

At-home Hair Color: Seven Tips for Great Results

Doing your own home hair color for the first time can be intimidating, to say the least. Have I chosen the right color? What if I make a mistake and wind up with green hair? What if I end up with overprocessed, dry damaged hair?

The fact is that you can achieve excellent results and save a lot of money by coloring your hair at home as long as you know a few basics about how to select the right color and apply it correctly.

Here are seven of the most common questions and my advice on hair coloring at home.

Advice on Permanent Hair Coloring at Home

1. How do I know whether I should color my hair at home or go to a salon?

Most people can successfully color their hair at home but there are exceptions. You should get a professional color job if your hair is in poor condition - coloring dry damaged hair at home can result in uneven color. Also, if your hair has different shades and you want one even tone, a hairdresser can apply different formulas to the different areas. Finally, it's best to leave it to the experts if you want to make a drastic change to your hair color, say dark brown to platinum blonde, or you want special color effects or highlights.

2. Are drugstore hair colors just as good as salon hair color products?

In general, salon hair colors contain higher-quality ingredients than the drugstore brands. Salons also offer a wider variety of colors and tones. But home coloring kits are getting better all the time and can deliver good results if used properly.

3. How do I pick a color that will look natural on me?

When choosing a hair color, your skin tone and natural hair color are the two most important factors. Whether you're going lighter or darker, stay within two or three shades of your natural hair color. Here is a guideline for selecting a compatible hair color for your skin tone:

Dark/olive skin: Stay with darker hair colors.

Yellow skin: Dark, rich colors like deep auburn.

Pale skin: Almost any color.

Pink skin: Neutral tones like sandy or beige blonde or chocolate brown are best. Avoid reds or golden tones.

If you know what clothing colors suit you, you can also use that to help in choosing hair color:

If you look good in warm shades like red, orange, golden yellow, cinnamon brown, olive green, and rust, then warm hair tones like golden blonde, golden brown, strawberry blonde, and auburn will suit you best.

Cool color favorites like bluish red, fuschia, black, royal blue, and pine green indicate that cool hair tones are best for you: platinum, ash blonde, ash brown, burgundy, and jet black.

If you look good in true red, purple, charcoal grey, periwinkle, and teal, then neutral tones like sandy or beige blonde, chocolate brown or mahogany will suit you.

4. How do I get ready to color my hair the first time?

It's a good idea to gather a few materials together before starting: an old T-shirt, a few old towels and a washcloth that you don't mind getting stained, some hair clips for sectioning your hair, a timer, and a hand mirror to see the back of your head.

5. If I color my hair at home and hate it, what can I do?

There are some home hair color products you can use to repair the damage, but it isn't easy. The problem is that if you used a home hair color kit to obtain a lighter color, your hair has been bleached and colored in a single process. So the

color needs to be added back in a process called "filling" before using the final color formula. Whatever you do, don't simply buy a box of your original color and try to cover over a bad dye job... it won't work. Fixing hair color gone wrong is a multi-stage process so a trip to the salon may be in order.

6. I already have permed hair. Can I color it without damaging it?

If your hair has been permed or relaxed, color has to be applied carefully or it can weaken the structure of your hair. Salons have colors specially formulated for treated hair. But if you insist on home hair coloring, choose a shade darker than you want since processed hair may come out lighter than expected. Then do a strand test to make sure your hair can handle the chemical stress.

7. I love my new color... now how do I keep it looking good?

You'll probably want to recolor every four to six weeks. Make a record of the hair color product and shade you used, and how long you left it on the ends and the regrowth. Use shampoos and conditioners formulated for color-treated hair to prevent fading. Stay out of the sun and chlorinated pools. Hair that has been previously been bleached is prone to such effects and should be rinsed as soon as possible. Don't use heavy conditioners and oil treatments after coloring... they can lift the color.

Now go out and enjoy your new look and all the money you saved by doing it yourself!

Nancy Faizabadi is a professional hair stylist and the founder of <http://www.short-hair-style.com> where you can find free tips on short hair style and color ideas, hair color trends, hair products and much more. Whether your hair is fine, thick, curly, straight, processed, colored or in need of a new style, [short-hair-style.com](http://www.short-hair-style.com) has a section for you.