



A girl's guide to extensions

Ever thought that extensions are a glamorous luxury only the stars can afford? Think again as we reveal the lowdown on length for aspiring Rapunzels

HOW DO YOU MATCH MY COLOUR?

TAKING A SWATCH

Often a swatch of your own hair will be sent away and shades of extensions mixed together to produce the closest match. Generally, there are more shades of synthetic hair available than real human hair. You can even add colour to your hair that contrasts with your natural hair colour, just like Victoria Beckham and the ever-popular Kate Beckinsale.



Have you ever been envious of those gorgeous celebs that seem to change their hair length as often as their Frost/French undies? We're talking Victoria Beckham, Emma Bunton and Britney Spears here, one day they're wearing a Chanel bob, the next bum-skimming lengths filled with tumbling

curls? OK, so you don't have a spare bag of cash and celebrity stylist on hand 24 hours a day, but there is a middle ground when it comes to getting natural looking extensions. With the right advice, you can 'wear it long' on the high street in just a few hours. Here's everything you need to know to make that choice...

Hair type, technique & cost

We've gathered together the most commonly-asked questions to bring you the ultimate guide, helping you to make your extension choices confidently

WHAT HAIR TYPE IS BEST?

Extensions generally suit any hair type as long as your hair is healthy. The minimum length varies from manufacturer to manufacturer, usually between 4cm to 4in so check with your salon first. Extensions are not just about length either, they're perfect for adding volume, length, highlights and lowlights to all lengths of hair (see our makeovers on page 33 for inspiration).

HOW ARE THEY ATTACHED?

There are various application methods, some involve glues, solvents, heat-sealed bonds, resins and various other techniques. If you're concerned about application make sure you do your homework and talk to the salons offering the extensions treatment.



Each extension is added by a trained technician

HOW LONG DO THEY TAKE TO PUT IN?

This depends on how much of the head you're having covered. If you only want to thicken the hair, this can take from 1-2 hours, whereas a full head can take from 5-6 hours.

ARE THEY EXPENSIVE TO HAVE APPLIED?

In comparison to a cut and blowdry, they can seem expensive, but then you have to weigh up the man hours and complete transformation you're getting. Costs vary from anything like £50 up to over £2,000! Simple flashes of fashion colours can cost you just £4.

WILL THEY BE EASY TO REMOVE?

IT'S A SIMPLE PROCEDURE!

You can remove some synthetic extensions by yourself, simply break the seal and pull the extensions away from the head. But we suggest that whether you choose synthetic extensions or human hair extensions you should always return to the salon to have them removed professionally. The technician can then check over your hair and give you a fresh new cut if need be. It'll be worth it in the end.



Have fun with quick-to-fit flashes of bright colour



Make sure you choose the appropriate tools

Make sure you have a good, long consultation with a trusted salon before taking the plunge

Human hair vs synthetic hair

PROs...

Synthetic hair

- Lighter than human hair
- Can be braided into the hair
- Hundreds of colour options
- Often cheaper (1/4 of a head can cost between approximately £250-£400)



CONs...

Synthetic hair

- Metal straighteners or curling tongs are a definite no-no!
- Individual connections can sometimes be seen if not properly attached
- They're not always as versatile as real hair

PROs...

Human hair

- It looks more realistic
- They can be easier to apply
- Can be restyled just like normal hair



CONs...

Human hair

- The glue can damage the hair
- Aftercare can be time-consuming
- Often more expensive (1/4 of a head can cost between about £750-£950)



Boost your hair for a fabulous party look



Imagine the styles you could create with your hair



Extensions generally suit any type of hair as long as the hair is healthy and long enough to take the bond and weight



Super shiny extensions can add a fabulous glossy feel



Big it up with a look that's ideal for the Hollywood hills

Keeping them in top condition

Follow just a few simple rules to keep them totally tossable all day, every day

How to look after them

Get into a good clean routine

WASHING

- Leave your extensions for about two days before washing to allow them to settle
- We recommend returning to the salon for your first wash to make sure there are no loose connections
- Use extension specific products when and where you can



Look after your extensions as you would your own hair

DRYING

- Pat your hair dry with a towel then separate with your fingers while the hair is damp
- Move your hairdryer quickly all over the head making sure the nozzle is never too close to the hair at any time
- Remove any tangles when the hair is wet, it'll be much easier



Release any unwanted tangles when the hair is wet

BRUSHING

- Brush your hair daily for top-to-bottom condition
- Use a soft, bristle brush
- Use downward strokes all over the hair, starting at the tips and working towards the roots
- Make sure you spend time brushing the roots, don't leave them to tangle
- Don't be alarmed if you brush out a synthetic extension, this is normal



Always brush downwards towards the tips of your hair



Lifespan & length

Staying practical could bag you your hair dreams

WILL THEY HURT TO PUT IN?

No, they shouldn't. Tell your technician, they may be creating the connections with too much tension.

HOW LONG CAN I GO?

This is totally up to you. The final cut should always enhance the look of the extensions, so be sure to let your stylist know what you're after.

ARE THEY DIFFICULT TO LOOK AFTER?

Most extensions can be treated like normal hair.

although there are products which are specially formulated to deal with both human hair and synthetic hair. Silicone-based products can break the extensions bonds so it's always safest to check with your stylist first.

HOW LONG WILL THEY LAST?

The average lifespan of a well-cared-for head of extensions is about three months. For the health of your natural hair it's advisable to return to your salon for a quick once-over to make sure that any loose connections are repaired.



Extensions are the most effective and fastest method to gain, thick long hair



Add a darker shade to your underneath layers for depth

YouHair on soap star extensions

First Letitia's extensions were heavy and too long now she's layered them



Danni's hair often looks great, but the extra length gives her a glam edge



Holly burst onto the pop scene with straight length now she has glam curls



Where to buy

Contact the contributors below for details of your nearest stockist or for more information on extensions:

- American Dream 0208 743 0206 www.american.com
- Cinderella Hair 0208 9653 777 kinggills.com
- Dome Extensions 01372 745 577 domeextensions.com
- Lucinda Elbery Hair Solutions 020 8741 8224 lucindaelbery.com
- Great Lengths 0870 241 4871 greatlengths.net
- Raveon International 01295 770999 raveoninternational.com
- Mark Glenn 0207 495 6069 markglenn.com
- ProStyle 01420 511 136 prostyle.com

YouHair on superstar extensions

Rock videos mean big hair for Britney and extensions fit the bill perfectly!



Angelina wears her extensions with so much elegance they're 'invisible'



The British queen of extensions, Mrs B could be in line for a change

