

FINDING THE RIGHT STYLIST



We change salons for many different reasons including relocation, changes in our bodies/health, or we want a different hairstyle. Unfortunately, some of us avoid going to a stylist because we suffer from our own version of PTSD due to a one or more experiences we'd like to forget about. While some of us are traumatized and resort to mainly doing our hair ourselves, there are times when we want to be pampered or could benefit from the service of a trained professional. If you are a hair model, you likely have hair that is in supreme condition and aren't willing to risk going to a professional who does not know what is best for your hair. But you should not have to be a model to feel like or be treated as one. This is an easy blueprint to help you during your search to find a stylist that's right for you!

EXPERIENCE/SPECIALTY

The experience level and specialty of a hairstylist is essential when trying to find an ideal stylist. There are different degrees of experience and different hair styles to consider. It is important that you find a stylist who knows how to properly style your type of hair the way you want. The main things to think about include natural hair, extensions, processes, and various treatments.

NATURAL HAIR

Since there are such varying types of natural hair, it is important that your stylist is comfortable with creating styles on different degrees of curl and has the appropriate experience to be able to properly take care of your hair. Due to different hair types, the same hairstyle may look different on different people based on differences in texture,

NATURAL HAIR (CONT.)

length, and porosity. For example, a person with fine hair may want the same style as someone with thicker hair. While this may be possible, the outcome could be very different. Because of this, your stylist should be able to set appropriate expectations on how the desired hairstyle will look with your specific hair type. Your stylist should also be able to inform you of the most compatible styles for your hair type and personal needs.



EXTENSIONS

Some hairstylists are experts at braiding, while others are experts at extensions. Since each stylist has different areas of expertise, it is important to make sure that the stylist you select is an expert in your chosen style.

When it comes to extensions the installation technique is very important and can impact the way the style looks, as well as the impact the style has on your natural hair. If your hair stylist is going to give you extensions, they should have a proper understanding of the variety of hair available for purchase. Not all hair is the same, so make sure you are getting the right hair for the style you desire.

There are two major red flags when it comes to hair extensions. They are: 1) using glue during application, and, 2) braiding too tightly. Both could damage your hair and/or scalp and should be avoided at all costs. To make sure this is not happening, ask your stylist about their installation techniques and never be afraid to tell them if they are braiding too tightly. While a conscientious stylist will ask if there is too much tension, you should still be prepared to advocate for yourself in case those questions do not arise. Here are some questions to ask your prospective stylist before the appointment:

- *What hair brand and length do you recommend?*
- *Do I have to buy my own hair before showing up to the appointment?*
- *What condition does my hair need to be in before coming?*
- *Do you have braid removal service?*



PROCESSES



Most styles require additional hair manipulation to get a desired look. The use of hooded and blow dryers, thermal irons and steam/misters are all processes, but the heat of the blow dryers and thermal irons can be particularly damaging to the hair if temperatures are too high. Ask your stylist to use the lowest setting that is effective for your hair. Heat damage can result in hair that readily breaks. If you have curly hair, it may not revert to its normal curl pattern.

TREATMENTS

One of the fun things about hair is flexibility in styling. However, some salon treatments can alter both the structure of the hair, as well as its integrity. Therefore, your stylist should be knowledgeable about the different treatments and how they can impact your hair. The stylist should also be experienced with that specific treatment to ensure that you are receiving the best care possible for your hair. Here are a few things to consider:

➤ Color

→ When changing the color of your hair, you and your stylist should evaluate your hair to see if it is in the right condition to yield the desired results.

➤ Relaxers

→ When deciding whether a relaxer is the best option, answer these questions for yourself:

- *What is the ultimate goal for straight hair?*
- *Do you have any past experience with straight hair? If so, what was the outcome of that experience? **You will need to disclose this information to your stylist.*

QUESTIONS

When finding the best hairstylist for you, make sure you are asking the right questions about their experience and specialty. Here are some questions to ask when looking for a hair stylist:

- *Do you have experience with styling (enter hair type) hair?*
- *What is your specialty?*
- *What are your signature styles?*
- *How long have you been a stylist?*



CUSTOMER SERVICE

Customer service is a pivotal part of your experience; therefore, your hairstylist should have these three things for proper customer service: transparency, time conscientiousness, and after care policies.



