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Esthetician – Nail Technician

Nail Tips and Forms

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Nail Tips and Forms

Rationale

Why is it important to learn this skill?

Nail enhancements are a major service provided by Nail Technicians. Since a good product requires a good process, a high-quality nail enhancement depends upon the correct application of tips and forms. Tips and forms are the base upon which an enhancement is built. If the base is not created correctly, then the enhancement will be faulty. Many problems with enhancements are actually problems with the base; therefore, the proper use of tips and forms is critical to the esthetician.

Outcome

When you have completed this module, you will be able to:

Describe the important factors that relate to tips and forms, and properly apply a set of tips and a set of forms.

Objectives

1. Describe selection of nail tips.
2. Describe adhesion of nail tips.
3. Describe shaping and blending of nail tips.
4. Demonstrate applying a full set of nail tips.
5. Describe applying nail forms.
6. Demonstrate customizing a full set of nail forms.

Introduction

Tips and forms are two ways of achieving the same result. Each method has its own advantages and disadvantages; in addition, one method may be dominant in a region while the other is rarely practised. Estheticians and clients may have a personal preference for tips, or a personal preference for forms, but both methods are within the scope of the esthetician, so mastery of the two is required for a person who wishes to be a competent hand worker. The decision to apply a tip or a form is often based on

the natural nail plate. For instance, tips are ideal for clients with no free edge while forms work best for clients with 2-3 mm of free edge. This ILM describes the application of tips and forms in one order only; in reality, some of the steps can be performed in different orders. Each different order has advantages and disadvantages. As is the case with other trades, the order in which some tasks are performed has no impact on the quality of the finished product. Some techniques in this ILM are more advanced than others, and some will be new to a reader. Often, a person will say "This is the right way." It is important to distinguish whether the statement was made because of personal preference or because of quality.

Objective One

When you have completed this objective, you will be able to:

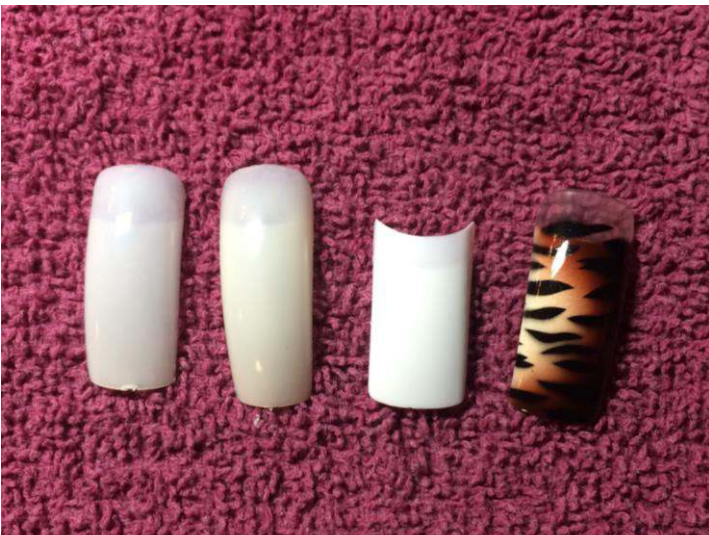
Describe selection of nail tips.

What is a Nail Tip?

A nail tip is a piece of molded plastic that acts as an extension of the natural nail. Lengths range from 3 to 10 mm. The tips adhere to the natural nail plate and come in three different styles: full wells, partial wells, and well-less. **The *well*, or *base*, is the portion of the tip that adheres to the natural nail plate.** Tips also come in various curvatures that can be matched to the structure of the natural nail plate. Generally, when a tip is not fitting well, the solution is to try a tip with a different curvature. Each style has its own advantages and disadvantages.

Full well tips have the largest well area; as a result, they create the sturdiest finished product. These tips are suited for clients with little or no free edge. Full well tips are considered to be the easiest to blend, but they require more blending. A full well tip always covers no less than one-third of the natural nail plate and no more than one-half of the natural nail plate.

Partial well tips have a smaller contact area than full well tips. Partial well tips are more difficult to blend. Well-less tips have no flat adhering surfaces. The edge of a well-less tip is glued to the free edge of the nail plate. The main advantage of a well-less tip is the reduced time for blending. These tips also allow the smile line to be placed anywhere.



The photograph on the left shows four different styles of tips. From left to right they are: a full well soft C, a full well deep C, a short/half well soft C French, and a pre-designed full well soft C. Soft curves are also called 'flat' and deep curves are also called 'arched'. Each manufacturer may have its own terminology.

Tips can be purchased in a variety of shapes and sizes. The shape of a tip can also be customized. See below for a display of some different tip shapes available.



Selection of Nail Tips

Nail tips are selected with several factors in mind. First, the tip must have the same (or as close as possible to the same) C curve as the natural nail plate. If the curve is too sharp, the tip will try to crimp the natural nail plate, resulting in discomfort or separation of the nail plate from the nail bed. If the curve is too flat, the tip will try to pull the natural nail plate flat, resulting in discomfort or separation of the nail plate from the nail bed. Most nail tips have sharper curves than the natural nail plate.

