How to Relax Kinky Hair

A USER GUIDE

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Revised: August 13, 2012

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This manual and related content is a final project for Seneca College's Technical Communications Graduate Certificate Program.

This manual is intended for people who have had their kinky (naturally curly) hair relaxed (chemically straightened) by professionals in the past, but would now like to relax their hair themselves.

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Section 1: Planning Ahead

In order to get the best experience when relaxing (chemically straightening) your hair, you need to be prepared.

Tools You'll Need

Before you relax your hair, you will need to have the following tools and products:

Hair relaxer kit

Hair relaxer kits include conditioner, activator gel and neutralizing shampoo, which you will all need in addition to the relaxer. Most kits also include a pair of gloves to protect your hands from the chemicals, and a mixing stick.

Wide-tooth comb

The wide-tooth comb is used to detangle wet hair.

Petroleum jelly

Petroleum jelly is used to form a base around the hair lines to prevent possible burning from the relaxer.

Two towels

You will need two towels; one to protect your neck while relaxing the hair, and another to dry the hair.

Four hair clips

Hair clips are needed to keep your hair parted into four sections.

Plastic cap

A plastic cap is required during the conditioning and treatment phase of the process.

Applicator brush or rat tail comb

You will need either an applicator brush or a rat tail comb to apply the relaxer to your hair.

Timer

The hair relaxing process should be timed using an analog or digital timer.

Choosing the Right Hair Relaxer

It is hard to know which relaxer is the best choice. What can help you decide is determining the degree to which you would like your hair relaxed. If you are hoping for more manageable hair, but with some degree of curls, then a mild to regular relaxer may be more suitable. Also, if you have a sensitive scalp, you may want a relaxer that is milder and does not burn the scalp. Bear in mind that the greater portion of the relaxer will be used on the root to middle sections of your hair. It is recommended not to relax hair ends because this may damage your hair and reduce the elasticity.

Relaxer Types

The two main types (not brands) of relaxers on the market are “lye” and “no-lye”.

Lye

The lye types are available only to professional hairdressers, because they are chemically stronger, and have higher PH levels than no-lye types. Lye relaxers never have to be mixed, and always come in a ready-to-use tube.

No-Lye

No-lye relaxers are said to be easier on the scalp and provide a straighter look, and are readily available for purchase at retail outlets. However, no-lye types are also said to be harder on the hair, even though they are easier on the scalp.

If you are relaxing your hair yourself, you will only need to be concerned with the no-lye types. No-lye relaxers come with either the option to mix, or to apply directly without mixing.

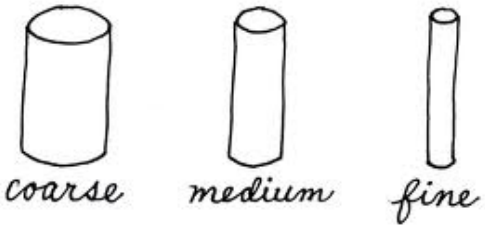
> ***Note***: You may speak to a hair consultant to find out the difference, or read the instructions on the box. Choosing the right type of relaxer may just be a matter of personal choice.

Relaxer Brands

There are several brands on the market for you to choose from. Whatever brand you choose is up to you. You may read the instructions on the back of the relaxer kit box, or you may speak with the store representative for advice. Bear in mind questions such as “is my hair prone to breakage,” and “what hair treatments do not agree with my hair?” Also, decide whether you want acidic and alkaline based hair relaxers, as those types can be damaging to the hair. Alkaline relaxers are the better option for relaxing kinky hair every six to eight weeks. Please refer to the Appendix for a detailed listing of hair relaxer brands, their strengths and ingredients.

Hair Textures

One of the most critical factors in helping you to decide which hair relaxer is appropriate is to determine the hair texture that you have. Hair texture refers to the size of the strand or the thickness/diameter of the hair strand. It also refers to the measure of the circumference of the hair strand.



Fine

Fine hair strands are very small in diameter. They cannot tolerate excessive heat because they are more susceptible to damage. Smaller strands also require less chemical products.