TRANSPARENCY

For many experienced stylists, artistic creation is key to setting them apart from others in the field. Sometimes stylists discover ways to enhance hair styles by mixing different products or adding new ingredients. Now it is understandable that these stylists would want to keep the unique aspects of their trade a secret so their customers continue to come back to them specifically, but you should always know what is being put in your hair. The labels on hair products are designed to keep people safe and informed. If your stylist has unlabeled bottles of their own concoctions and are refusing to tell you what ingredients they are putting in your hair, you may want to rethink going to them as your hair stylist.

It is always important, and appropriate, to ask your stylist questions about their process or what they are putting in your hair. Refusal to give you that information is a red flag. You are well within your rights to ask your stylist what products they are using, and why they are using them. The primary goal should be to keep your hair as healthy as possible, so it is important to be informed and to make sure all products have been deemed safe.

Here are a few appropriate questions to ask your stylist about their transparency:

- *What type of products do you use?*
- *Do you have a problem sharing the products you use and why you use them?*

TIME CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

Everybody's time is important, and that includes yours! It is not fair for you to spend hours waiting on your stylist to start your hair due to poor scheduling or simply a complete disregard for your time. Your stylist should be knowledgeable on how long it takes them to do

different styles to prevent overlapping of appointments. While everybody makes mistakes or runs late occasionally, it is important to pay attention to trends and recognize if lateness is a regular occurrence from your stylist. If so, it may be time to find a new stylist. To ensure that your time is being respected and taken into consideration you can ask your stylist the following questions:

- *How long is the typical wait time for service?*
- *Is there a late fee for unexpected delays in arrival?*
- *What is the procedure if I'm running late?*
- *Does the service rate change with hair length or density?*

AFTER CARE

In the past many people believed they needed to visit a hair professional to achieve and maintain their best hair. That mentality is thankfully now dated, and you should be able to take care of your hair on your own between visits. The best stylists will make sure that you look the best once you leave



AND that you are able to maintain that amazing look once you leave their chair. Some stylists even receive a few bonus points for having a knowledgeable assistant that can have a quick 5-minute phone consultation with you to help you with an unanticipated hair crisis. I once had a situation where I did not have access to my typical shampoo. I really appreciated that I was able to call my stylist so she could help provide me with the best alternative options. To see if your stylist aids with after care, try asking:

- *Do you provide information about at-home care and make recommendations for products I should use at home?*

EDUCATION/REPUTATION

Just like any other profession, it is important that your stylist is educated and has a good reputation. The three essential components are credentials, continuing education, and need compatibility.

CREDENTIALS

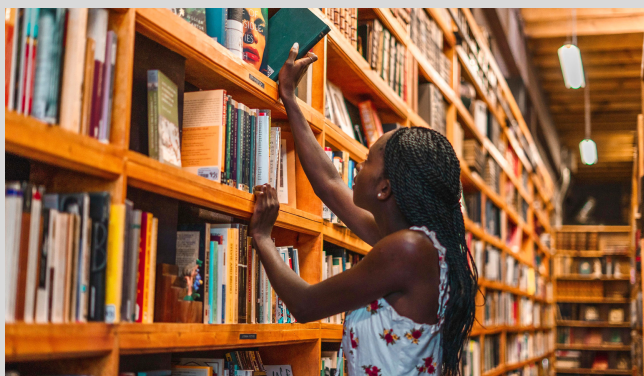
When looking for your perfect stylist, check and see if they are a licensed practitioner. Having a license is a great indication of them having the proper education and knowledge base to properly take care of your hair. While this is not the only indication that they have the proper credentials to take care of your hair, it is a good place to start. You should also research whether they are a recognized leader in the industry (bonus points if they are an educator). This will help you to get a better understanding of their reputation. Remember it is always okay to simply ask:

- *Are you a licensed stylist?*
- *How long have you been working at this salon/ shop?*
- *How many salons have you worked in?*



CONTINUING EDUCATION

Education is so much deeper than what your stylist learned in school. The hair industry is always evolving and changing, and it is important that your stylist continues to grow with the industry. While staying up to date on the newest trends is great, your stylist should have a proper understanding of the effects



that trends could potentially have on your hair. Every week more and more products are introduced, and your stylist should be aware of the functionality in new products they are using in your hair. When it comes to your stylists' knowledge of different products, it should be significantly advanced from the regular marketing material. Your stylist should be demanding to have access to the data that backs up the claims that are associated with the products they use. They should also have no issue sharing what information they have learned with you.