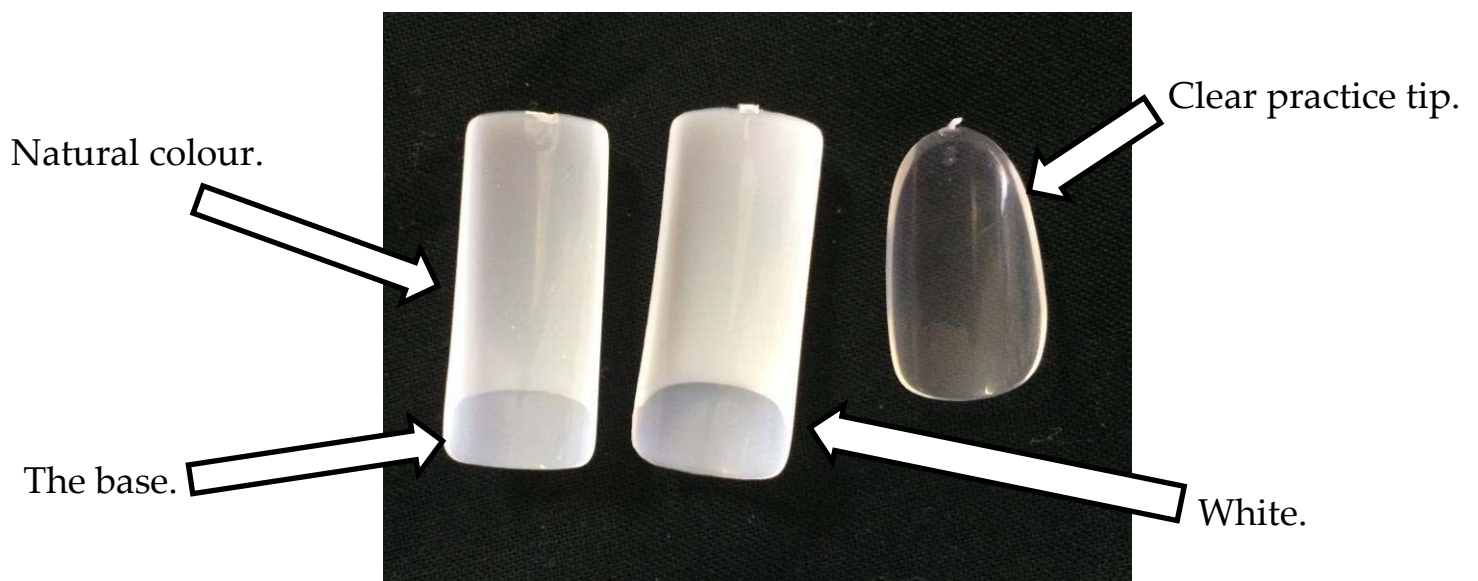
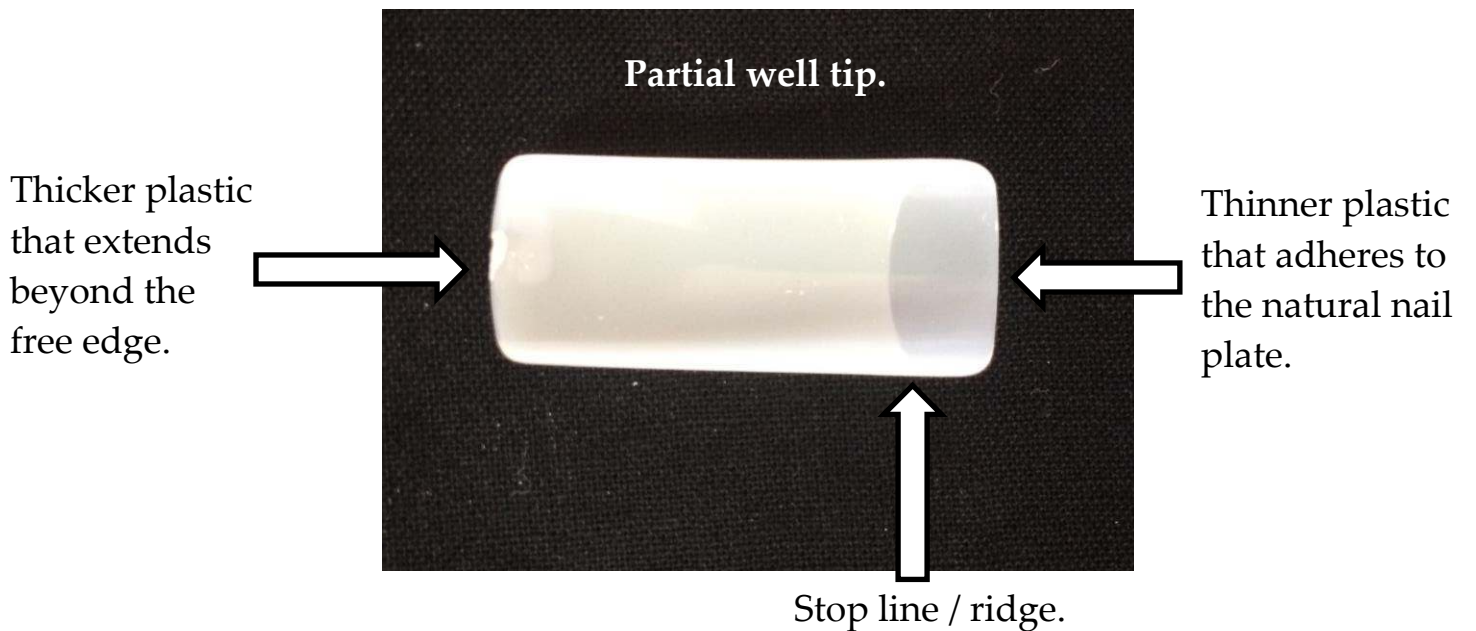


A full-well deep / arched C curve



A full-well soft / flat C curve

Clear tips provide a see-through look while naturally-coloured tips provide a natural look when finished with a glossy, clear polish. The tip must fit snugly to the sidewalls. If a perfect tip cannot be found, then choose a larger tip and reduce its size by slightly filing both sidewalls. Lastly, make sure that the 'stop line' or 'ridge' fits snugly against the free edge of the natural nail. A tip is not constructed of equal thickness for its entire length. The plastic of the base is thinner. A curved ridge occurs where the plastic changes from thin to thick. This ridge acts as a stop line, helping to locate the tip correctly on the natural nail plate. The stop line should snugly fit the free edge of the natural nail.



Objective One Self-Test

1) What are the three types of tips available?

2) Which type of tip is the least suitable for nails that have been bitten, and why?

3) How does the curvature of most nail tips compare with the curvature of most natural nail plates?

4) What is the purpose of the ridge located on the underside of each tip?

5) Which colour of tip would be chosen for a see-through look?

Objective One Self-Test Answers

- 1) The three types of tips available are full wells, partial wells, and well-less.
- 2) Well-less tips, because they would have little free edge to adhere to.
- 3) Most nail tips have a sharper curvature of most natural nail plates.
- 4) The purpose of the ridge located on the underside of each tip is to act as a stop line that touches the free edge and helps locate the tip on the natural nail correctly.
- 5) A clear tip would be chosen for a see-through look.

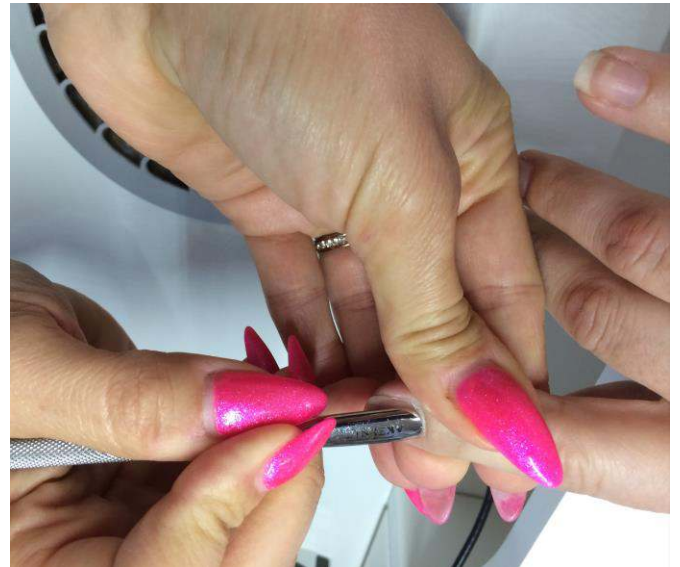
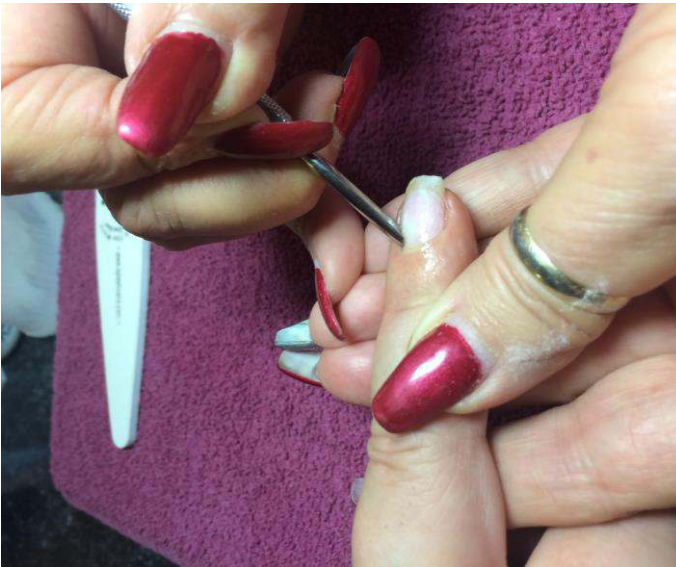
Objective Two

