

EMBRACING A BOLD NEW HUE

Bright hair colors can be a fun form of expression, but will they damage your curls?

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Hair color has come a long way since Greco-Roman times when beauty-seeking individuals used a dyeing recipe that contained lead oxide and calcium hydroxide to darken hair. While more natural colors — like blond, red, brown, and black — dominated the scene for decades, bolder color choices such as purple became popular in the 1970s when punk-rockers embraced the vivid hue as a symbol of rebellion.

“I think any choices we make with our hair are a form of expression,” says Josephine Jones of Haircraft by Jo in Portland, Oregon. Bold colors just happen to be a fun way to deviate from the mainstream and add a little more variety to your style options.

Today, hair color can be used for everything from flaunting your bold personality to supporting a cause. Stars like Rihanna and Katy Perry have sported pastel blue locks on the red carpet just to make a splash. But you could dye your hair pink to support breast cancer awareness or try layering in rainbow shades for LGBTQ Pride.

Though everyone has their own reason for experimenting with non-natural hair colors, the more important questions might be where to get started and how to go about it the right way so your curls don't get damaged.

Is a bold color right for you?

Going bold is not for the faint of heart, says Jones. Darker-haired individuals need to apply bleach before they can add color; in a salon, this would be called a



HAIR BY CURL/ISH; PHOTO BY CAROLINE KRAJCIR

double-process color service. This process can damage hair, especially when it's done repetitively, for maintenance, over time. Also, once you go bold, it is often difficult to reverse, she says, and your hair will need to grow out before applying a new color.



HAIR BY CURL/ISH; PHOTO BY CAROLINE KRAJCIR



HAIR BY CURL-ISH; PHOTO BY CAROLINE KRAJCIR

One way to go bold safely is to use temporary color, like the Curl-ish salon team did for this photo series.

If you have naturally white or blond hair, then there's less potential for damage when going with a flashy color. It can be managed easily with a semipermanent hair color that contains no developer chemicals (which are mixed with dyes and enable the color to penetrate the hair's cuticle) and gives a longer-lasting look. In general, vivid colors are usually direct-dyes, which are dyes that sit on top of strands, so they do not adhere as well as other options.

Bridget Warne, a curl specialist at Pyrite Studio in Warrington, Pennsylvania, suggests using saturated gemstone hues for brunettes and pastels for blonds. Another option she suggests is to add just a pop of color.

It "reminds me of having fun jewelry in the hair," says Warne. "I feel this helps to elevate the look of naturally textured hair."

According to Laurie Cain from The Salon by Cain Curls in Hernando, Mississippi, curly hair can be lightened and colored and still be healthy and happy.

However, in order to make the decision that's best for you, she recommends thinking about the long-term goals and current health of your curls.

"If your curls are well-hydrated and you aren't experiencing any issues from prior damage, you should go for it, if it fits your long-term goals," she says. "If you are already dealing with deeply dehydrated or damaged curls, it is better to wait until you have resolved those issues."

Cain suggests you take precautions if you sport longer lengths or have a significant event in the near future to attend. It's always good to discuss your goals with the colorist so that they can recommend ways to help prevent damage such as split ends, breakage, tangles, and frizz.

It is also preferable to use a professional lightener that has little to no ammonia and lower peroxide levels. She recommends using a hair painting technique to lift curly hair: "Old-fashioned foiling techniques generally result in a stronger chemical reaction, causing additional damage to already delicate strands," she says. "Fine strands will be damaged more easily than coarse strands."

How to choose a colorist

Finding the right person to color your hair can be a journey. Start by seeing if any of your contacts has a referral. Don't be afraid to ask other curlies whose hair you admire where they got their locks done. If recommendations don't work out, try Facebook or Instagram. You can search hashtags such as #vividhair, #curlyhaircolor, #mermaidhair, or specify the color of your choice, such as #pinkhair or #pinkcurls.

Look for profiles where the majority of photos



HAIR BY KORLU BULAYA; PHOTO BY JUDEL BRICE; MODEL: OLIVIA MONTGOMERY

highlight curly clients. In an ideal world, you'll find someone with experience styling *and* coloring curls, says Nicolle Lemonds, a curly hair color specialist at Rêzo Salon in New York City.

"Curly hair is damaged more easily than straight hair, so you need to find someone that has been working with curly hair for a while and knows how to be gentle with the coloring process on curls since it is quite different from coloring straight hair," she says.

But if you happen to find a curl specialist that you like that only does cuts but not color, ask them for a reference. They probably know a colorist you can trust with your curls.

"The curl community is very tight, and we try to help direct people to the right specialists, even if we are not doing the service or if we're not in the area the potential client is located in," says Lemonds.

When viewing a colorist's work, consider whether or not you like what you see. Are they working with curly hair? Does their aesthetic align with your style? Once you find someone you like, look at the reviews.

