

Tuscarora Lapidary Society, Inc.

Skill Improvement Program

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SKIP — The TLS Skill Improvement Program

Tuscarora's Skill Improvement Program (SKIP) is dedicated to increasing enjoyment of our hobby by the development of higher levels of craftsmanship. Each member is given the opportunity to have his/her work evaluated in relationship to standards of workmanship. These standards become progressively more rigorous as the member's skill increases.

Three levels of achievement are established: **APPRENTICE**, **JOURNEYMAN**, and **MASTER**.

Every participant is required to progress one level at a time in order to achieve recognition as a **MASTER**. In some cases the rules may specify size, shape, or a particular property of the material to be used; otherwise, each member is free to select the kind of material, size, shape, etc. Items previously entered in Single Stone competitions may be entered in the SKIP program, where they will be evaluated according to SKIP criteria. Items entered in SKIP remain the property of the member at all times.

There are at present nine **DIVISIONS** in the program: **CABOCHON**, **FACETED STONE**, **CHANNEL JEWELRY**, **INTARSIA**, **INTARSIA-JEWELRY**, **SPHERE**, **CONSTRUCTED JEWELRY**, **JEWELRY CASTING**, and **CARVING**.

Instructions for Submitting Items for Evaluation

1. Place your piece(s) in a box or plastic bag; put your membership number on the box/bag.
2. **DO NOT** put your name on any item or on the container.
3. Prepare a list describing each item by material, color, cut design (if appropriate), size in millimeters (if appropriate). Place your membership number on this list, not your name. Indicate the Level (Apprentice, Journeyman, or Master) and Division for which the submitted items are to be judged. Place all pieces and the list in the box/bag with your membership number on the outside. Each submission must include the complete set of work required for the given level.
4. Turn in the pieces to the SKIP chairman or any Board member at any meeting.

Every effort will be made to return entries and evaluations at the next General Meeting. Returned entries will be accompanied by scoring sheets that show how the items submitted were rated in each of the judging categories. Most valuable will be the comments and suggestion of the SKIP judge in regard to ways in which you can improve your workmanship.

The Following SKIP Rules Apply to All Nine Divisions

- A. A given item may be submitted for evaluation in only one level of a SKIP Division.
- B. In the Intarsia, Intarsia Jewelry, Channel Jewelry, Constructed Jewelry, and Jewelry Casting divisions, a given **design (pattern)** may be used only once.
- C. Any item that fails to meet the required score in any level of any division may, if appropriate, be reworked and resubmitted once. Items that fail to meet the required score on the second evaluation may be replaced, but may not be further reworked for resubmission.
- D. When items that need to be reworked or replaced are completed, the full set, including items in the set that have already received passing scores, must be submitted together for judging along with all scoring sheets for any of the items that had been submitted previously. Items that previously received passing scores will not be re-scored.
- E. Items that have received passing scores may be resubmitted unchanged at most twice.

NOTE: If you plan to take part in Federation competitions, you should familiarize yourself with the *AFMS Uniform Rules* of the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies.

CABOCHON DIVISION

Definitions

A cabochon is a polished stone with a domed surface (the top), cut freehand (not tumbled). The second surface (the back) may be flat or domed. If domed, it may be of lesser height than the front dome. A cabochon is normally of a size suitable to be worn as jewelry.

A standard cabochon is one whose girdle outline has at least one axis of symmetry. All patterns on the standard templates satisfy this condition.

A free-form cabochon is one whose girdle outline has no symmetry.

The bezel angle is the slope that is cut on the side of a cabochon for a short distance above the girdle; it should be uniform around the stone. Its purpose is to allow the bezel of a mounting to be rolled or pressed down against the stone to secure it in the mount. It should be in the range of 10 to 15 degrees. The dome may meet the bezel angle surface in a definite line, parallel to the girdle, or may blend in smoothly down to the girdle.