When you have completed this objective, you will be able to:

Describe adhesion of nail tips.

Nail Plate Preparation

Before the tip can be adhered, the natural nail plate must be prepared. Proper preparation will ensure that the tip adheres well and looks good. The first step is to sanitize both sets of hands and then gently push back the eponychium. Some estheticians will apply cuticle softener/remover before pushing back to eponychium. This product will allow the tool to slide on nail plate; this feels better for the client and aids in removal. If cuticle softener/remover is used, wipe it off when complete.



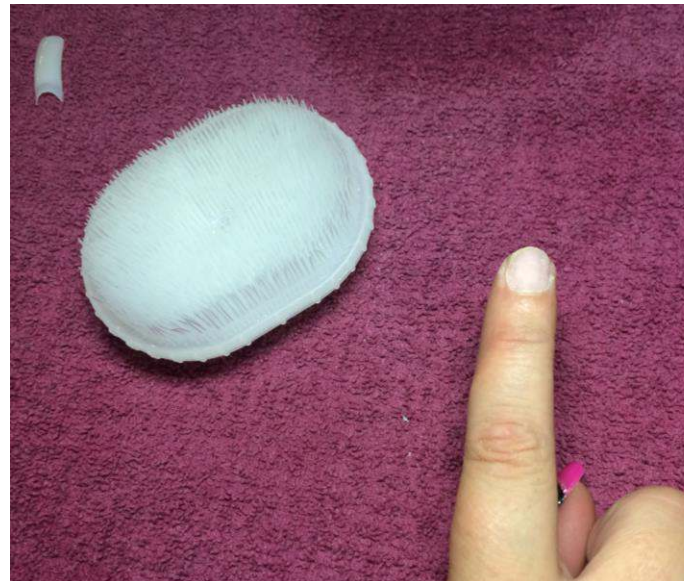
After the eponychium is pushed back, remove the excess cuticle from the nail plate with a foam file or an electric drill. A diamond bit on low RPM works very well. Press very lightly on the natural nail plate, and be careful not to grind too deep into the nail plate or surrounding skin.



If a foam file is used, 'season' a new file before using it on a client. Seasoning involves using a second file to dull all four edges of the file that will touch the client. If the edges are left sharp, they can cut the client.



Once the excess cuticle has been removed, continue to clean the entire nail plate. An electric file with a diamond bit or a foam file can be used. This step of the process will remove any debris and oil from the plate. If the plate is not clean, the tip will not adhere properly. Make sure to not buff the plate with a high grit tool. If the plate is too smooth, the tip will not adhere. Periodically brush the nail plate.



The photograph above and left depicts a nail plate being buffed with an electric file. On the right, the nail has been buffed with a foam file. The photo on the right also shows a silicone brush. This type of brush is commonly used to remove dust from the nail during the preparation process.

If an electric file has been used, the next step is to go over the nail plate with a 150 – 180 grit buffer and clean any spots that have been missed.



Free Edge Preparation



Before the tip can be adhered, the free edge must be shaped. The first step is to reduce the free edge (if necessary) and shape it to match the stop line. Using a 240 grit or higher file, file from outside edge toward the centre.



The next step is to bevel the underside of the free edge to a 45° angle. Use the same grit of a file.

Tip Preparation

Tip preparation can be done after the nail plates have been prepared, or all of the tips can be selected and prepared before the nail plates have been prepared.

Process 1

Buff nail plates.
Shape free edges.
Shape and fit tips.
Clean nail plates.
Glue tips.

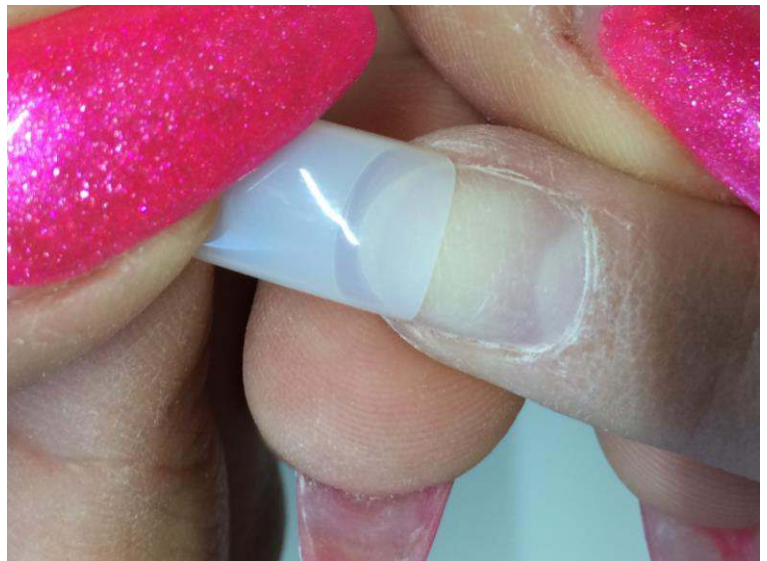
Process 2

Shape and fit tips.
Buff nail plates.
Shape free edges.
Clean nail plates.
Glue tips.

Some estheticians feel that **Process 2** is simpler because, once the nail plates are prepared and cleaned, the tips can be applied with less chance of contaminating the nail plates with oil or debris.

The following photographs and explanations are in no particular order. Every individual is free to choose the process that works best for them.

Perform a trial of the tip by sliding it down the nail plate until it 'clicks' as the stop line slips over the free edge. Check the sidewalls and reduce them if necessary to ensure a snug fit against the skin folds. Next, check the curvature of the free edge against the curvature of the stop line.



The curvature of this free edge does not match well against the curvature of the stop line.



The free edge has been re-shaped to fit the curvature of the stop line. A tight fit will ensure a strong finished product. Experience has taught estheticians that the curvature of the smile line reflects the curvature of the natural nail's arch. Typically, a finger that has a flatter smile line has less of an arch. The photograph to the left shows a finger with a curved smile line, so the esthetician has chosen a deeply arched tip.

