

REVIEW

Great
finish!

Crafty Cat Craft Abrasives

The Crafty Cat abrasive line is one of the more exciting things I've seen in a while, in terms of my finishing efforts. I'm one of those people who run to the drugstore to buy multiple grits of salon-style nail files so I have something easy to hold onto while I'm sanding small pieces. But those days may be over! Crafty Cat's line of sanding and finishing tools is not only wide-ranging, it's convenient.

I started my testing with the ¼- and ½-in. (6.5 and 3 mm) craft sanding files and the plastic sanding needles. What I really liked about these, beyond their efficacy, was that there was a color system for grits, from coarse (100) to medium (320). I didn't have to wonder what grit I was working with; I just looked at the color. As I worked on copper and brass, the sanding files held their grit well, and a little curve at the top and bottom of each one ensured that I could follow curves easily and also get into tight spaces. The sanding needles were excellent on edges, curves, and holes,

especially around tube rivets.

The related crafter's files were the closest to a standard salon-style nail file in size and working quality, except that one end tapers quickly at a diagonal, leaving an end that's straight on one side and curved on the other to get in and around tight spaces. They have a greater range of grits from coarse (100–150) through medium (220–320) and into fine (600–1000). There are also micro-fine crafter's files (1000–12,000 grit) for a high shine on jewelry. However, I found nothing between 320 and 600 grit, which I thought was an oversight. I use 400 grit a lot, and I noticed the lack of that grit in my finishing efforts.

The professional sanding film and the micro finishing cloths were effective for both wet and dry sanding as a final finishing step before polishing. Both the film and the cloths were sturdy and resisted tearing, although the cloths were able to conform to more shapes than the film and didn't crinkle when I hand sanded. I did not test this,

but I imagine they would also be useful for giving wax-casting models a final polish without removing much wax.

The tool that really knocked my socks off was the aluminum frame with assorted-grit abrasive tapes. The frame was easy to load with the tapes, and it only took a tiny amount of pressure to sand virtually anywhere: on domes, around solder seams on bezels, and (my favorite) inside pierced designs. I had never come up with a satisfactory solution for sanding inside pierced lines until now. It amazed me how many uses I found for this handy tool!

The Crafty Cat line is an excellent solution for shaping and finishing for jewelry makers of all types. The tools themselves are durable and easy to use, and the available kits are comprehensive. The only thing that disappointed me was the omission of 400-grit sanding options, but hopefully that will come as the line expands.

—Reidin Dintzner

WHERE TO BUY

Crafty Cat Craft Abrasives

From \$4.99 for single items; from \$7.99 for kits, depending on size and assortment.

Alpha Precision Abrasives
(www.alphaabrasives.com)