Medium

Medium hair strands are average sized, are mid-range the size of the hair shaft and have a medium quantity of layers. They can tolerate heat and chemicals better than fine hair.

Coarse

Coarse hair strands are the largest and thickest of all three. They require more processing time than fine or medium hair and may also be resistant to processing.

> ***Note***: You can have all three hair textures in various parts of your head. Also, fine, medium and coarse hair textures are applicable to any race or nationality.

Warning

All strands can burn if the temperature of a heated tool is greater than 150 degrees Fahrenheit.

Do's and Don'ts

Here are a few helpful tips to mentally note before you begin.

Do	Don't
❖ Wear clothing that can be easily removed. ❖ Rinse the hair the moment you feel any burning sensations. ❖ Buy gloves that fit. ❖ Read the Kit instructions carefully before you proceed.	❖ Scratch your scalp before you relax your hair. ❖ Relax your hair more than every 6 to 8 weeks. ❖ Relax hair within a week of adding colour to your hair. ❖ Relax your hair immediately after removing braids. ❖ Apply relaxer directly to your scalp.

Caution

It is important to bear in mind the recommended time to keep the relaxer in based on your hair texture. The following table is a basic guideline that you can go by in the event that your relaxer kit does not include a time chart.

Time Chart for Regular Strength		Time Chart for Super Strength	
Hair Texture	**Maximum Time**	**Hair Texture**	**Maximum Time**
Fine	10-12 minutes	Fine	DO NOT USE
Medium	12-15 minutes	Medium	DO NOT USE
Coarse/Medium Coarse	15-20 minutes	Coarse	18-20 minutes

Section 2: The Hair Relaxing Process

The hair relaxing process includes several steps that ought to be read and followed carefully to avoid any harm or damage.

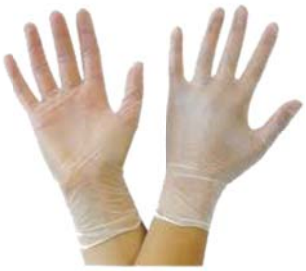
Instructions

Pre-relaxer

1. Comb out your hair carefully and part it into four equal sections by going horizontally from ear to ear and vertically from the middle of your forehead to the nape of your neck. Pin each section up with a hair clip.

2. Apply a large amount of petroleum jelly all around the hairline, including over the earlobes.

3. Put on a pair of gloves.



Relaxer Steps

4. Use the mixing stick to mix the relaxer and activator gel.

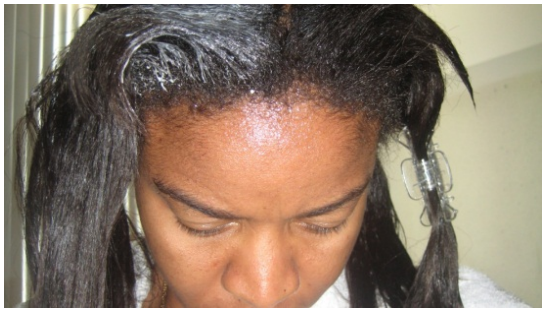
Note: Follow the instructions in your relaxer kit.

5. Put a small towel around your neck and shoulders for protection from the relaxer.

6. Test the relaxer by applying it to a small hidden section of your hair. Allow it to stay for two to three minutes to ensure there is no negative reaction.

7. Dip your applicator brush or rat tail comb into the relaxer and apply the relaxer only to the new hair growth at the roots of the parted sections of your hair.

Note: It is optional whether or not you remove the clip to apply the relaxer to your hair roots.



8. Quickly apply the relaxer to each parted section. Each quarter of the hair should not take longer than 5 minutes to apply.

9. Smooth hair roots with finger tips, and let the hair continue to process for the duration indicated on the relaxer kit, or at least 10 minutes.

Shampoo and Condition

10. Rinse your hair thoroughly with warm water until most of the relaxer is removed.

11. Shampoo with the neutralizing shampoo that came with the relaxer kit. Shampoo and rinse 2-3 times, or until all trace of the relaxer is removed from the hair.

