

# Nail Care 101

NAIL FAIL



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## Discoloration

**The Cause:** Small, white blotches often develop after trauma to the nail, while yellowing can signal infection or can occur after wearing polish for too long. Brown and red streaks could be cause for greater concern (such as melanoma or an abnormal growth under the nail, according to dermatologist and Health Advisory Board member Joshua Zeichner, MD). **Protection Plan:** Play it safe. "Any brown, red, or new spot should be evaluated by a dermatologist, stat," recommends Dr. Zeichner. White spots will grow out. To help even out a yellowish tone at home, swipe on a brightening top coat. We like **Zoya Naked Manicure Pink Perfector** (\$12; [zoya.com](http://zoya.com)) for a sheer but chic cover.

## Brittleness

**The Cause:** Dry, brittle nails are begging for moisture. This type of dryness can be caused by many things, including harsh hand soaps, aging, nutritional imbalances, improper gel manicure removals, and more. **Protection Plan:** "Take a gentle approach to nail care," says Caroline Robinson, MD, dermatologist and founder of Tone Dermatology in Chicago. She recommends using soothing soaps, like Dove Aloe & Eucalyptus Nourishing Foaming Hand Wash (\$3.50; [target.com](http://target.com)). And apply a treatment to fight off everyday aggressors: Fast-absorbing **Essie Hard to Resist Nail Strengthener** (\$10; [target.com](http://target.com)) conditions and locks in moisture.

STEP 1

## File in Style

Instead of sawing back and forth, celebrity manicurist Julie Kandalec recommends filing a little bit at a time in one direction. To avoid a lopsided manicure, "make sure to look at your hand from both the top and the palm side. When the shape looks good from both angles, you know you nailed it." How you shape your nails depends on preference and lifestyle. Oval edges work on most lengths and don't snag. Almond-shaped tips offer room for nail art, but they require extra length. When you can't decide, let your nail be your guide: Mirror your cuticle's curve for the most flattering shape. **Try This:** **Bellasonic 4-in-1 Electric Nail File Set** (\$79.95; [bellasonicbeauty.com](http://bellasonicbeauty.com)). With four heads, this easy-to-use shaper smooths, files, and buffs for healthier-looking nails at the push of a button.



STEP 2

## Ace Your Base

Skip the soak—nails will absorb the water and expand. Before applying polish, "always swipe on a base coat," says celebrity manicurist Maria Salandra. This creates a surface that your polish can grab onto for longer wear. **Try This:** **Pear Nova Beneath Me Base Coat** (\$13.50; [pearnova.com](http://pearnova.com)). Formulated with good-for-you ingredients, it nourishes nails while laying the foundation for a long-lasting look. Plus, its milky white finish means you can wear it alone for a naked manicure.



STEP 3

## Perfect the Polish

Before applying, roll the bottle between your hands instead of shaking it. "Shaking creates air bubbles and can thicken the polish," says Salandra. Apply lacquer in a thin, even layer, starting with one strip down the middle, then one on each side. Wait for it to dry fully before applying the next coat. In order to keep your fingers steady while painting, "rest them on something like the table or a bottle of polish," recommends Kandalec. Paint your dominant hand first (it takes longer since you're painting with your weaker hand).



STEP 4

## Top It Off

Once polish is dry, seal it with a top coat. This will fortify your color, helping it last longer. For added protection and shine, Salandra suggests reapplying it every few days. **Try This:** **Emilie Heathe On the Top Glossy Top Coat** (\$28; [emilieheathe.com](http://emilieheathe.com)). A single coat dries like a gel manicure and wears like one—no UV lamp necessary.



Hands: prxyimner/Getty Images

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## Ragged Cuticles

**The Cause:** "It's a myth that they should be trimmed regularly," says Dr. Robinson. Cuticles protect surrounding skin and deeper nail structures. "In the colder months, exceptionally dry air and exposure to indoor heat can worsen the state of your cuticles," says Shereene Idriss, MD, dermatologist and founder of Idriss Dermatology in New York City. Hand sanitizers and polish removers can strip the skin of natural oils, and insufficient moisturizing can also worsen the problem. **Protection Plan:** Avoid picking at, cutting, or aggressively pushing back cuticles (if you do the latter, use an orange stick instead of a metal tool). Apply a hydrating oil daily. **Farmaesthetics Lemon Cuticle Cream** (\$24; [farmaesthetics.com](http://farmaesthetics.com)) softens skin without the mess of traditional oil. When removing polish, look for an acetone-free option. **Tenoverten The Rose Soak** (\$12; [tenoverten.com](http://tenoverten.com)) is infused with nourishing natural oils and extracts, and smells like a garden.

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# Paint Like a Pro