Sadly, the amount of research available for black hair is severely lacking. However, there is enough information about our hair and the best products to use for your stylist to make informed decisions about the products they choose to use in their practice. If you want to ask your stylist about their knowledge base on the newest trends and products, try asking them:

- *How do you stay abreast of the latest research on products and/or techniques?*
- *I love learning about what's new in hair care. Do you mind sharing what you learned about _____?*

NEED COMPATIBILITY

Need compatibility ensures that your stylist is knowledgeable about your hair, as well as the different ways to help that go beyond hair services. If you are suffering from a specific condition or are exhibiting hair related problems, make sure your professional has experience with that particular issue, as well as references for other complimentary professionals to provide you with a holistic approach to address your needs. For example, if you are showing signs of hair loss, it is important that your condition is properly diagnosed by a board-certified dermatologist. This will make sure that your stylist knows what they are dealing with and can collaboratively work with the dermatologist for the best possible outcomes. To check and see if your stylist matches your needs consider asking:

- *Do you have any references for someone you have helped with the problems I am exhibiting?*
- *Do you collaborate with other professionals?*

FACILITIES/SANITATION PRACTICES



Sanitation and cleanliness are essential to have a good experience with a hair stylist and their facilities. Some of the things you should be on the lookout for include cleanliness, privacy, and a convenient and safe location.

CLEANLINESS

Since the era of COVID, everyone's senses about sanitation have been heightened. However, sanitation should have always been a priority for your hair stylist. You should make sure that they were clean before COVID to make sure that they will remain clean after the immediate threat has passed. You should also make sure that your stylist is following CDC guidelines to keep you, their other clients, and themselves safe at all times. To make sure their cleanliness habits are sufficient, try asking, *"What are your sanitation measures and do you adhere to official industry standards?"* Conscientious professionals should have safety measures publicly posted or readily available for you to read.

PRIVACY

There should be substantial privacy measures in place if that is something that you would like established between you and your stylist. Sometimes you may have issues going on with your hair that you would like to remain private and this request should be honored. If you would like a more private setting for your appointment, a salon suite may be a good option for you. If you would like to address privacy concerns before you meet with a stylist, you may want to consider asking them:

- *Do you have a private room where services can be performed?*
- *How many stylists will be working in the salon at the same time?*
- *Do you service more than one client at a time?*



CONVENIENT AND SAFE LOCATION

Since we are already juggling so much in life, a trip to the salon should come with a minimal amount of stress. Your stylist should be in a location that is convenient for you. Location needs vary from person to person, so make sure the location works for you and your needs. You may want to find a location with a parking lot near the facility in case an appointment lasts into the evening. To ensure your safety, check if you will be able to park on, or near, the premises. Here are some good questions to ask your stylist to make sure you have a safe and convenient experience:

- *Does your establishment have a designated parking lot in a well-lit area?*
- *Do I have to pay for parking?*
- *Are you in a high traffic area where it will take me additional time to find parking; and if so, how much time should I allot to park?*

FINAL WORDS

Lastly, don't give up! Thankfully, there are a substantial number of stylists in many areas with a wide variety of expertise, knowledge, and specialties. It may take a few tries, but you can find one that works best for you and your hair. While it may seem overwhelming to find your own stylist in a sea of professionals, paying attention to the tresses of friends, colleagues, and even strangers, is a great beginning. Oftentimes, you can gather preliminary information from these sources to narrow down your initial choices. Don't be afraid to take recommendations but remember to ask your own questions. As stated above, your hair needs are personal to you and you should base finding a stylist on what works best for your specific hair. Armed with your research and the information in this guide, you will be well on your way to finding your perfect match.