> ***Note***: If the shampoo lather has a pink colour, this means that the relaxer is still in your hair. You need to see a white lather once the relaxer is completely removed.

12. Apply the conditioner that came with the relaxer kit to your hair.

13. Work the conditioner to the ends of your hair. Leave it in for 15 minutes.

Dry and Style

14. Squeeze the extra water from your hair using a clean towel.

15. Dry your hair using a bonnet hair dryer or hand-held blow dryer.

16. Apply hair oil to your scalp and style your hair.

Section 3: After Care

This section gives you a few tips on how to get the best results from your relaxed hair.

It is important that you care for your hair after it has been relaxed. Relaxing your hair often causes it to become weaker and dryer, and more prone to breakage.

1. Whenever you wash your hair you should use a leave-in conditioner while the hair is still wet. This will help you maintain the relaxed look.

2. Deep condition your hair twice per week. Get a deep conditioning treatment that contains moisturizing and damp protein ingredients, and apply it to clean, damp hair. Cover your hair with a plastic cap and allow 30-45 minutes for treating. You may check retail outlets near you for possible brands.

3. Avoid brushing your hair with harsh bristled brushes.

4. Use only minimal heat with your hair. Use a low heat curling iron, or use rollers to curl your hair.

5. When using a curling iron to curl your hair, do not allow the barrel cover to clamp down on your hair. Hold the barrel cover slightly open and allow the hair to move over the curling iron barrel without tugging and pulling. Your hair becomes easier to break whenever the barrel cover clamps down.

6. Do not relax your hair every time new growth appears; instead wait at least six weeks.

7. Wrap your hair at night, and tie it off with a silk wrap. This helps to maintain your hair's moisture and retain your desired hairstyle.

8. Trim your hair ends at least once in every six months to get rid of dry, split ends. The hair ends are the weakest section of your hair.

Appendix: Relaxer Brands

Brand	Relaxer Name	Strength	Ingredients
AFFIRM	Crème Relaxer Original	Mild	Sodium Hydroxide
		Regular	
		Super	
	Crème Relaxer Control	Mild	Time Release Sodium Hydroxide
		Regular	
		Super	
AFFIRM	Moisture Plus Sensitive Scalp Relaxer(Custom Mix)	Mild	Guanidine Hydroxide
		Regular	
		Super	
AFFIRM FIBERGUARD	Crème Relaxer	Mild	Sodium Hydroxide
		Regular	
		Super	
AFFIRM FIBERGUARD	Sensitive Scalp Crème Relaxer(Custom Mix)	Mild	
		Regular	
		Super	
AFRICAN PRIDE	Olive Miracle Deep Conditioning Anti-Breakage No-Lye Relaxer	Regular	Calcium Hydroxide
	Olive Miracle No-Base Conditioning Relaxer	Super	Sodium Hydroxide
	Olive Miracle No-Base	Normal	Sodium

Brand	Relaxer Name	Strength	Ingredients
	Conditioning Relaxer		Hydroxide
	Olive Miracle Deep Conditioning Anti-Breakage No-Lye Relaxer	Super	Calcium Hydroxide
DREAM KIDS	Anti-Breakage No-Lye Crème Relaxer	Regular	Calcium Hydroxide, Guanidine Carbonate
	Anti-Breakage No-Lye Crème Relaxer	Super	Calcium Hydroxide, Guanidine Carbonate
DARK AND LOVELY	Healthy-Gloss 5™Shea Moisture Relaxer	Regular	
	Healthy-Gloss 5™Shea Moisture Relaxer	Super	
	Healthy-Gloss 5™Shea Moisture Relaxer	Mild and Color-treated	
	Beautiful Beginnings® No Mistake® Nourishing No-Lye Crème Relaxer	Mild to Regular	
	Beautiful Beginnings® No-Mistake® Nourishing No-Lye Crème Relaxer	Mild	
ALTER EGO	Linange Shea Butter Relaxer	Regular to Super	Sodium Hydroxide
	Linange No-Lye Shea Butter Crème Relaxer	Mild	Hydroxypropyltri mo-nium
ELASTA QP	No-Lye Conditioning Crème Relaxer Kit	Regular	
	No-Lye Conditioning	Super	

