32 coilet.

A diamond 1mm drill bit

He started out instructing us to use shallow plastic plates. All other materials have drawbacks for using them for this purpose. On your piece of glass mark the place where you want the hole. Place the piece to be drilled in the plate and cover it with water.

You hold the piece steady using your left hand. Turn the Dremel to a slow speed and position the bit over the mark at a 45 degree angle. Start drilling for a short period of time at this angle (just to get the hole started) and then quickly go to vertical. You have to watch out for the bit skipping out of the hole and across your piece. This will mar the piece. As you are drilling down, with a steady but not excessive pressure, you move your hand and the drill bit slightly up and down. This motion will allow the drilled material to escape from the hole. Keep doing this until you feel the bit come out the other side of the piece. This may take a long time if your piece is thick or a short time if you piece is thin.

After doing this successfully about a dozen times we moved on to learn how to drill a hole in a foiled gem stone. The trick to this is to start the drilling on the foil side (the back) and when you are about 9/10th of the way through (which is a guesstimate on your part) you turn it over and finish drilling the hole from the clear side. I did not do this successfully but I did get the idea and I'll practice it at home. I'm no where near trying to do this with a valuable piece but I will go home and practice until I get it right!