

Cut hair using basic barbering techniques

Learning outcomes

- Maintain effective and safe methods of working when cutting hair.
- Cut hair to achieve a variety of looks.

Introduction

Client consultation is an important opportunity to explore the ideas and needs of the client. Ask open questions to better understand and confirm your client's desired look.

Assess the potential of the hair before you start and what tools you will need to complete the job. When making a recommendation, take into account the client's head and face shape. Look out for any signs of male pattern baldness and make sure any piercings are taken into consideration.

Tools required for this treatment



Combs



Scissors



Razors



Clippers



Products



Clippers attachment

Cutting men's hair



This guide will provide information on the following:

Hair characteristics

- Elasticity
- Porosity
- Hair condition
- Density
- Texture
- Hair growth patterns

Hair classification

- Straight, wavy and curly hair
- Head and face shape
- Hairline
- Male pattern baldness
- Adverse skin conditions

Cutting techniques

- Club cutting
- Scissor over comb
- Clipper over comb
- Freehand
- Thinning
- Fading

The guide will also provide an overview of how to achieve the following looks

- Trimming facial hair and eyebrows
- Uniform layer look
- Graduated layer look
- Cutting graduations
- Graduation with clippers and fading techniques
- Cutting the neckline, e.g. natural, square, round, full neckline.



Hair characteristics

Elasticity

Elasticity can affect the cutting technique, you should avoid pulling with too much tension during the cutting process. Ensure the hair has even moisture balance when you cut it - either all wet or all dry - to ensure the effects of poor elasticity are not worsened.

Porosity

Hair that is damaged is likely to be porous - this can affect the cutting technique and client comfort. Porous hair is more likely to become tangled. Spray with a leave-in conditioner and use a wider-toothed comb to aid the combing process. Take care when using clipper grades, as they may get caught in the dry porous hair. Avoid using a razor.

Hair condition

Poor hair condition can make hairstyling difficult, for example, fine or unmanageable hair that is just not responsive to styling without force. Look out for any product build-up and damaged, dry or oily hair that may require a shampoo treatment before proceeding with the service.

Density

Density is the amount of hair per square cm on your client's head. For example, if you can see your client's scalp through the hair then they have sparse hair and you will need to use blunt/club cutting technique to maintain as much thickness as possible. Avoid cutting the hair too short. Abundant hair might need to be thinned out to achieve the desired look.

Texture

Texture is the thickness of an individual strand of hair. For coarse textured hair, use products to achieve a smoother result. For fine hair, use products to add support and avoid clipper cuts or very short cuts.

Hair growth patterns

Hair growth patterns can affect the choice of style and cutting technique.

- For cowlicks avoid fringes; instead suggest a side half fringe that works with the cowlick.
- For widow's peaks avoid fringes completely and suggest styles that are constructed with the top area going over to one side, or straight back.
- For double crowns suggest maintaining a little length around the crown area and ideally work with the natural fall of the hair. Alternatively, very short haircuts around the crown area will prevent it from sticking up.
- For nape whorls suggest maintaining the length at the nape area, or at least a little weight, and avoid cutting into the hairline unless you are using clippers or cutting the nape area very short. This growth pattern can affect many men's hairstyles, as they generally wear their hair shorter than women.

Hair classification

Straight

When cutting straight hair every 'scissor cut' can show. Accuracy is very important and subtle texturised cuts can help to prevent the cutting lines from being so apparent. For fine straight hair, however, avoid using texturising techniques as it may not achieve the desired result. Medium straight hair can have lots of volume and body and suits most techniques. Coarse straight hair can be difficult to curl and add movement to. It may benefit from texturizing and thinning out techniques to remove some bulk and improve the end result and style.

Wavy

Wavy hair can be great to work with as it is easy to mould straighter or to create enhanced body. Most techniques work well with this hair type. For fine/thin wavy hair, you may need to leave some length to aid body and use club cutting techniques to give the appearance of thicker hair. Medium and coarse wavy hair can be frizzy so avoid texturizing techniques that will enhance a frizzy appearance - such as razor cutting. Club cutting can help by keeping all hair length the same. Coarse wavy hair can be resistant to styling, so benefits from being texturised or thinned out but avoid using a razor on the hair.