Customizing the Tip

It is a good idea to customize the tip before it is adhered to the natural nail plate. Unnecessary blending of the tip while it is adhered to the nail plate increases the chance of damaging the natural nail.

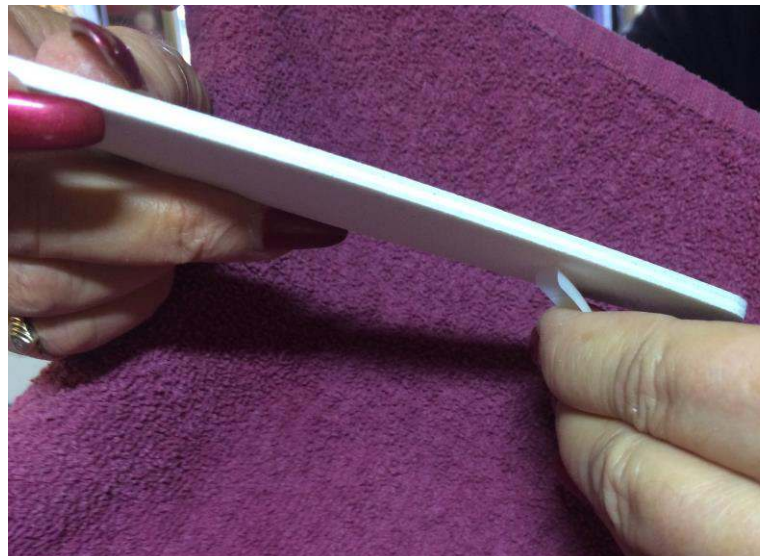


Pre-blend the top, rear edge of the tip by thinning it with a file.



File the top, rear edge of the tip on an angle. The file can be used across the tip (as in this photograph), or parallel with the tip (as in the photograph below). Reduce the well so that it is between one-half and one-third as long as the natural nail plate.

The angle between the file and the tip is important to maintain. The angle will create a 'moon shape' as seen below. This curve creates a parallel line with the free edge, ensuring that the base of the tip is consistently one-half to one-third across the nail plate. If the free edge is irregularly shaped, the tip must be customized to be parallel with the irregular line.



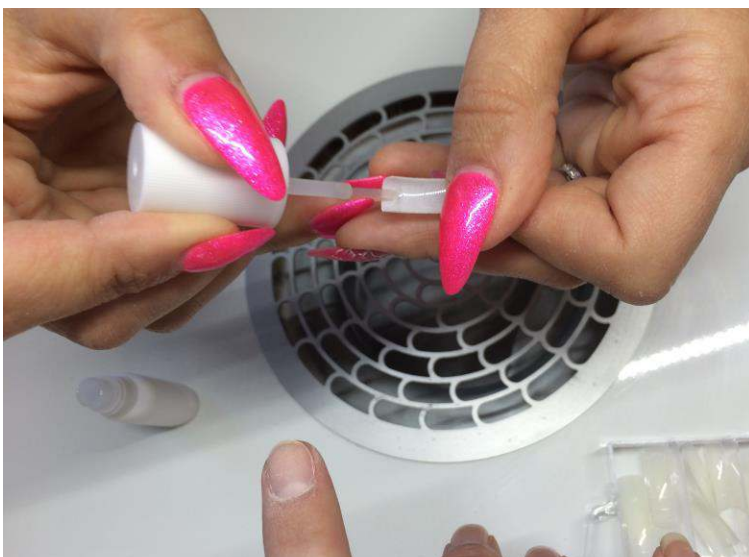
The tip to the left has been customized to fit an arched natural nail plate. *The scooped centre of the tip allows the arched centre of the nail plate to sit deeply into the tip. This also allows for the pointed edges 'ears' of the tip to sit flush on the nail plate.*



This tip is being given a final check for the correct fit.



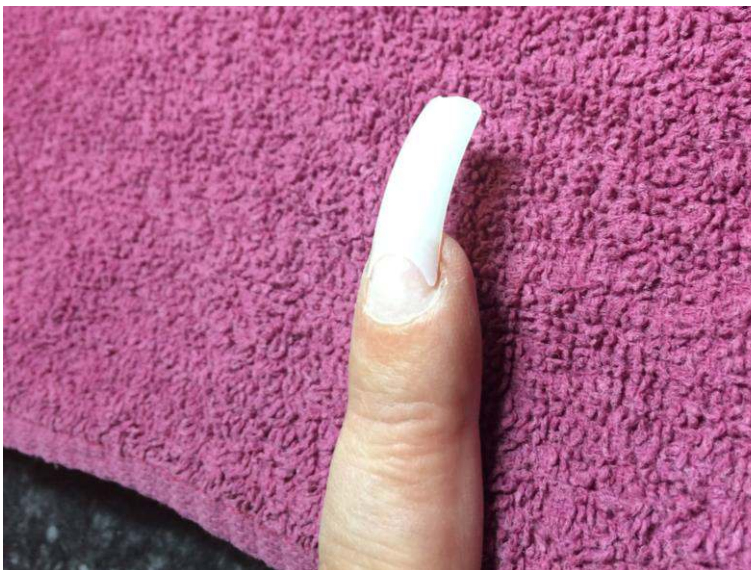
Clean the natural nail to remove any oil, debris, or dust. It is important to make sure that the tip is also clean.



Apply a thin layer of adhesive to the base or the free edge. Follow the manufacturer's specifications. If adhesive squishes out from the tip when it has been pressed onto the nail plate, too much adhesive was applied. Adhesive is water soluble. A viscous or 'thicker' adhesive will break down slower in water. A 'thin' or 'runny' adhesive will break down faster. A medium viscosity adhesive is a popular choice because it will not run or flood over the cuticles, and it breaks down slower in water.

Thin adhesives usually set faster and are suitable for smooth nail plates. A viscous adhesive is more suitable for nail plates that have irregularities such as ridges. The thick adhesive can fill in the low spots.

Attach the tip by first sliding it until the stop meets the free edge of the nail. Smoothly 'rock' the tip forward into place and press it firmly onto the plate, holding it for the recommended amount of time. The rocking forward will squeeze out air bubbles.



To the left is a tip, freshly glued. It is now ready for trimming and shaping.

Objective Two Self-Test

1) What are the steps in preparing the natural nail plate?

2) What are the steps in customizing the form?

3) How is the free edge shaped?

4) Why does the esthetician pre-blend the tip while holding it?

5) What movement is used to adhere the tip while squeezing out air bubbles?

Objective Two Self-Test Answers

1) The steps to prepare the natural nail plate are:

Sanitize both sets of hands.

Push back the eponychium.

Remove excess cuticle.

Buff the natural nail plate.

Reduce the free edge (if necessary)

Shape the free edge to match the ridge / stop line.

Bevel the underside of the free edge.

**Some of these steps can be performed in a different order.*

2) Select the correct tip.

Shorten the well to between one-half and one-third the length of the nail plate.

Pre-blend the tip.

