



The world of hair wearing is a bit baffling at first as there is a lot of terminology that most people seem to use incorrectly, so it's really worth investing a bit of time to understand what you're purchasing. This guide will give you a good basic understanding of wearable hair; types of hair used and its properties, materials hair is attached to and the techniques for attaching the hair. All of these elements determine what will work best for you.

All hair has its purposes and the best hair is not always the most expensive!

I strongly recommend viewing and trying options to start with before attempting to buy anything online. You can use the information in this guide to ask the right questions and fasttrack yourself to becoming an expert.

## Understanding hair

### Human/real Hair

If you want your hair to appear flawless you still can't compete with real hair. It's lighter in weight, undetectable in natural lights and has the right bounce. If you wash your hair and let it dry naturally (as long as you're using the right kind of hair) it mimics your own hair. However, not all real hair is equal. Good quality, real hair will last a long time and poor quality can look like a birds nest after one wash! It's important to know what quality of hair you're using and where it comes from so you can achieve the desired look. You can't always trust what you're told so try and get recommendations.

### Benefits and issues of human hair

Real hair is always best for long hair and blonde shades. It tends to have more movement and gives the most natural appearance. You can use hair products and heat to style your hair, however it does not have the same natural moisture as growing hair so try to keep heat to a minimum (the same is true for your natural hair!). Human hair requires more effort than synthetic hair as it needs to be styled and I always recommend using real hair in extensions for any semi-permanent hair addition as it's extremely porous (absorbs a lot of water) and takes a very long time to dry. Additionally, in time (which differs from piece to piece) the hair will oxidise (get lighter), even those made from virgin hair, although low lights can be used to correct this. The type of hair and length will determine the price tag, however investment at the beginning should save money later on.



### The true meaning of remy, virgin and processed hair

Remy hair is hair from a single donor (ponytail cut off) with the roots and ends in the same place and the cuticle running in the same direction. It may already be coloured or permed (unlike virgin hair) but the cuticle remains intact. It's often mistakenly thought of as Indian or Chinese hair, but most hair advertised as remy hair is not and is instead processed hair from mixed donors placed in a pile, which means the cuticle is in different directions and tangles. To combat this the hair is then treated in an acid bath and has a silicon coating added to return it to hair that looks and feels good. However, the silicon eventually washes off and the hair becomes very unruly. True remy hair is stronger with more body and will last a lot longer so with human hair, you get what you pay for!

Virgin hair is hair that has not been chemically treated/dyed and is the most luxurious and expensive hair, which will last the longest.



### Synthetic hair

Synthetic hair looks like human hair but is made from manufactured fibres. Quality synthetic wigs are made from Kanekalon Fiber and most ladies struggle to tell the difference with real hair. The race continues to create the most realistic fibre hair and technology has already improved dramatically.

### The benefits and issues of synthetic hair

Synthetic wigs are fab as they are very easy to maintain making them particularly useful for travel, exercise and periods of sickness as they are quick to wash and dry. For those who aren't great at styling hair they offer salon perfect hair everyday! This hair comes in an insane array of colours and has the added benefit of retaining its fabulous colour unlike real hair that can fade or sunbleach. It's often the hair of choice for gray shades as it can be very hard to find real hair without heavily processing it. Great for 'above the collar' length hair, it looks good for many months. I do meet ladies that prefer synthetic hair as they do not like the idea of wearing hair from a donor, not to mention it tends to be a lot cheaper than real hair, but this of course depends on where you're buying it! Longer styles frizz a lot quicker (friction frizz) due to your hair rubbing on your body and clothes and needs to be replaced every few months so it's often not economical to have long synthetic wigs that are worn continuously.

Synthetic hair reacts worse to heat than an ice cube, so absolutely no hairdryers or straighteners and keep away from heaters and blasts of heat when you open the oven door. They also look less authentic in blonde colours as they can appear shiny and naturally blond hair does not absorb as much light as dark hair so does not shine as much. You can tone down the shininess in synthetic hair by using a spray-in dry conditioner.

Based on everyday wear, the expected lifespan (before frizzing) for a short wig is 4 – 9 months, mid length (bob) is around 5 months and long around 3 months. It is not recommended to sleep in a wig as it will cut the life span in half. A word of warning: synthetic hair is flammable so I never recommend synthetic extensions or attaching units that cannot quickly be removed.

### Heat resistant synthetic hair

Heat resistant synthetic hair is relatively new technology and it's blooming amazing! Its main issues are that it wears out quicker and can tangle more and it also can be a lot more expensive - I've seen heat resistant syn wigs priced much higher than real hair.

You can't apply over 160 degrees heat using styling tools or the hair will melt!



## Bases & foundations

### Ready to wear and custom made

Bases/caps are the foundations on to which the hair is attached. The range of options now available is phenomenal, suiting all lifestyles and budgets. I love all of them and they all have their place in my wig wardrobe.