Curly

When cutting curly hair consider the amount of tension you place on the hair during the cutting service, use a wide-toothed comb and use freehand cutting techniques. Soft curly hair can have a combination of textures to consider; it may be frizzy in appearance and have lots of body. Tight curly hair can also have combined textures and will spring up after the hair has been cut when it is dried - particularly fine curly hair.

Very curly

Soft, very curly hair is often very fragile, so be careful if using razors or clippers. Comb the hair gently using a wide toothed comb and use a conditioning spray to prevent client discomfort. If the client does not want to encourage the curls, then clipper cuts would be the most effective recommendation. Wiry curly hair is also very fragile but can have less of a defined curly pattern. Avoid techniques that texturise the hair and use mostly club cutting and freehand techniques. Take care with tools on the fragile hair.

Head and face shape

The head and face shape can affect the choice of style. Avoid styles that will accentuate face shapes, for example, for round face shapes, avoid styles that add more roundness such as too much width or height. For oblong face shapes, avoid height but add width if you can and suggest a fringe to give the illusion of shortening a long face. The shorter the haircut the more prominent the oblong shape will appear. For square face shapes, avoid square styles such as 'flat tops' which would accentuate this feature. The head shape should be considered within the overall shape of the style. The ideal head shape is rounded from the crown to the occipital bone and dips slightly inwards towards the nape.

Hairline

If the hair is being cut short at the nape area, you need to consider the natural hair shape. Along with a nape whorl, you can have hairlines that grow in different directions each side, or grow into the middle from both sides. This might affect the length you want to cut or the shape of the end result.

Male pattern baldness

If your client wants to cover the hair-loss area, then suggest leaving the overall style slightly longer, particularly on the top. Some clients prefer to have the hair cut short around the thinning area, to make the rest of the hair look a little thicker.

Adverse skin conditions

Some scalp disorders might require consideration in the style recommended, as your client might want them covered up. Always ask about scalp disorders during your consultation and check for infections and infestations which would prevent the service from being carried out.

Cutting techniques

Club cutting

Club cutting is also known as blunt cutting and is the most popular cutting technique. It involves cutting the hair straight across, while holding the hair with tension between your fingers. This technique will reduce the length of the hair and layers but will retain the thickness of the hair. Club cutting can be carried out on wet and dry hair.

Scissor over comb

When you are using the scissor over comb technique, run the comb up the hair and use it to lift and support the hair to be cut. The hair is cut with the scissors over the comb. This technique gives a graduated effect to the cut and blends short hair into the neck. This technique is most effective on dry hair.

Using clippers

Clippers can be used with or without a clipper grade attached. If using clippers with a grade, you will need to decide the size of the grade required and this will depend on your client's requirements. Clipper grades vary in size from grade 1 to grade 8, gradually getting about 3mm bigger with each grade, with grade 1 starting at 3mm. Clippers are used on dry hair only.

A common grade for the short back and sides is a grade 2; grade 1 can be used for the back and sides but it is often used to blend a grade 2 down into the hairline, keeping the hairline very short and maximising how long the cut will last before it needs cutting again. Grades 3 and 4 can also be used around the back and sides of a cut, but are also used to blend in the grade 2 up into the occipital area of a scissor cut.

Grades 5 to 8 are mostly used on the top and crown areas for short, layered effects. Some men have a clipper cut all over the head and any grade can be used for this, depending on the overall length required or a variation of grades can be used so the hair gradually gets shorter towards the back and sides and hairline.



Clipper over comb

Clipper over comb can be used to blend in scissor or clipper cuts. This technique helps to remove any bulk or definition lines from the varying clipper grades or when the scissor cut meets a clipper cut. It is a popular technique used on dry hair to blend and fade into the hairline.

To use this technique, follow the comb with the clippers through the back and sides, angling the comb at +45° or -45° angle to create longer or shorter effects.

Freehand technique

When using the freehand technique, you must not hold the hair with any tension but instead comb the hair into position and cut. This technique can be used when you do not need any tension, such as when cutting fringes, or allowing for the natural fall of the hair and cutting around the ears. Freehand cutting can be used on wet or dry hair but is particularly good on dry hair.