The next step is to schedule a consultation or set up a phone call in which you ask about the stylist's approach, suggested treatments, and follow-up and maintenance requirements. When you go in, bring inspirational photos of what you want, along with color swatches showing the color you hope to achieve.



PHOTO COURTESY OF HAIRCRAFT BY JO

“Photos on your phone may not be the best choice as they can disrupt the colors; bringing in an actual swatch or item will help your stylist create exactly the color you want,” advises Cain. “Bonus if you can bring in an item that you can leave with your stylist to color-match, if needed.”

DIY BOLD HAIR COLOR

While DIY hair color is possible, it isn’t a good fit for everyone. It depends on what you want. A novice can certainly do a single-process color. “But pick a color and stick with it,” says Jones. “You cannot change a color by putting a different color over top. This is science, and it just doesn’t work that way.”

If you’re looking to go big — for example, if you’re pinning for a makeover that includes fantasy, fashion, or over-the-top hair colors — you probably want to leave it to the professionals. “I definitely do not recommend at-home bleaching because there’s just too much that can go wrong,” says Jones. “You can end up orange, stripey, or even worse: with breakage and damaged curls.”

However, once a stylist has lightened/bleached your hair, Lemonds says you can add vibrant deposit-only colors at home to create your new look.

“Sometimes I suggest certain coloring products [that my clients] can reapply on their professionally

Here are some questions you might want to ask a potential colorist during your consultation:

- Do they have special training in curls and coloring?
- How often do they do this service?
- What technique or products do they use to limit damage?
- How much damage can you expect from the process?
- What will that look like (frizz, dryness, breakage)?
- What type of at-home treatments would they recommend to minimize damage and preserve the color?
- How much fading should you expect? How often will you need to touch up the color?
- What’s the cost?
- Will swimming in pools or at the beach impact the color?
- Will the service include drying your hair? (The stylist should see the color dry to ensure you get the results you want.)
- Can you see photos of other clients?

When choosing your color, really think it through. Some tones only last a few weeks, so you have to be prepared for the cost and the inevitable fade. Have fun with your hair color choice — go pink, purple, blue, rose gold, ginger, rainbow, whatever — but be practical about what works with your desires and lifestyle.

“Unconventional tones are extremely fun and playful; they always amuse my clients,” says Warne. “I believe hair, fashion, and makeup *all* serve as a way of self-expression. To me, it’s about the total look.”

bleached hair, like Manic Panic, to refresh fun colors like pink or purple — or professional-grade products to retouch gray if they are going away for a bit — but never lightening or changing their color,” she says. “That should only be done by a professional.”

Remember that even in this scenario, you do want to avoid applying a different hue if there is any residual color left in your hair from a previous coloring since you will not achieve the look you are envisioning. One hue may cancel out the other.

Think about the practicalities of DIY, too, advises Carleen Sanchez, a curly hair and color artist in Reno, Nevada. Dye stains almost everything, so be careful where you do your coloring and take precautions to cover furniture, clothes, etc. Don’t forget to wear gloves and use a towel that can get blotchy. If you just need a streak, maybe you don’t want to bother with the process — after all, a clip-in extension can offer the look you want without any of the aggravation.



HAIR BY CURL-ISH; PHOTO BY CAROLINE KRAJCIR

ADVICE ON GOING BOLD

We asked *Curl* Stylist Panelists Liv Jummati of Curl Coven in Nashville, Tennessee, and Dianne Nola of Nola Studio in San Francisco, California, a few important questions for anyone considering a bold hair color.

What’s your best advice for curlies who want to dye their hair bold or bright colors?

LIV: I would highly recommend seeing a colorist who also specializes in curls. Doing colors like that often requires pretty intensive lightening, which can cause significant damage to the curl pattern if it is not done with proper care.

DIANNE: Consider doing just your bangs, part of a bang, just your nape, or a large clump of curls. This way you won’t be committed to bleaching and coloring every three weeks, and the damage will be less.

What kinds of dyes should they look for (or ask for) that are least damaging to curls or provide the most lasting color?

LIV: Bright, “fashion” colors are just a stain, so the end result color is actually not the part that will

cause damage to the hair. The lightening service prior to applying the final color is what will cause the damage. It is important to note that there is no such thing as “damage-free” lightening or oxidative color, because in order to change the color of the natural underlying pigment, the structure of the hair needs to be damaged in some way. There are, however, measures that can be taken to significantly reduce the extent of the damage that is done — like using Olaplex during the service and utilizing a gentle formula.

DIANNE: Definitely use a bonder of sorts, whether that be K18, Olaplex, or something that is built-in. Your curl stylist/colorist will know. This will preserve the integrity of the hair.

What are ways to keep the color bold and bright for the longest period of time?

LIV: Cleansing and conditioning with cold water, staying out of direct sunlight as much as possible, wearing a hat to cover the hair when you are outside, and using the color-protecting products recommended by your colorist.

DIANNE: Use a sulfate-free cleanser, and know that if you clarify, it will pull that color right out!