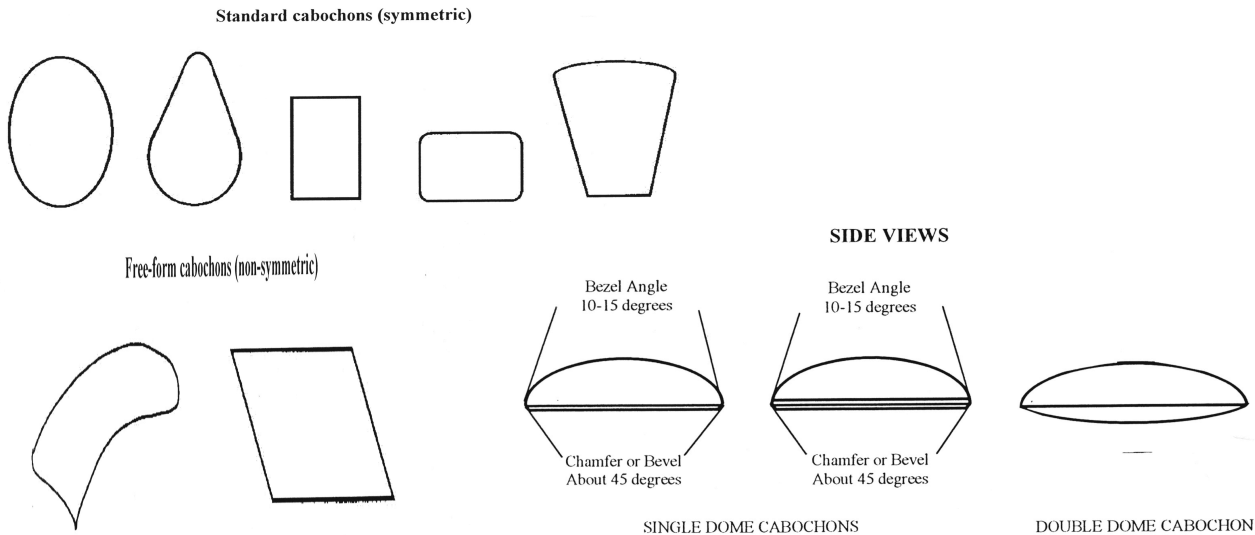
The chamfer or bevel is a narrow angled surface cut around the girdle of a cabochon toward the back to reduce the likelihood of chipping. It should be about 45 degrees, of uniform width, not wider than 1mm except on very large stones.

Note that cabochons with two domed surfaces have no chamfer, and that the angle at which the back surfaces meet the girdle may be much larger than the bezel angle on the front. Ideally, the girdle in this case would be sharp. Because of chipping, this is not practical and the girdle must be slightly and smoothly rounded.

The symmetry overall refers to the contour of the domed surfaces, not to the shape of the girdle.

Orientation refers to the shaping of the stone to make best use of its natural patterns, color distribution, and inclusions to show chatoyancy, cat's-eye, star, or to otherwise enhance the beauty of the finished piece.

Examples that illustrate the definitions



Material

A cabochon may be made of any suitable natural mineral or any synthetic mineral-like material, such as goldstone. The quality of the material refers to color, pattern, freedom from cracks, pits, etc.

Point Allocation for Evaluation**STANDARD CABOCHONS**

Accuracy of girdle outline*	15
Symmetry overall (shaping of top & sides)	
Top	10
Sides	10
Quality of polish	
Top	10
Sides	10
Orientation	10
Quality of material	15
Bezel angle	10
Chamfer or bevel	5
Back	5
Perfection	100 points

*Free form cabochons: For accuracy of girdle outline, substitute complexity of form attempted.

Polished flats will not qualify in the Cabochon Division.

Judging

Accuracy of girdle outline: For traditional shapes — check by placing template over (or carefully tracing outline) then placing template over traced outline, then cutting out and folding; freeform — shape that exhibits skill.

Symmetry overall: Make a light move over the stone. If the reflection changes shape or jumps, instead of moving evenly over the top, then symmetry is off (flat spots).

Quality of polish: Check by looking at light reflection on stone (use a clear light bulb). Softer stones may not take as high a polish, nor will stones of mixed minerals.

Quality of material: Take into consideration the quality for this particular material.

Bezel angle: The interface between the bezel and the top should be either smoothly rounded or have a nice sharp edge.

Chamfer: Must be even all around — no chips.

Bottom: All stones submitted should be clean on the backs, with all saw marks, all aluminum pencil, or other marks sanded off. Cabochons with two domes must have both polished. Clear or translucent material cabochons must be polished on the back as well.

Judging will be done using 10X magnification.

SKIP Points Required for Advancement (See page 2 for general rules regarding submissions.)

Apprentice Level: Two cabochons are required, a 30mm × 22mm and any other oval stone.

Minimum points required: 50 per cabochon.

Journeyman Level: Three cabochons are required: pillow cut, round, keystone or oval; three different shapes.

Minimum points required: 70 per cabochon.

Master Level: Four cabochons are required, as follows:

1. One oval cabochon, 40mm × 30mm, with one dome.
2. One free-form of any size, one dome and at least one inside curve.
3. One free-form of any size, with two domes.
4. One standard or free-form, of any size, with one or two domes, using translucent or transparent material.