Test the tip for fit from sidewall to sidewall.

3) The free edge is shaped by beveling the underside to a 45° angle using a 240 grit or higher file.

4) Pre-blending the tip while holding it prevents accidental damage to the natural nail plate which can occur when the tip is blended while it is on the natural nail.

5) The tip is applied with a rocking motion.

Objective Three

When you have completed this objective, you will be able to:
Describe shaping and blending of nail tips.

Shaping and Blending



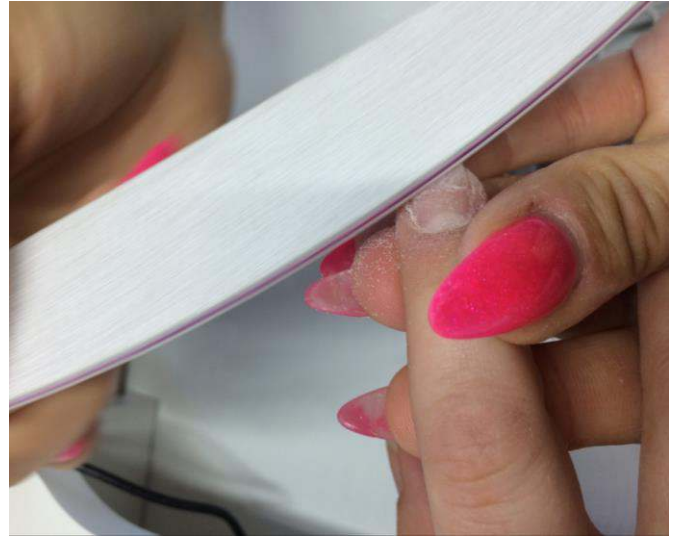
To the left are the proper cutters for a tip. Tips must not be cut with natural nail clippers; these clippers can crack or shatter a tip.

Trim the tip so it is slightly longer than the finished length. Hold the cutters perpendicular to the tip while cutting. Cut in a smooth, firm motion. The tip will be filed and shaped to the finished length. Filing and shaping is more accurate than cutting. An esthetician should always place a finger over the portion of the tip that will be removed. This prevents the tip from flying into the air.





The base of the tip is the only place that is thinned. It is reduced down until it is transparent.



Start with a low grit file (80-100) to blend the base of the tip. As the base becomes translucent, switch to a higher grit file (120-180). Remember to thin the base but not remove it. Check frequently with a cleaner. How the finger looks while wet is how it will appear when complete. Always remember to not damage the natural nail plate.

This tip has been fully blended. Note the air bubble at the top left (it appears white). This tip was put on incorrectly (with an air bubble) to help apprentices identify what an air bubble looks like. A tip that has an air bubble must be removed and a new tip applied. A bubble is often caused when a tip is 'over rocked' and lifted off the free edge, or not enough glue was applied.



Shape the sides of the tips so that they line up with the nail folds. Bevel the underside to 45°.



Shape the free edge and double check it with the file to make sure that it is perpendicular to the finger.



Periodically clean the tip and inspect its shape.





A final buffing is done with a soft foam buffer block. Because these blocks are flexible, they have a decreased chance of digging too deeply into the natural nail plate. Double check that the nail is fully prepared and cleaned for product application. A primer may be applied at this time to the natural nail.

Care and Maintenance

A properly applied tip with enhancements should last two to three weeks before a fill is required. Broken nails should be repaired immediately to prevent further breakage.

Objective Three Self-Test

1) Why is the tip cut longer than its finished length?

2) Which colour is an air bubble under a nail tip?

3) What should be done with broken nail enhancements?

Objective Three Self-Test Answers

- 1) The tip is cut longer than its finished length, because it will be filed and shaped to its finished length. Filing and shaping is more accurate than cutting.
- 2) An air bubble under a nail tip appears white.
- 3) Broken nails should be repaired immediately to prevent further breakage.

Objective Four

When you have completed this objective, you will be able to:

Demonstrate applying a full set of nail tips.

Tools and Equipment

Full set of tips	Tip cutters	Adhesive
PPE	Nail primer	Buffers: 150-180, 240
Dust vent	Trash receptacle	Chairs
Workstation	Cotton wipes	Cuticle pusher

Have the correct tips been selected for shape, curvature, and width?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the eponychium been pushed back and the cuticle removed?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the natural nail plate been thoroughly buffed?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the underside of the free edge been beveled to 45°?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the free edge been shaped to match the stop line?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have the tips been narrowed (if necessary)?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the tip been pre-blended?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the adhesive been applied and the tip correctly adhered? (No air bubbles)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have the tips been cut to length?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have the tips been finish blended?	<input type="checkbox"/>

Instructor verification:

Objective Five

When you have completed this objective, you will be able to:

Describe applying nail forms.

What is a Nail Form?

Many different nail forms are available, and each may have unique characteristics. All nail forms share some commonalities. As a basic description, a nail form is a sticker that is placed under the free edge of the natural nail, closely hugging the hyponychium. The form projects past the free edge, and a building material is layered onto the natural nail plate and the form. When the form is removed, the material remains, appearing as an artificial nail. Three different forms are shown below.



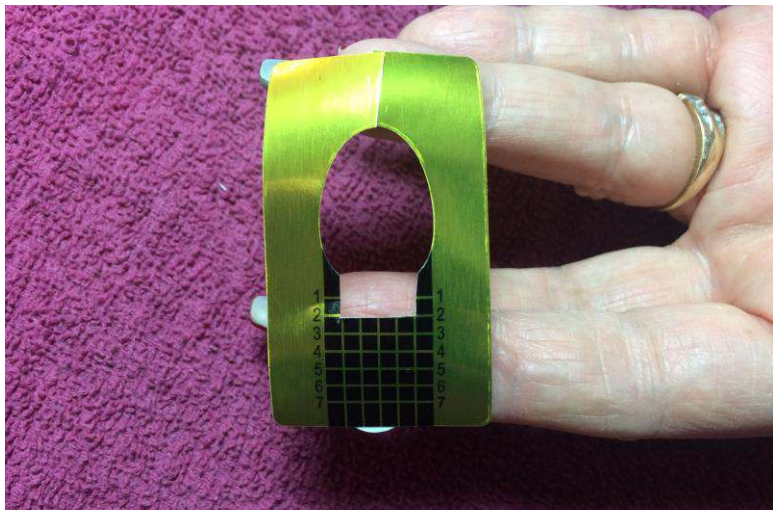
Many different forms are manufactured. Forms can differ based on thickness, material type (from metallic to plastic), size, hyponychium shape, length, and grid patterns. It is possible that an esthetician will use different forms on one client's hand in order to match the shape of the fingers. A form can be cut to fit an irregular hyponychium. Some estheticians feel that forms are faster than tips because forms do not require as much shaping, nor do they require blending to remove the seam; in addition, the finished product does not put pressure on the natural nail plate. Some estheticians feel that enhancements created with forms are more comfortable and natural feeling. Either way, both tips and forms must be customized to fit a client's natural nail plates.