Brand	Relaxer Name	Strength	Ingredients
	Crème Relaxer Kit		
	No-Lye Conditioning Crème Relaxer Kit	Mild	
	No-Base Crème Relaxer	Regular	
LUSTER's	Pink® Triple + Conditioning No-Lye Relaxer Enhanced with Nutrient Sheen™ PNT	Regular	
	Pink® Triple + Conditioning No-Lye Relaxer Enhanced with Nutrient Sheen™ PNT	Super	
	Pink® Conditioning No-Lye Relaxer Featuring The Pink Protection® System	Regular	
	Pink® Conditioning No-Lye Relaxer Featuring The Pink Protection® System	Super	
Dr Miracle's	Feel It Formula Thermalceutical Intensive No-Lye Relaxer (for new growth)	Regular	
	Feel It Formula No-Lye Relaxer	Regular	
	Feel It Formula No-Lye Relaxer	Regular	
	Feel It Formula	Regular	

Brand	Relaxer Name	Strength	Ingredients
	Thermalceutical Intensive No-Base Crème Relaxer		
	Feel It Formula Thermalceutical Intensive No-Base Crème Relaxer	Super	
MIZANI	Butter Blend Relaxer System	Mild and Color Treated	Sodium Hydroxide,Polyquate-rnium-6
	Butter Blend Relaxer System	Regular	Sodium Hydroxide,Polyquate-rnium-6
	Butter Blend Relaxer System	Super	Sodium Hydroxide,Polyquate-rnium-6
Organic Root Stimulator	Olive Oil Build-In Protection No-Lye Relaxer	Regular	Calcium Hydroxide
	Olive Oil Girls Built-In PROTECTION PLUS™ No-Lye Conditioning Relaxer System	Regular	Calcium Hydroxide
Profectiv	Relax & Refresh Anti-Damage No-Lye Relaxer Plus Color Restorative System		Guanidine Carbonate, Calcium Hydroxide
	Mega Growth Procision Therapeutic No-Lye Relaxer System	Regular	Guanidine Carbonate, Calcium Hydroxide
	Mega Growth Procision Therapeutic	Super	Guanidine Carbonate,

Brand	Relaxer Name	Strength	Ingredients
	No-Lye Relaxer System		Calcium Hydroxide
Optimum Care	Salon Collection No-Lye Conditioning Relaxer	Regular	
	Salon Collection No-Lye Conditioning Relaxer	Super	
	Bodifying Relaxer - Conditioning No-Lye Relaxer System	Mild	
Roots of Nature	Conditioning Relaxer with low pH Relaxer Cream	Regular	
	Conditioning Relaxer with low pH Relaxer Cream	Mild	
Silk Elements	MegaSilk Relaxer with Shea Butter	Regular	
	MegaSilk Relaxer with Shea Butter	Super	
	MegaSilk Relaxer with Shea Butter	Mild	
	MegaSilk Olive Oil Relaxer		Sodium Hydroxide
	MegaSilk Olive Oil No-Lye Relaxer	Regular	Calcium Hydroxide
Soft and Beautiful	No-Lye Crème Relaxer System	Regular	
	No-Lye Crème Relaxer System	Super	
Soft & Beautiful® Botanicals™	No-Lye Sensitive Scalp Relaxer	Regular	

