

how to make a suit of armour

How to make a suit of armour is a fascinating blend of artistry, craftsmanship, and practical design. The creation of a suit of armour has a storied history, rooted in the needs of protection and the artistry of metalwork. Whether you are a history enthusiast, a cosplayer, or a blacksmith looking to expand your skills, understanding the process of making a suit of armour can be both rewarding and challenging. In this article, we will explore the steps necessary to create a suit of armour, along with the tools, materials, and techniques involved.

Understanding the Types of Armour

Before diving into the making of a suit of armour, it's essential to understand the different types of armour that have existed through history. Different designs serve various purposes, and knowing these can help you decide what kind of suit to create.

1. Plate Armour

- Description: Consists of large, flat pieces of metal that cover the body.
- Era: Predominantly used from the 15th to the 17th century.
- Advantages: Provides excellent protection; relatively lightweight for the level of safety offered.

2. Chainmail

- Description: Made from interlinked metal rings.
- Era: Used from antiquity through the Middle Ages.
- Advantages: Flexible and provides good protection against slashing attacks.

3. Leather Armour

- Description: Crafted from hardened leather.
- Era: Common in various cultures, especially among lighter infantry.
- Advantages: Lightweight and more comfortable than metal, but offers less protection.

Gathering Tools and Materials

Creating a suit of armour requires a variety of tools and materials. Below is a comprehensive list to get you started.

Tools Needed

1. Anvil: For shaping metal.

2. Hammers: Various types, including ball peen and cross-peen hammers.
3. Tongs: For holding hot metal.
4. Forge: A place to heat the metal.
5. Quenching Tank: For cooling metal rapidly.
6. Belt Sander/Grinder: For finishing edges.
7. Drill: For making holes in the metal.
8. Measuring Tape and Calipers: For accurate measurements.
9. Safety Gear: Goggles, gloves, and face shields.

Materials Needed

- Metal Sheets: Steel or aluminum are commonly used.
- Rivets and Fasteners: For joining pieces.
- Leather Straps: For securing the armour to the body.
- Padding Material: Such as wool or cotton for comfort.
- Paint or Finish: To protect and beautify the metal.

Designing Your Armour

Once you have gathered your tools and materials, the next step is to design your suit of armour. This process involves several stages.

1. Research and Inspiration

- Look at historical examples or modern recreations.
- Gather images and descriptions from books and online resources.

2. Sketch Your Design

- Create detailed sketches of each piece, including the chest plate, shoulder guards, gauntlets, and greaves.
- Consider how the pieces will fit together and allow for movement.

3. Measurements

- Take careful measurements of your body or the intended wearer to ensure a proper fit.
- Key measurements include chest, waist, hips, arm length, and leg length.

Creating the Armour Pieces

Now comes the hands-on part of making a suit of armour. The process can be broken down into steps for each major piece.

1. Making the Chest Plate

- Cutting: Use metal shears to cut the metal sheet to the desired shape based on your design.
- Shaping: Heat the metal in the forge and then hammer it into shape over the anvil.
- Finishing: Smooth the edges with a belt sander and drill holes for rivets.

2. Crafting the Shoulder Guards

- Template: Create a cardboard template based on your shoulder measurements.
- Cut and Shape: Repeat the cutting and shaping process as with the chest plate.
- Attachment: Ensure they can attach securely to the chest plate.

3. Creating the Gauntlets

- Design Considerations: Ensure they allow for movement while protecting the hands.
- Construction: Each gauntlet will require several pieces; shape them accordingly and attach them with rivets.

4. Making the Greaves

- Design: Create a design that covers the shin and knee.
- Assembly: Use the same techniques of cutting, shaping, and finishing.

Assembling the Armour

Once all pieces are created, it's time to assemble them into a complete suit of armour.

1. Fitting the Pieces Together

- Trial Fit: Try on each piece to ensure comfort and mobility.
- Adjustments: Make any necessary adjustments to the fit.

2. Attaching Straps and Fasteners

- Use leather straps to connect different pieces, ensuring they are secure but allow for movement.
- Consider using buckles or laces for easy on-and-off capability.

3. Final Assembly

- Once all pieces are fitted, rivet or bolt them together as needed.
- Ensure that there are no sharp edges that could cause injury.

Finishing Touches

With the suit of armour assembled, it's time to give it a polished look.

1. Surface Finishing

- Sanding: Smooth out any rough edges.
- Polishing: Use a metal polish to give it a shine.

2. Protective Coating

- Apply a coat of lacquer or oil to protect the metal from rust and wear.

3. Customization

- Consider adding personal touches such as engravings, paint, or embellishments to reflect your style.

Maintenance and Care

To ensure your suit of armour remains in good condition, follow these maintenance tips.

- Regular Cleaning: Wipe down the metal after use to remove sweat and dirt.
- Rust Prevention: Store in a dry environment and apply oil regularly.
- Check Fasteners: Periodically check rivets and straps for wear and tear.

Conclusion

Making a suit of armour is a significant undertaking that requires patience, skill, and creativity. By understanding the types of armour, gathering the right tools and materials, designing your pieces thoughtfully, and executing the construction with care, you can create a stunning and functional suit of armour. Whether for historical reenactments, cosplay, or personal enjoyment, the process of crafting your own suit of armour is a rewarding experience that connects you to centuries of history and craftsmanship. Happy crafting!

Frequently Asked Questions

What materials are typically used to make a suit of armour?

Common materials for making a suit of armour include steel, aluminum, or leather. For historical

replicas, hardened steel is often used, while modern suits may incorporate lighter materials for improved mobility.

What are the basic steps involved in crafting a suit of armour?

The basic steps include designing the armour, selecting appropriate materials, cutting and shaping the metal or leather, assembling the pieces, and finally, polishing and finishing for protection and aesthetics.

Do I need special tools to create a suit of armour?

Yes, creating a suit of armour typically requires tools such as a forge for heating metal, hammers, anvils, cutting tools, and safety equipment like gloves and goggles to ensure safe handling of materials.

Can I make a suit of armour at home, or do I need professional help?

While it is possible to make a suit of armour at home with the right tools and skills, it is often beneficial to seek guidance from a professional blacksmith or armorer, especially for more complex designs.

How do I ensure my suit of armour fits properly?

To ensure a proper fit, take accurate body measurements and create a custom pattern. It may also involve multiple fittings during the assembly process to adjust and refine the fit according to individual body shape.

What are some modern uses for suits of armour?

Modern uses for suits of armour include historical reenactments, film and theater productions, cosplay, and as decorative art pieces. Some enthusiasts also create functional suits for historical martial arts and demonstrations.

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