At least one cabochon must be of agate or other material with a hardness of at least 7 on the Mohs scale. Because this is the highest level attainable, the evaluation will be rigorous. Stones may be of any acceptable material.

Minimum points required: 90 per cabochon.

FACETED STONE DIVISION

<u>Point Allocation for Evaluation</u>	<u>Total</u>
Girdle: Alignment and uniformity (5 pts) Polish (5 pts)	10
Table: Symmetry (5 pts) Polish (5 pts)	10
Crown: Facet symmetry, uniformity (5 pts) Meets (accuracy of facet intersections) (15 pts) Polish (15 pts)	35
Pavilion: Facet symmetry, uniformity and angles (5 pts) Meets (15 pts) Polish (15 pts)	35
Difficulty of Material or Design (i.e. harder or brittle materials or difficult designs)	5
Orientation and/or Presentation	<u>5</u>
Perfection	100 points

Judging

Each stone submitted must be correctly identified as to the variety of material. The name and diagram of the cutting design must also be submitted.

Judging will be done using 10X magnification.

Points are deducted on the basis of the percentage, which exhibit the fault and the severity of the fault (i.e. if a crown has 14 facets and 4 show scratches seen by the naked eye, $4/14 \times 15 \times$ severity factor 1.0 polishing points are deducted).

Severity: If a fault is seen by the naked eye (no magnification) the severity factor is 1.0; easily seen at 10X magnification, 0.5 is the factor; barely seen at 10X magnification, 0.1 is the severity factor.

If a design has no table (i.e. apex facets, checkerboard), the table points will be included in the crown total and awarded as noted.

SKIP Points Required for Advancement (See page 2 for general rules regarding submissions.)

Apprentice Level: Two faceted stones, any cut design or size, any material suitable for faceting.

Minimum points required: 50 per stone.

Journeyman Level: Three faceted stones, any size, any suitable material. One stone must be a standard round brilliant cut; one stone must contain step cuts in the crown and/or pavilion, third stone optional cut.

Minimum points required: 70 per stone.

Master Level: Four faceted stones any size, cut from three different natural or synthetic materials. One standard emerald cut; one oval, marquise, or heart cut; two optional cuts differing from each other, no standard round brilliants; free form cuts are accepted among the optional stones. All four must be submitted at one time.

Important note: Since this is the highest grade obtainable, evaluation will be rigorous. The stone must look perfect to the naked eye and the severity factor at 10X will be 1.0 for easily seen faults and 0.5 for barely seen faults.

Minimum points required: 90 per stone.

CHANNEL JEWELRY DIVISION

A channel piece may be made of any suitable natural mineral or any synthetic mineral-like material, such as goldstone. Except for natural obsidian, glass may not be used, nor are metals acceptable to fill the channels.

Definition

Channel jewelry is a picture in stone with silver channel wire (usually 1/8-inch, 24 gauge) separating the pieces of stone. Soldering the strips of silver together to construct a geometric design or object creates the piece; this lacy design is then soldered to a silver back (22 gauge or thicker for a bola or buckle). The spaces or channels between this outline are then filled with accurately cut stones or minerals. This forms a colorful picture; such as that of a bird, animal, flower, free form, or geometric design.

Point Allocation for Evaluation

Difficulty of subject	10
Shape (flat/concave)	5
Use of material (does material enhance the piece)	10
Soldering	
No spaces where channel meets backing	10
No spaces where channel meets itself	10
Finishing and polishing of silver	
Sides	5
Back	5
Accuracy of fit of stones	
Deductions for every space: 25/number of stones	25
Quality of stones (free of cracks, pits, etc)	10
Polishing of stones	<u>10</u>
Perfection	100 points

Judging

Judging is done without magnification.

SKIP Points Required for Advancement (See page 2 for general rules regarding submissions.)

Apprentice Level: One piece of channel jewelry, such as a free form design, a pin, or a pendant, etc. A pin may have a purchased finding.

Minimum points required: 50.

Journeyman Level: Two pieces of channel jewelry, one of which must be either a bola or a pin. One piece must have a minimum of ten channels. A minimum of three inside curves is required as part of the design of one of the pieces. A pin may have a purchased finding.

Minimum points required: 70 per piece.

Master Level: Three pieces of channel jewelry. One piece must have a minimum of 18 channels. One piece must have a curved finish (concave or convex). One piece must be a subject, such as a flower, bird, scene, etc. One piece can meet more than one requirement, such as a flower with 18 channels. All items must be fully constructed handmade pieces. A pin may have a purchased finding, but it must be a catch and joint.

Minimum points required: 90 per piece.

INTARSIA DIVISION

Definition

Intarsia is the making of a picture or geometric design using thin slices of natural or synthetic stones and cutting them to align with each other without gaps between the pieces.