Modifying Forms

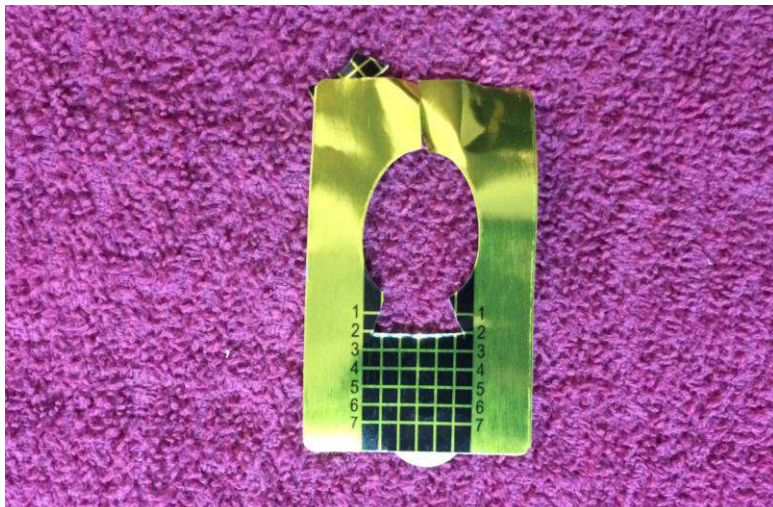
Forms can be modified in a large number of ways, for a large number of purposes. Below are some of the modifications, accompanied by a brief explanation.



The 'punch out' of a form can be added to the underside, acting to provide more support for the form.



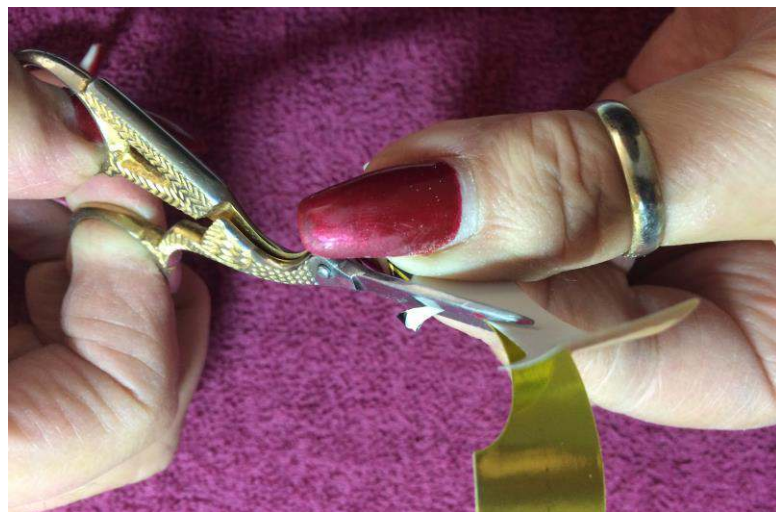
This modification will help the form fit a client who has a strong C curve.



This modification will help the form fit a client who has a very wide nail or a 'hammer thumb.'



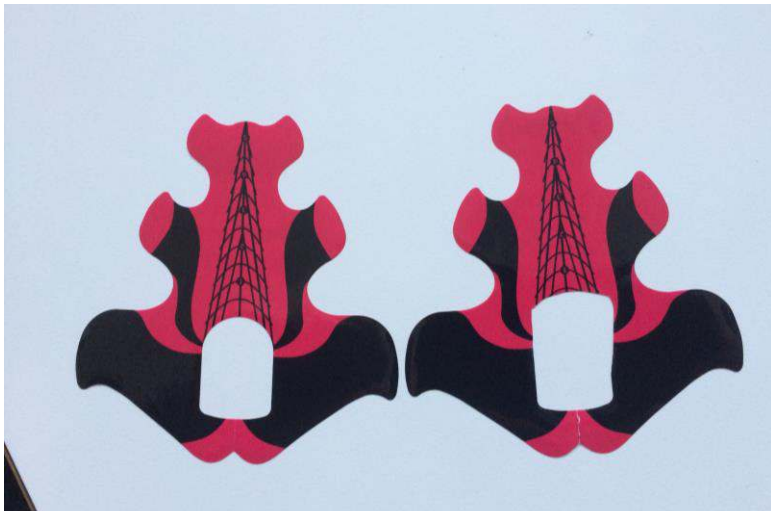
This modification will help the form fit a client who has an overgrown hyponychium.



This photograph shows how to make a general modification that allows a form to fit snugly on many irregularly shaped fingers. Fold the form in half and then cut out a 'V' into the contact point.



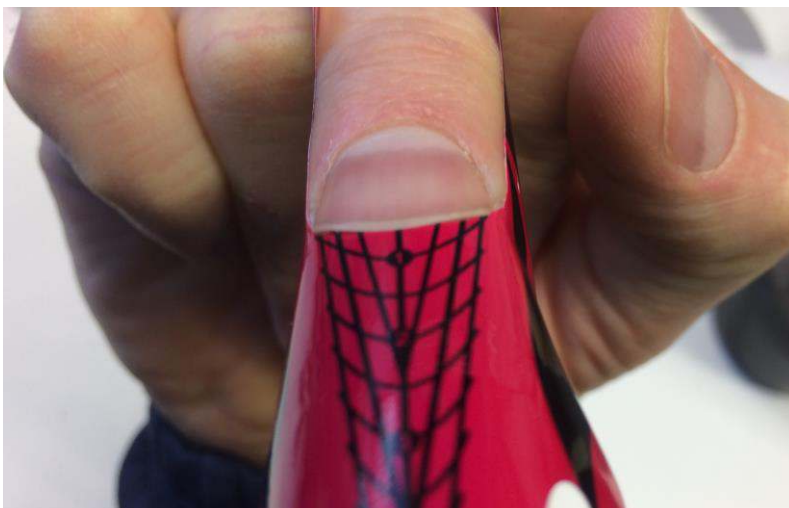
Here is the finished form with the 'V' shape cut out.



The form on the far left has not been modified. The form on the near left has been modified to fit a large, flat finger. The form must be modified so that it fits the curvature of the smile line, the C curve, and tightly from sidewall to sidewall.



The photograph on the left shows the form fitting all three dimensions noted above.



