What is claimed is:

1. A method comprising:

a) providing a solution comprising one or more sources of silver ions, one or more imides or imide derivatives and one or more alkali metal nitrates, the solution is cyanide-free;

b) contacting a substrate comprising nickel with the solution;

c) electroplating a silver strike layer onto the nickel or nickel alloy; and

d) electroplating a second silver layer onto the silver strike layer.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the silver strike layer is 0.01μm to 0.2μm thick.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the second silver layer is 1μm to 50μm thick.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the silver strike layer is electroplated at a current density of 0.1 A/dm^2 to 2 A/dm^2.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the alkali metal nitrates are potassium nitrate and sodium nitrate.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the imides are chosen from succinimide, 2,2-dimethyl succinimide, 2-methyl 2-ethyl succinimide, 2-methyl succinimde, 2-ethyl succinimde, 1,1,2,2-tetramethyl succinimide, 1,1,2-trimethyl succinimide, 2-butyl succinimide, maleimide, 1-methyl-2-ethyl maleimide, 2-butyl maleimide, 1-methyl-2-ethyl maleimide, pthalimide and pthalimide derivatives.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the imide derivatives are chosen from hydantoin, 1-methylhydantoin, 1,3-dimethylhydantoin, 5,5-dimethylhydantoin, 1-methanol-5,5-dimethylhydantoin and 5,5-diphenylhydantoin.

CLAIMS:

1. A method comprising:

a) providing a solution comprising one or more sources of silver ions, one or more imides or imide derivatives and one or more alkali metal nitrates, the solution is cyanide-free;

b) contacting a substrate comprising nickel with the solution;

c) electroplating a silver strike layer having a thickness of 0.01µm to 0.2µm onto the nickel or nickel alloy; and

d) electroplating a second silver layer of 1µm to 50µm thick onto the silver strike layer.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the silver strike layer is electroplated at a current density of 0.1 A/dm^2 to 2 A/dm^2.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the alkali metal nitrates are potassium nitrate and sodium nitrate.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the imides are chosen from succinimide, 2,2-dimethyl succinimide, 2-methyl 2-ethyl succinimide, 2-methyl succinimde, 2-ethyl succinimde, 1,1,2,2-tetramethyl succinimide, 1,1,2-trimethyl succinimide, 2-butyl succinimide, maleimide, 1-methyl-2-ethyl maleimide, 2-butyl maleimide, 1-methyl-2-ethyl maleimide, pthalimide and pthalimide derivatives.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the imide derivatives are chosen from hydantoin, 1-methylhydantoin, 1,3-dimethylhydantoin, 5,5-dimethylhydantoin, 1-methanol-5,5-dimethylhydantoin and 5,5-diphenylhydantoin.