There's an insane number of ready-to-wear wigs in hundreds of base material combinations as well as hair choices. You can also get petite and large sizes although there is much less choice however, I will often be found adapting the perfect wig for clients! You really need to see them and try them before ordering from the internet as the pictures of the styles and colours are inaccurate. Also it's really hard to tell what styles suit you unless you can put it on.

Sometimes it's hard to find exactly what you want readily available, for instance; If you only want specific areas covering, or have more difficult hair to match, or can't find the right length. In these cases it's best to get a piece custom made. It takes around six weeks, but it's well worth the time to get something that's absolutely perfect!



### Lace

A hairpiece can be made of full lace or part lace depending on what you want to achieve. Lace is the most breathable and comfortable base material, however it is also very delicate so needs to be looked after carefully. French lace is thicker and more durable than Swiss lace. Swiss lace is finer and less detectable. It's important to know how and when you'll be wearing your hair so the right material can be used. Both come in a variety of colours to match the wearer's skin tone so it's pretty difficult to spot anyway. Most wigs that come with a lace front are actually welded lace (this is stiffer than a French or Swiss lace type).

Welded lace can come in many shades but is generally transparent to help blend with all sorts of different skin tones. A lace front is lace placed around where your forehead is enabling you to wear the hair away from your face and allowing for lots of different options when it comes to styling.



### Monofilament (monotop)

Monofilament is hair which is individually knotted into a fine mesh. This material is much more durable than lace. The monofilament section is usually at the top of the wig around the parting area and you are able to see your own scalp through it so it looks very natural. Monofilament hair takes many hours of skilled labour to hand knot as opposed to machine wefting and works best when you can see the scalp underneath as it's transparent.



### Machine wefted

A machine wefted wig (standard cap) is the most affordable. The hair is wefted at the back and sides, which keeps the wig cool and the hair at the crown is often lightly teased or crimped so you can not see down through the cap. This permtease is great if you want volume but can look less realistic. These wigs also provide less flexibility with styling

Many monofilament wigs have machine wefted sides. The wefting at the sides can be open or close wefted. Closed wefting means a soft material has been placed behind the wefting to add more comfort against your scalp. Open wefting is cooler to wear.

### PU & Silicone

PU stands for Polyurethane and is sometimes incorrectly referred to as silicone (which is thicker). It's a flexible, strong, transparent material. It's used to create wig caps (with hair injected in) or is placed around the perimeter of wig caps to provide areas to attach adhesive or clips. On its own it's referred to as PU but when placed around another material like a monotop it's referred to as NPU.

Wigs made entirely of silicon are known as suction cap wigs. These wigs do not come off until you peel them off so there's no need for any attachment methods. These foundations grip to skin so you must be hair free to wear them. Unfortunately they are not breathable so they can get very hot to wear.

You may also come across "antislip" materials in your wig foundation. These are thin strips of silicon added to prevent units slipping.

## Silk Tops

Silk tops are very clever indeed! They give the most natural looking parting currently achievable by hiding the hair knots in between 2 layers of the silk material. The result is a flawless parting that no one, not even if inspecting, would be able to tell that it's not authentic. Usually you have to compromise with a slightly thicker hair density (amount of hair used on the wig) to cover where the silk intergrates into another (thinner) base material, such as a lace front.



### Attaching hair to bases

#### Hand tied

Individual hairs are hand tied (knotted) to the base material. This method creates more movement and greater flexibility when styling. It's a highly skilled process and is extremely laborious, therefore the price tag jumps up a fair bit. Most people tend to prefer the softer feel of hand tied hair to machine wefted options.

### Single knotted, double knotted, bleached knots, under knotting

Hand tied wigs use different knotting techniques for different durability or appearance. It's incredibly time consuming and each worker's skill will impact greatly on the appearance of the finished product.

Single knotting means one tiny knot, which looks better. Double knotting means two or three hairs knotted at once, which provides a more durable piece but one that is less aesthetically pleasing. Personally I prefer to use a combination of both to achieve the best of all worlds.

Bleaching the knots is the process of dyeing the knots lighter to match the colour of the lace. If you are studying a hairpiece closely you can see the knots (you'd need to be really looking for them), but lightening them creates more of an illusion of your hair growing from your scalp. It's particularly useful for the hairlines on light coloured lace bases with darker hair. You will often find under knotting around the edge of a hair piece to hide the edges of a thicker base cap.



#### Silicone injected

Hair is individually injected into a silicon base, which gives a very real impression of hair growing from the scalp. This type of system is often used in hair replacement systems (used for extended wear) as the silicon moulds to your bald scalp. It can be very hot and hair tends to shed much easier than hair individually handtied.