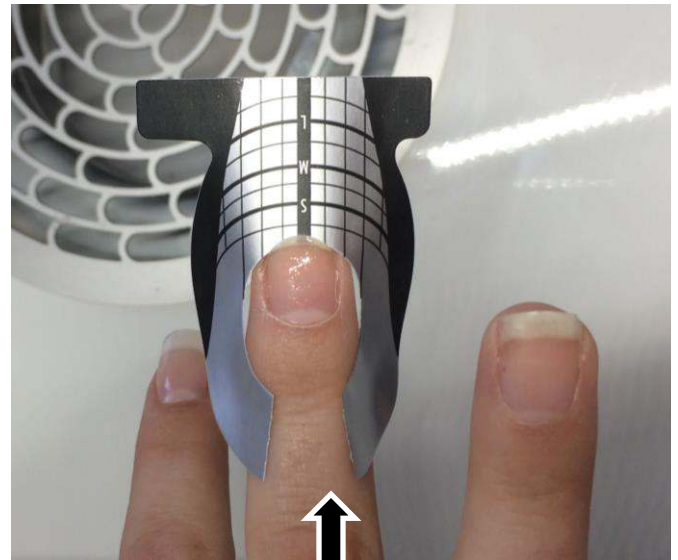
Note how the form fits the C curve and is tight to the sidewalls. If the form is not tight to the sidewalls, product is likely to seep under the form, or product may not be placed where the extension meets the smile line.

The preparation of the natural nail plate for forms is identical to that of tips. Once the natural nail plate has been prepared and cleaned, a primer may be applied.

It is important to realize that a form can be applied to a finger in different positions. If the finished nail shape is a stiletto, the form must be applied in a certain position; if the finished nail shape is round, the form is applied in a slightly different position. In all cases, a form has a centre line, and the centre line will always line up with the finger's centre line. The finished nail shape in this ILM is square-based, so the forms have been applied in a position that will create a square-based finished shape.



A thin layer of base gel being applied.



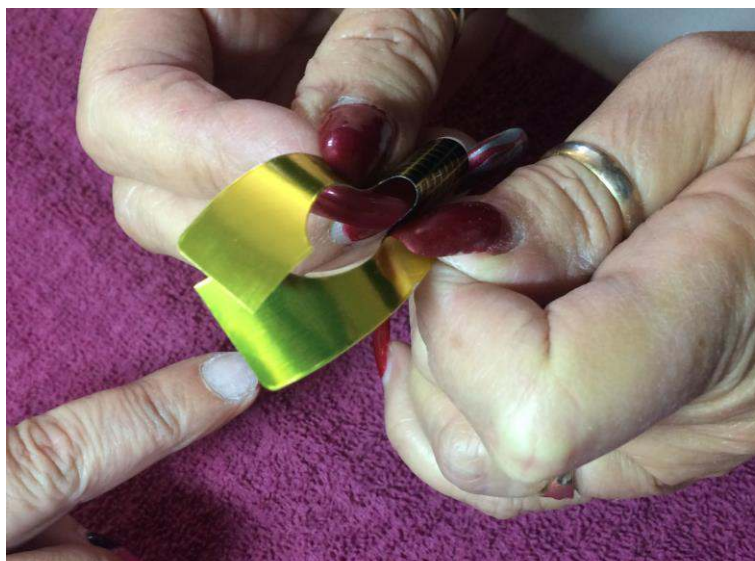
Apply the form so that the centre line is in line with the finger, fitting snugly against the hyponychium.

The correct placement of a form that will create a square-based shape is especially dependent upon where it meets the corner of the free edge and the sidewall. In order to line it up perfectly, it may be easier to 'extend' the sidewalls by drawing them onto the finger. As the form is closed around the finger, the corner of the form should line up with the lines that have been drawn. See *blue arrow below*.



Gently shape the form and squeeze it closed at the bottom, under the finger.





In the photograph on the left, the form is being pre-shaped to fit the curvature of the finger. In the following two photographs, the form is being applied to the finger. The form is shaped and squeezed onto the finger.





The photograph on the left shows the final pinch to close the tip of the form. If the nail is wide, the form may not be able to close. The form's removable tab can be used to close the end. Below is a photograph of the form fully applied.

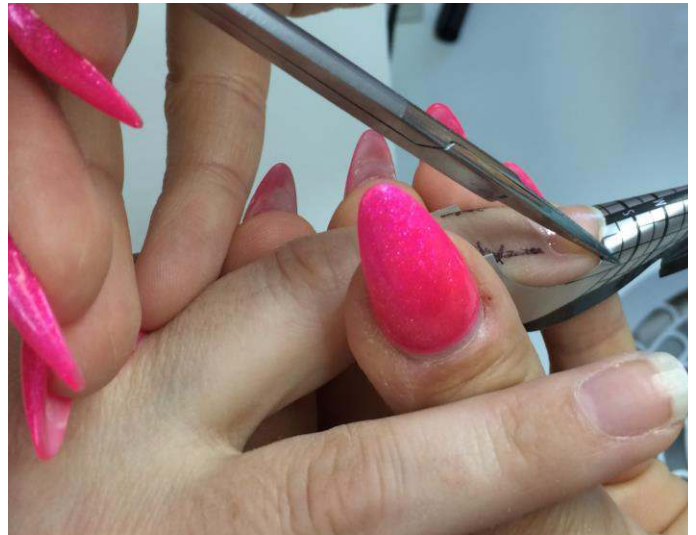


After the form is applied, check it against the straight edge of a file. For beginners, the form should look as if it is coming off of the nail in line with the natural nail growth. In the photograph to the left, a gap has been created (where the builder will be placed), and the form rises to meet the file. This means that the builder will be thicker over the nail plate, but will decrease in thickness as it moves toward the free edge. The slope of the form depends on the desired finished shape and length.



The following pages depict a technique that is considered by many to be advanced.

If a form is not manufactured with a release cut, the form can be nipped at the corner of the natural nail. Cutting the form will allow it to be shaped tightly against the finger. Remember to fit the form from sidewall to sidewall. This is essential for a high quality finished product. One cut is made on each side.



When making custom release cuts, make sure to cut down and away from the work area. Common mistakes include cutting straight down or cutting into the work surface. After cutting, re-pinch the form. Re-pinching gives the form its final shape. Double check to make sure that it comes straight off the finger.



Re-pinch the form to give it a final shape. It is a good idea to double check the form to make sure that it comes straight off the finger.



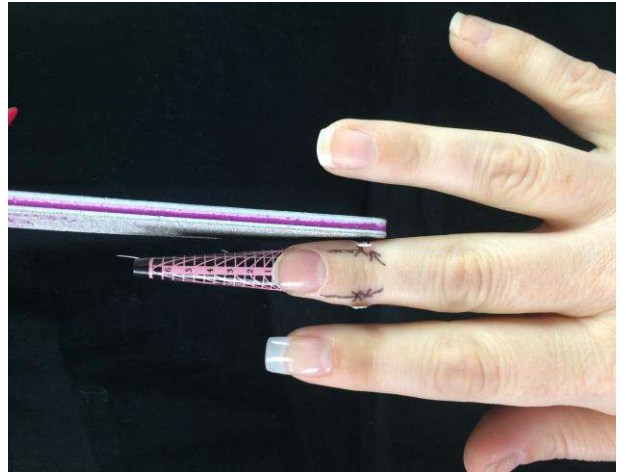
The same process is shown below, with a different style of form, one that has release cuts and an additional adhesive pad.



Snugly place the form against the hyponychium, keeping it in line with the finger.