The effect achieved with any material is the important criterion. Polish is not a requirement in intarsia except as needed to create an effect. In some cases it may detract. Designs are to be either abstract or subjective as indicated in the advancement requirements.

A design may not be submitted more than once.

Point Allocation for Evaluation

Originality of subject matter	10
Complexity of subject	20
Alignment of sections (workmanship)	35
Finish	20
Presentation of work*	<u>15</u>
Perfection	100 points

*Finished piece set in a handmade or commercial setting or edges finished.

Judging

Alignment of sections (workmanship): Means precise joins (no gaps) and no chips along the edges.

Finish: Includes quality of polish (or sanding, if piece is not polished) and as little undercutting as possible.

Presentation: Framed in some way in a setting or finished with stone backing; quality of finished edges.

Magnification will be used in judging.

SKIP Points Required for Advancement (See page 2 for general rules regarding submissions.)

Apprentice Level: One intarsia, minimum size $2\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

Minimum points required: 50.

Journeyman Level: Two intarsias, minimum size $2\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{1}{2}$ inches; one must be a subject such as a flower, bird, person, scene, etc.

Minimum points required: 70 per intarsia.

Master Level: Three intarsias, minimum size $2\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{1}{2}$ inches. One must be of a subject such as a flower, bird, person, scene, etc. and one must be a minimum size of 6×6 inches with at least 15 pieces.

Minimum points required: 90 per intarsia.

INTARSIA — JEWELRY SIZE

Definition

Intarsia is the making of a picture or geometric design a suitable size for jewelry, using slices of natural or synthetic stones and cutting them to align with each other without gaps between the pieces.

Point Allocation for Evaluation

Artistic value	20
Complexity of subject	20
Alignment of sections (workmanship)	25
Finish	20
Presentation of finished work	<u>15</u>
Perfection:	100 points

Quartz caps are not permitted.

Judging

Alignment of sections (workmanship): Means precise joins (no gaps) and no chips along the edges.

Finish: Includes quality of polish (or sanding, if piece is not polished) and as little undercutting as possible.

Presentation: Framed in some way in a setting or finished with stone backing; quality of finished edges.

Magnification will be used in judging.

SKIP Points Required for Advancement (See page 2 for general rules regarding submissions.)

Apprentice Level: One intarsia, approximately 1 to 3 square inches (any shape), with at least 4 pieces.

Minimum points required: 50.

Journeyman Level: Two intarsias, two different shapes, up to approximately 4 square inches (any shape), with 10 to 15 pieces.

Minimum points required: 70 per intarsia.

Master Level: Three intarsias, one with any overall shape containing a scene or design with inside and outside curves limited to 4 square inches, and one with more than 15 pieces. Also, one finished intarsia must be set in a handmade or commercial setting and one intarsia must have a finished backing.

Minimum points required: 90 per intarsia.

SPHERE DIVISION

Definition

Any suitable natural mineral or any synthetic mineral-like material may be used and fashioned by hand or by machine in the shape of a geometric sphere and polished. It may include crystal vugs and cavities if the quality of material is appropriate.

Point Allocation for Evaluation

Quality of material	10
Color & pattern of material	10
Eye appeal	15
Workmanship	
Polish	25
Cracks must be sealed (except for crystal vugs)	20
Spherical accuracy	<u>20</u>
Perfection	100 points

Judging

Spherical accuracy: Random measurement (with calipers) of approximately 10 diameters, minus 1 point for each deviation.

Maximum deviation for a sphere made by hand or with 1 cup: Less than 1%.

Maximum deviation for a sphere made with 3 cups: Less than ½%.

For each material one should compare with good material that is generally available. Clear quartz spheres should be free of cracks and flaws. Rose quartz spheres will have lots of inclusions, possibly including flaws and cracks, even in rather good material. Emerald is another material that could show lots of skill but not be free of flaws and cracks; emeralds come with a “garden.”

SKIP Points Required for Advancement (See page 2 for general rules regarding submissions.)

Apprentice Level: One sphere up to 3 inches in diameter.

Minimum points required: 50.

Journeyman Level: One sphere.

Minimum points required: 70.

Master Level: Two spheres, one of any natural material. One sphere must be at least 2 inches in diameter and one must be of agate or another material with a hardness of at least 7 on the Mohs scale.

Minimum points required: 90 per sphere.

CONSTRUCTED JEWELRY DIVISION

1. All jewelry must be finished pieces and can contain, as specified, one of the following: any finished natural or synthetic material, mineral specimen, or fossil.
2. More than one technique may be incorporated in one piece.
3. No commercial findings may be used, for example, bezels, chains, ear wires, etc. Stones may be purchased and this should be noted when the piece is turned in for judging. No epoxy allowed.

