

The title of the invention is:

Use of silver alloys as cadmium-free brazing solder

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Specification:

The invention relates to the use of silver alloys as cadmium-free brazing solder, in particular as vacuum brazing solder and as general purpose brazing solder for use with fluxes in air.

Brazing solders are taken to be metal alloys suitable for brazing with working temperatures in excess of 450°C. They often consist of silver with added copper, zinc and cadmium.

There are though to date practically no usable general purpose brazing solders for use with fluxes or under a vacuum or protective gas which have a working temperature below 600°C. However, the lower the working temperature, the less the mechanical properties of the workpieces to be joined are impaired during the brazing operation by heating to this temperature. Energy requirements are simultaneously reduced. It is therefore important to have available brazing solders which have the lowest possible working temperature.

Brazing solders with working temperatures between 600 and 700°C mainly consist of alloys of the metals silver, copper, tin, zinc and cadmium. It is, however, known that cadmium and its highly volatile oxides may have toxic effects if they are absorbed by the human body. Such absorption cannot always be completely eliminated when brazing is performed incorrectly with solders containing cadmium, such that there may be a risk of poisoning. This gives rise to the requirement to greatly reduce the cadmium

content of brazing solders or to keep brazing solder alloys free of cadmium.

In most previously used brazing solder alloys with a working temperature between 600 and 700°C, a moderate or high cadmium content is necessary to achieve these low temperatures. Previously known cadmium-free brazing solders have working temperatures which are 80 to 120°C higher than for solders containing cadmium, which is not tolerable for temperature sensitive materials. While brazing solder alloys of silver-copper-tin with high proportions of tin do have low working temperatures, they are, however, very brittle and cannot be made into shaped articles.

A cadmium-free brazing solder based on silver is known from DE-AS 24 17 060, which contains 40 to 50 wt.% silver, 15 to 38 wt.% copper, 22 to 32 wt.% zinc, 1 to 6 wt.% tin and 0.5 to 3 wt.% indium. The working temperatures of these brazing solders are between 710 and 630°C, which is, however, still too high for various applications.

DE-OS 33 15 498 describes stratified contact pieces for low current contacts in which the solder layer consists of a silver-copper-gallium alloy. The alloy contains 60 to 75 wt.% silver, 18 to 35 wt.% copper and 5 to 8 wt.% gallium, wherein the latter component may also be replaced with 4 to 7 wt.% gallium plus 1 to 4 wt.% indium, or with 1 to 4 wt.% gallium and 3 to 7 wt.% tin. Melting points for these solders are not stated. They are, however, above 650°C.

Solders with 50 to 65 wt.% silver, 5 to 41 wt.% copper, 3 to 12 wt.% gallium and 6 to 18 wt.% indium are known from SU PS 450 673 (Derwent Abstract 75-65066W7/39). Their melting point is from 640 to 680°C.

DE-OS 27 45 409 describes brazing solder alloys with 50 to 70 wt.% silver, 15 to 30 wt.% copper, 8 to 20 wt.% zinc and 0.1 to 8 wt.% gallium and/or indium. Their melting point is between 650 and 680°C.

The melting points of these alloys may be still further reduced by raising the gallium content. However, silver-copper alloys with more than 8 wt.% gallium are difficult to work and may no longer be made into semi-finished articles.

The object of the present invention was therefore to develop cadmium-free brazing solder alloys based on silver which have the lowest possible working temperature below 630°C, may be readily formed and may be used for general purpose applications.

This object is achieved according to the invention by the use of silver alloys with 45 to 80 wt.% silver, 5 to 25 wt.% copper, 10 to 25 wt.% gallium and 0.1 to 5 wt.% indium and/or tin.

Preferably, alloys made from 62 to 72 wt.% silver, 8 to 18 wt.% copper, 12 to 24 wt.% gallium and 1 to 4 wt.% indium and/or tin are used. Alloys made from 65 to 70 wt.% silver, 10 to 15 wt.% copper, 15 to 22 wt.% gallium and 2 to 4 wt.% indium and/or tin have proved particularly successful.

Surprisingly, these alloys have working temperatures between 600 and 530°C. They exhibit very good wetting on various substrates, such as copper, nickel, brass, iron-nickel alloys or steel both under protective gas and after use of fluxes in air. These solders may also be used as vacuum brazing solders and are suitable for brazing metallised ceramics.

The alloys are ductile and may be surprisingly readily shaped, so that the most varied shaped solder articles may be produced from them.

It has surprisingly been found that the processability of silver-copper-gallium alloys with gallium contents of over 10 wt.% may be substantially improved if indium and/or tin is added to the alloy in quantities of 0.1 to 5 wt.%. With indium/tin contents above 5 wt.%, processing properties deteriorate distinctly.

The following table contains, by way of example, the composition and working temperatures of several solder alloys according to the invention.

Table:

Solder number	Alloy composition in wt. %					Working temperature (°C)
	Ag	Cu	Ga	In	Sn	
1	68.6	9.8	19.6	2	-	580
2	67.2	9.6	19.2	4	-	560
3	68.6	9.8	19.6	-	2	550
4	67.2	9.6	19.2	-	4	530
5	70	10	16	3	1	600
6	65	16	16	1	2	580

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Patent claims:

1. Use of silver alloys with 45 to 80 wt.% silver, 5 to 25 wt.% copper, 10 to 25 wt.% gallium and 0.1 to 5 wt.% indium and/or tin as cadmium-free brazing solder.
2. Use of silver alloys according to claim 1, characterised in that they consist of 62 to 72 wt.% silver, 8 to 18 wt.% copper, 12 to 24 wt.% gallium and 1 to 4 wt.% indium and/or tin.
3. Use of a silver alloy according to claim 1 or 2, characterised in that it consists of 65 to 70 wt.% silver, 10 to 15 wt.% copper, 15 to 22 wt.% gallium and 2 to 4 wt.% indium and/or tin.



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