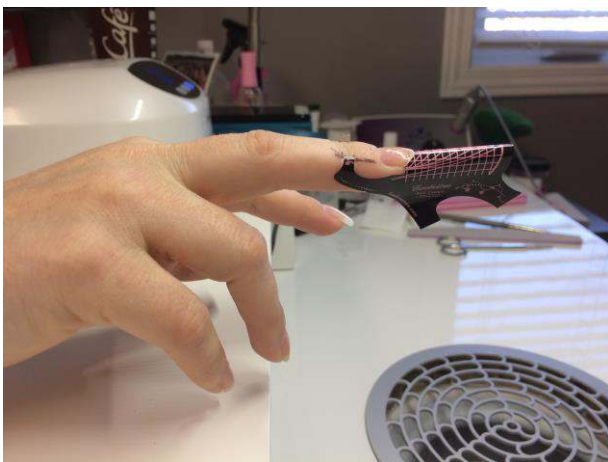
Shape and pinch the form.



Check the side of the form for alignment with the finger.

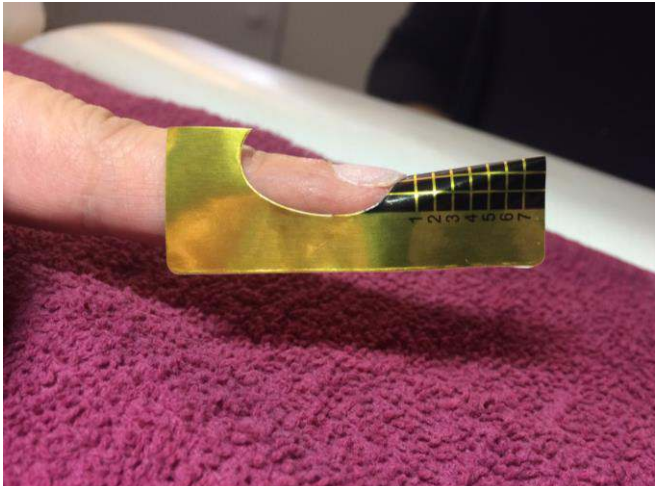


Check the top of the form to make sure that a gap exists and the tip rises.

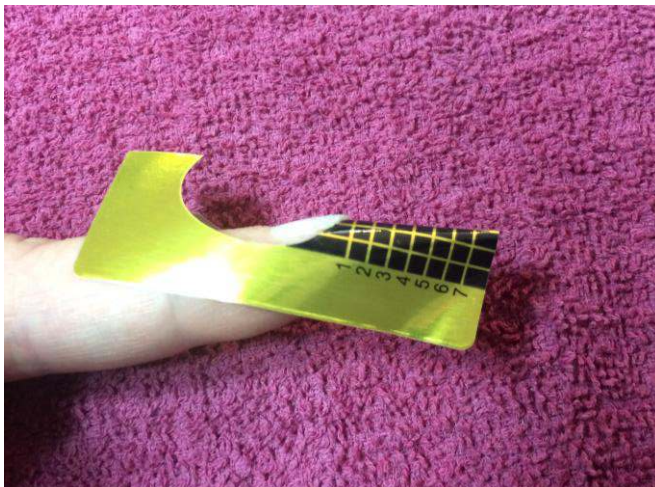


Here is the finished product. Notice the two, long, black adhesive pads of this style of form.

Common Placement Errors



This form has been placed pointing too high. This will cause the enhancement to be too thin and / or point upwards.



This form has been placed pointing too low. This will cause the enhancement to point downward.



This form has been placed not in line with the finger. This will cause the enhancement to look crooked.

Care and Maintenance

If a nail plate dehydrates, the sidewalls will curl inward and downward, pulling the natural nail plate away from the extension. This dehydration can occur in dry climates, or during changes of the season. For dehydrated nails, a cuticle oil should be applied under the nail every day to keep the natural nail hydrated and pliable so it keeps its shape. In extreme cases, a protein primer is applied to the natural nail plate before product is applied. Pay special attention to apply the protein primer to the free edges.

Objective Five Self-Test

1) In what ways can forms differ?

2) What can be done if a client has an irregularly shaped hyponychium?

3) What can be done to make it easier to line up the form with the sidewalls?

4) What are the general steps in adhering a form?

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____
- d) _____
- e) _____
- f) _____
- g) _____
- h) _____

5) What is the purpose of release cuts?

Objective five Self-Test Answers

- 1) Forms can differ based on thickness, material type (from metallic to plastic), size, hyponychium shape, length, and grid patterns.
- 2) The form can be cut to fit an irregular hyponychium.
- 3) In order to line it up perfectly, it may be easier to 'extend' the sidewalls by drawing them onto the finger
- 4) Prepare the nail plate.
Modify the form if necessary.
Apply form.
Shape and pinch form.
Check form.
Re-pinch form.
Check form alignment from all profiles.
- 5) Release cuts allow the form to be fitted closely to the finger where the corners of the nail plate meet the sidewalls.

Objective Six

When you have completed this objective, you will be able to:

Demonstrate customizing a full set of nail forms.

Tools and Equipment

Full set of forms	Workstation	Gel base coat
PPE	Nail primer	Buffers: 150-180, 240
Dust vent	Trash receptacle	Chairs
Cotton wipes	Cuticle pusher	

Has the eponychium been pushed back and the cuticle removed?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the natural nail plate been thoroughly buffed?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the underside of the free edge been beveled to 45°?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have the forms been applied in a straight line with the fingers?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have the forms been shaped and pinched?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have the forms been checked from all profiles?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have the forms been re-pinched?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have the forms been re-checked from all profiles?	<input type="checkbox"/>

Instructor verification:

Module Summary Self-Test

1) What is the common range of lengths for forms?

2) Which type of tip creates the sturdiest finished product?

3) Why is a nail plate buffed by hand after it has been cleaned with an electric file?

4) How does an esthetician know if they have applied too much adhesive to a nail plate?

5) While finish blending a tip, what precaution is taken?

6) After a tip has been fully blended and shaped, which two profiles are checked?

7) What home care regimen can be practiced by clients who have natural nails that tend to curl away from an extension?

8) Which common mistakes are made when making release cuts?

9) When placing forms, what is true for all nail shapes?

Module Summary Self-Test Answers

- 1) Forms commonly range from 3 to 10 mm.
- 2) Full well tips create the sturdiest finished product because have the largest well area.
- 3) The nail plate buffed by hand to clean any spots that were missed by the electric file.
- 4) If adhesive squishes out from the tip when it has been pressed onto the nail plate, too much adhesive was applied.
- 5) While finish blending a tip caution is taken to not damage the natural nail plate.
- 6) After a tip has been fully blended and shaped, the sides are checked to make sure that they line up with the sidewalls, and the tip is checked to make sure that is perpendicular to the centre line of the finger.
- 7) The client can apply cuticle oil every day to keep the natural nail hydrated and pliable.
- 8) Common mistakes include cutting straight down or cutting into work surface.
- 9) When placing forms for all nail shapes, the centre line of the form must line up with the centre line of the finger.