Point Allocation for Evaluation

Design	20
Perfection of detail	10
Soldering	20
Finishing	20
Stone setting	20
Functional use of piece*	<u>10</u>
Perfection:	100 points

*Wearable, comfortable, and mechanically perfect.

SKIP Points Required for Advancement (See page 2 for general rules regarding submissions.)

Apprentice Level:

Required techniques: Ability to saw, file, solder and polish silver; ability to create a bezel and base for round or oval stones on a single curved shank or flat pendant platform.

Required pieces:

1. A ring with a cabochon.
2. A flat backed pendant with a cabochon and handmade bail (could also be earrings or a tie tack).

One of the required pieces should have a textured or oxidized finish.

Minimum points required: 50 per piece.

Journeyman Level:

Required techniques: Ability to create bezels on domed surfaces; ability to decorate with solid beads, reticulation, fancy trim, or piercing (a different such skill required for each piece).

Required pieces:

1. A ring with a cabochon set in a half dome curved up.
2. A pendant (or earrings or tie tack) with a cabochon set on a half dome curved down.

Minimum points required: 70 per piece.

Master Level:

Required techniques: Ability to create a hinge and a clasp. One of the following skills is required for each piece: granulation, reticulation, repoussé, chasing, piercing, fancy trim.

Required pieces:

1. A flat-topped box designed to contain a ring (the box must have a hand constructed hinge and at least one cabochon on top); or, as an alternate, a pendant or pin with two separate mounted shaped stones connected by a handmade hinge.
2. A hand constructed necklace with a handmade clasp and two or more cabochons.

Minimum Points required: 90 per piece.

JEWELRY-CASTING DIVISION

1. All pieces must be modeled and cast by the applicants; any metal may be used.
2. The pieces may be poured or the centrifuge, steam, or vacuum method of casting may be used.
3. All pieces must have stones or natural crystals; faceted stones of less than 4.5mm may be commercial.
4. Stone mountings may be bezel, wire, or cavity.
5. Pieces should not show any bubbles or evidence of sprue removal.
6. No investment should be left on the piece nor should there be any porosity evident in finished pieces.
7. Pieces must demonstrate textured and/or smooth finishes.
8. Handmade or commercial chain is optional; commercial findings (ear wires, pin backs, cufflink backs, etc.) are allowed.

Point Allocation for Evaluation

Design	20
Soldering and construction	30
Finish of cast	
Sprue removal	30
No bubbles, investment, or porosity in finished piece	<u>20</u>
Perfection	100 points

SKIP Points Required for Advancement (See page 2 for general rules regarding submissions.)

Apprentice Level: Two pieces required, a pendant and a ring with cabochon or faceted stone. Required techniques: wax poured in water or built-up, or cuttle-bone method.

Minimum points required: 50 per piece.

Journeyman Level: Four pieces required:

1. A piece of jewelry using casting and construction.
2. A ring from built-up wax with a faceted stone.
3. A piece of jewelry from built-up wax with a natural crystal.
4. A piece of jewelry from constructed pieces of wax (such as wire, sheets, etc.).

Minimum points required: 70 per piece.

Master Level: Four pieces required:

1. A ring carved from wax of original design with either a cabochon or faceted stone.
2. A bracelet or necklace consisting of duplication of a wax mold.
3. A cast piece of jewelry from nature (woody things, flowers, insects, or any organic material).
4. A piece combining more than one metal, cast separately, by any casting technique.

Minimum points required: 90 per piece.

CARVING DIVISION

Originality and difficulty of subject should be a prime consideration. Quality of material, such as soft and easy to polish as opposed to hard and difficult to polish, should be considered when making a choice of material.

Anatomic accuracy is important in representational work, unless it is stylized or abstract. Under quality of material, careful consideration should be given to top-quality material free of fractures and free of pattern unless such pattern enhances the realism of the subject.

Point Allocation for Evaluation

Choice of subject	10
Difficulty of subject	25
Accuracy of anatomy*	20
Quality of material	20
Workmanship & polish	<u>25</u>
Perfection	100 points

*For free forms, overall balance.

SKIP Points Required for Advancement (See page 2 for general rules regarding submissions.)

Apprentice Level: One piece required.

Minimum points required: 50.

Journeyman Level: Two pieces required, one of which should be an animal, at least 3 inches in size.

Minimum points required: 70 per piece.

Master Level: Three pieces required, two of which should be animals and one of which should be 6 inches.

Minimum points required: 90 per piece.