Thinning the hair

You can use thinning scissors to remove unwanted bulk from the hair but maintain the length. When using thinning scissors, you must cut into the section of hair towards the mid-lengths and ends, avoiding the root area. Thinning out the root area can cause hair to stick up and show signs that it has been thinned out. Hair should be dry while this technique is carried out, otherwise you might remove too much 'bulk'.



Fading

Fading is used to blend short haircuts into the nape of the neck. If hair has been clipper cut or if the scissor over comb has been used, blend the hair from the occipital bone down to blend in with the nape area and fade out to the hairline. This technique can enable the hairline shape to appear more natural looking. Fading techniques are carried out on dry hair.



Carry out cutting services

- Consult with your client.
- Create and follow your guideline.
- Use cutting techniques to achieve the desired result.
- Adapt techniques depending on factors identified.
- Establish an accurate distribution of weight, balance and shape of the hair.
- Balance and shape sideburns.
- Make final visual checks on the haircut and cross check the result.
- Minimise risk of damage to tools and equipment.
- Use suitable products for after styling.

Tips:

- To ensure the best results, it's important to cross-check the cut, the balance and shape of the sideburns.
- Use a razor to remove unwanted hair outside the desired outline shape. You should only use razors on wet hair.

Types of razors

Open (cut throat) razor

This razor has a fixed blade that folds into its handle for safety. The blade is kept keen by regular stropping and honing and must be sterilised after each use between clients.

Safety razor

This razor simulates the shape and feel of the open razor with disposable blades which make it more hygienic, as blades can be replaced for each client.

Shaper

This is a popular razor with disposable blades that is used for cutting and styling hair but not for shaving. It therefore has uses for both women's and men's hairstyling.

Products and their purpose

- **Dry wax** - A moderately firm hold providing a non-wet look or greasy finish. Ideal for men who really don't like the look of product on the hair, but need the benefits of the control it provides. Suited for application on pre-dried, short and medium-length hair.
- **Styling glaze** - A wet look effect with firm to strong hold. Suitable for controlled or groomed looks with a mild, wet look effect. Applied to wet/pre-dried hair and allowed to dry and fix into shape.
- **Hair clay/putty** - A matt styling paste to create casually textured styles, works best applied to dry, layered hair.
- **Defining crème** - A moulding cream to construct a rugged texture with a strong matt definition, ideal for dry, short hair for an edgy, matt finish.
- **Defining wax** - A defining clay that allows flexibility and remoulding of the hair, ideal for dry, textured, layered hair.
- **Hair varnish** - A high gloss look with a greasy texture. The styles created are moisture repelling. Ideal for men who do like product effects on their hair.
- **Hair gel** - A styler that lifts, texturises and tousles hair into many different styles with a pearl shine finish and hold.
- **Hair spray** - Provides mild, moderate and firm hold, can be used as a final fixative or as a styling product when scrunched in.

Trimming facial hair and eyebrows

Tools required for this treatment



Scissors



Comb



Clippers



Clipper attachments

Trimming facial hair

Scissor over comb is ideal for beard and moustache trimming, however, clipper over comb may be more suitable for clients with stronger bristles.

Lift the hair using the comb and cut the protruding hair at 90° angle. Work in channels so you can see the areas of hair that you have cut and where you are working next. Work in a flowing motion, following the facial contours, and take care not to put any hard lines into the hair.

When using clippers with attachments ensure that you keep contact with the skin and follow the client's facial contours to achieve an even result.

Finish the trim using freehand technique to cut the perimeter shape; comb the hair into place and cut freehand, this gives a truer indication of where the hair will fall because you have not used any tension to hold the hair in place. Finally, turn the clippers away from the design line and remove any unwanted hair or stubble from outside the desired style line.

Trimming eyebrows

Some clients may only have a few stray hairs, which can be cut using freehand cutting technique, but if the eyebrows are really overgrown you will need to use scissor over comb technique.

Tips:

- Remember to always close your scissors before using them to pick up the next section.

