

Silver [Ag]

Silver, in comparison to other native elements such as gold and copper, is relatively rare and is highly sought after as a mineral specimen. Most silver produced is a byproduct of refining lead, copper, and zinc ores. One of the largest silver mines is found in Mexico and is still exhuming thousands of pounds of silver each year. In regard to hardness, silver is harder than gold, but softer than copper, and alloys readily. These properties, along with its shiny appearance, make silver an attractive metal for jewelry and coinage. Silver slowly oxidizes when exposed to air so silver coins, jewelry, and tableware will darken with age and require polishing. Silver specimens have a gray outer coating due to oxidation and are not the silver color one might expect. Silver alloys are usually more resistant to oxidation.^{G4}



Silver ^{G4}

Silver pseudomorph after Dyscrasite [Ag]

Silver has been found in tombs dating back as far as 4000 B.C. Humans have found numerous ways to use silver due its malleability. By the 1960's, the use of silvers in industry would be unrivaled compared to other native elements. Silver's most important physical characteristic is its ability to conduct heat and electricity, allowing it to be used in complex electrical circuit boards. In this specimen, the mineral dyscrasite has been chemically altered into silver, although preserving the original orthorhombic crystal shape of the initial mineral. Alteration like this whereby the shape and structure are retained, but the chemical composition has changed is called pseudomorphic replacement. ^{G9}



Silver pseudomorph after Dyscrasite ^{G9}