Brand	Relaxer Name	Strength	Ingredients
Relaxers			
	No-Lye Sensitive Scalp Relaxer	Super	
Dudley's	No Base Permanent Crème Relaxer		Sodium Hydroxide
	Sensitive Scalp Relaxer(Application Kit)		Sodium Hydroxide
Hawaiian Silky	HERBAL Sensitive Scalp No Lye Relaxer System	Mild	
	HERBAL Sensitive Scalp No Lye Relaxer System	Regular	
	HERBAL Sensitive Scalp No Lye Relaxer System	Super	
	No Base Relaxer	Mild	Sodium Hydroxide
	No Base Relaxer	Regular	Sodium Hydroxide
	No Base Relaxer	Super	Sodium Hydroxide
Designer Touch	Strait Shades Colorlaxer		
	No-Lye Crème Relaxer		Lithium Hydroxide
	Sensitive Scalp No-Lye Relaxer System		Calcium Hydroxide
	Texturizing Relaxer		
Motions	Silkening Shine No-Lye Relaxer System	Regular	
	Silkening Shine No-Lye Relaxer System	Super	

Brand	Relaxer Name	Strength	Ingredients
Revlon	Professional Realistic Conditioning No- Base Crème Relaxer	Mild	Sodium Hydroxide
	Professional Realistic Conditioning No- Base Crème Relaxer	Regular	Sodium Hydroxide
	Professional Realistic Conditioning No- Base Crème Relaxer	Super	Sodium Hydroxide
	Fabu-laxer Professional No-Lye Crème Relaxer System	Regular	
	Fabu-laxer Professional No-Lye Crème Relaxer System	Super	
Crème Of Nature	Nourishing No-Lye Relaxer	Regular	Calcium Hydroxide
	Nourishing No-Lye Relaxer	Super	Calcium Hydroxide
	with Argan Oil No-Lye Relaxer	Regular	Calcium Hydroxide
	with Argan Oil No-Lye Relaxer	Super	Calcium Hydroxide
Ultra Sheen Supreme	No-Lye Conditioning Crème Relaxer	Regular	Calcium Hydroxide
	No-Lye Conditioning Crème Relaxer	Super	Calcium Hydroxide
Ultra Sheen	No Base Crème Relaxer	Regular	Sodium Hydroxide
PHYTOSPECIFIC	Phytorelaxer - No-Lye Relaxer	Mild	
	Phytorelaxer - No-Lye Relaxer	Super	

Glossary

A-C

Applicator – a device for applying a substance to a surface.
Base – refers to the coating of petroleum jelly to the scalp to protect it from being burned or irritated by the relaxer.
Blow dryer – a hand-held electric blower that can blow warm or cold air onto the hair.
Breakage – damage resulting in dry, rough and fragile hair that breaks off.
Chemicals – otherwise known as chemical substances, which are any material with a definite chemical composition.
Circumference – the distance around a closed curve.
Conditioner – a substance that improves the condition of hair.
Crème – a cosmetic product that has the consistency of cream.
Cuticle layer – the outer cellular layer of the hair.

D-F

Detangle – remove intertwined strands.

G-I

Hair Shaft – the part of the hair that projects from the scalp.
Hair Dryer – a bonnet electric blower that can blow warm air onto the hair.
Hair Texture – refers to the size and/or thickness of the strand.

J-L

Kinky – tightly twisted or curled.
Lye Relaxer – a lye relaxer is an alkaline relaxer that consists of sodium hydroxide (also known as NaoH or lye) mixed with water, petroleum jelly, mineral oil and emulsifiers to create a creamy consistency.

M-O

Mild – moderate in type, degree, effect or force. Not severe or harsh.
Nape – the back of the neck.
Neutralize – to make a solution neutral.

No-Lye – there are three main types, and they are weaker than the lye types; (a) one type consists of potassium hydroxide, lithium hydroxide, or guanidine hydroxide. (b) one type is generated after mixing a cream containing calcium hydroxide with an activating solution of guanidine hydroxide. (b) another type consists of ammonium thioglycolate, which is also known as perm salt for its use on permanent waves.

P-R

Regular – orderly, even or symmetrical.
Relax – the process of making curly hair become straight using lye or no-lye crème.
Relaxer – a type of cream that straightens the hair by chemically relaxing the natural curls.

S-U

Split ends – hair that has split at the end from dryness or harsh products.
Strand – a lock of hair.
Style – design or comb hair in a particular way.
Super – to the highest degree or strength.
Treatment – subjection to the action of a chemical agent.

V-X

Y-Z

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