When trimming facial hair or eyebrows, always ask your client to close his eyes so the coarse hairs do not fly off into the eyes. Alternatively, place damp cotton wool pads over your client's eyes to protect them from fragments.

Uniform layer look

Tools required for this treatment



Scissors



Comb

A uniform layer cut is cut the same length at 90° all over, following guideline sections for the desired length of the hair and one for the internal layers of the hair.

Start with a vertical section on the top of the head from the front hairline to the crown. Elevate the hair straight out from the head and cut a square line. Create a rectangular area in the top, using the initial section as a guide and work a horizontal section cutting a square line straight out of the head. Create a vertical section over the crown and, using the top section as a guide, elevate the hair straight up and cut a square line. Work with mid-side areas following the round of the head.

Using the previous section as a guide and working with parallel sections, continue with this process to the round of the head at the back, ensuring a flat edge. Work on the internal layering of the perimeter, using the existing internal shape as a guide.

Take a vertical section in the front hairline which incorporates the mid-section. Continue the existing line into the hairline. Work the round of the head using over-direction to maintain the square shape. Work with the back section hairline. Begin from an initial vertical section which incorporates the mid-section and continue with the existing hairline using elevation to maintain the square line. Use freehand techniques to enhance the natural texture and movement of the hair.

Please note: as with all hair cutting, this method is subjective and open to adaptation, as there are different methods of cutting hair in order to achieve the same look.

Graduated layer look

Tools required for this treatment



Scissors



Comb



Clippers



Clipper attachments

A short, graduated layer cut must gradually get shorter towards the nape, neck and sides. More length and weight is kept at the top of the head. The top can be cut in a similar way to the uniform layers at 90°, but the sides and back of this style must be cut at 45°.

Using clippers to achieve a graded look

Start with a grade 1 attachment to create graduation from the nape, around the sides and no higher than the temples. Then, using the grade 2, remove the weight line around the nape and temple area. Check the balance of the shape created in the mirror. Starting from the crown working forward, club cut through the top. When you get to the front, slightly angle towards the crown to create graduation and more length around the front.

Working from the side panel to the lower occipital bone, blend using scissor over comb, removing the weight line. Point cut to create shape around the ear. Taper the neckline, angling the comb to create graduation. Adjust the clipper level to grade 0 to create skin fade around the edges.

Please note: as with all hair cutting, this method is subjective and open to adaptation, as there are different methods of cutting hair in order to achieve the same look.

Cutting graduations

Tools required for this treatment



Scissors



Comb



Clippers



Clipper attachments

Section the hair above the crown out of the way. Using clippers with a grade 2 attachment, clipper the back and sides. Angle the clippers outwards to create graduation. Blend the back clipped hair with scissor over comb. Repeat with the side sections. Pull the layers out at 90° for the crown. Follow the 90° angle through the top and sides. Fade out the clipper cut into the sideburns/facial hair. Tidy the hairline around the ears and neckline.

Graduation with clipping and fading techniques

Tools required for this treatment



Clippers



Comb



Clipper attachments

Clipper the back and sides to just above the occipital bone. Use the clipper over comb technique to blend clipped hair. Continue this through the side into layers. Club cut the top. Continue layering the top section. Use thinning scissors to remove bulk. Discuss the neckline shape with your client and shape it to suit your client's requirements. Check that your client is happy with the end result.

Cutting the neckline

Tapered neckline

When you have clipper cut or cut the hair into the neck with a scissor over comb technique, you will need to decide with your client how to fade into the neckline.

One of the more popular necklines is to blend the main haircut into the natural hairline. To create this effect, the hair is gradually cut shorter and blended into the natural movement of the hairline, checking for any nape whorls or inward/outward nape growth patterns.

Faded neckline

To create this effect, the hair is clipper cut with a grade and gradually blended into a clipper cut without a grade, into the hairline.

Square neckline

To create a square neckline, the end result will be a blunt, clean finish.

Rounded neckline

To create a rounded neckline, use the scissors or clippers as for the square neckline but, rather than leaving square corners, round off the edges. Although the result is not as harsh as a square neckline, it is still a blunt finish to the cut.

