STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Hair Color Service SOP

Document no.	SOP-SAL-004
Revision	1.0
Owner	Salon Manager
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Review cycle	Every 12 months

1. Purpose

To make sure every hair color service is preceded by an allergy check, applied with the correct formula and timing, and finished with aftercare guidance, protecting both the client and the colorist.

2. Scope

Applies to permanent, demi-permanent and semi-permanent hair color services. General consultation steps are covered by a separate SOP.

Definitions

Patch test	A small application of the color product to the skin, done in advance per the manufacturer's instructions, to check for an allergic reaction.
Strand test	A test application of the mixed formula to a small section of hair to preview color result and processing time.
Processing time	The time the color formula needs to stay on the hair to develop, set by the manufacturer's instructions.

3. Responsibilities

Colorist	Confirms the patch test, mixes and applies the formula, monitors processing, and gives aftercare guidance.
Front Desk Coordinator	Schedules the patch test appointment and confirms it is on file before the color service is booked.
Salon Manager	Reviews any adverse reaction, approves formula changes for sensitive clients, and manages chemical waste disposal.

RACI matrix

Activity	Colorist	Front Desk Coordinator	Salon Manager
Confirm a valid patch test is on file	R	R	A
Mix the color formula	R/A	-	I
Apply color and monitor processing	R/A	-	I
Respond to an adverse reaction	R	I	A

Activity	Colorist	Front Desk Coordinator	Salon Manager
Dispose of chemical waste	R	-	A

R = Responsible, A = Accountable, C = Consulted, I = Informed

4. Materials and PPE

Materials, tools and systems

- Color formula card and client profile history
- Color, developer and mixing bowl or bottle
- Foils, sectioning clips and tint brush
- Timer
- Cape and skin barrier cream
- Chemical waste container

Personal protective equipment

- Disposable gloves
- Tint cape and towel
- Eye protection when mixing

5. Procedure

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.1	**Confirm a current patch test on file** Before booking or starting a color service, confirm the client has a patch test on file completed within the manufacturer's recommended window, typically 48 hours before application. **Checkpoint:** No color service proceeds without a documented, current patch test on file.	Front Desk Coordinator	☐
5.2	**Perform the patch test if needed** If no current patch test is on file, apply a small amount of the diluted color to the skin per the manufacturer's instructions and schedule the color service for after the required waiting period. **Warning:** Never skip or shorten the patch test waiting period, even for a returning client, if their patch test has expired.	Colorist	☐
5.3	**Review the consultation and desired result** Review the client's consultation notes, reference photos and previous formula history before selecting today's formula.	Colorist	☐
5.4	**Protect the client's skin and clothing** Apply a skin barrier cream along the hairline and drape the client with a cape and towel to protect their skin and clothing.	Colorist	☐
5.5	**Mix the formula to specification** Mix the color and developer at the ratio specified by the manufacturer, using a clean bowl or bottle and gloves. **Warning:** Never combine different product lines or ratios outside the manufacturer's instructions.	Colorist	☐
5.6	**Perform a strand test if needed** For a new formula combination or a significant color change, apply the mixed formula to a small, hidden strand first to preview the result and timing.	Colorist	☐

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.7	**Section and apply the color** Section the hair cleanly and apply the formula in the order needed for the technique, working efficiently so all sections process evenly.	Colorist	☐
5.8	**Set the timer and monitor processing** Set a timer for the processing time specified by the manufacturer and check the color's development partway through without disturbing the full application. **Checkpoint:** Color development is checked against the strand test result before rinsing begins.	Colorist	☐
5.9	**Rinse thoroughly** Rinse the hair thoroughly with lukewarm water until the water runs clear, then apply a color-safe shampoo formulated to stop the processing.	Colorist	☐
5.10	**Tone or treat as needed** Apply a toner or bond-building treatment if the desired result calls for it, following the same formula and timing discipline as the base color.	Colorist	☐
5.11	**Style and record the final formula** Style the hair to complete the look, then record the exact formula, timing and technique used in the client's profile for future visits.	Colorist	☐
5.12	**Give aftercare guidance** Explain color-safe washing frequency, recommended products and when to book a touch-up before the client leaves.	Colorist	☐
5.13	**Respond to an adverse reaction** If a client reports burning, swelling or a rash during or after the service, stop and rinse the area immediately, notify the salon manager, and advise the client to seek medical attention if symptoms are severe. **Warning:** Treat any sign of an allergic reaction as urgent. Rinse the product off immediately and do not attempt to continue the service.	Colorist	☐
5.14	**Dispose of chemical waste** Dispose of leftover color, developer and used foils according to local regulations for chemical and hazardous waste.	Colorist	☐

6. Quality checks

- Every color service has a current patch test on file before application.
- Formula and timing used are recorded in the client profile after every service.
- Processing is monitored against a strand test or the manufacturer's stated time.
- No adverse reaction goes unreported to the salon manager.

7. Records

- Patch test results and dates
- Color formula card per client
- Adverse reaction reports, if any
- Chemical waste disposal log

8. KPIs

- Percentage of color services with a current patch test on file
- Number of adverse reactions reported per quarter
- Color correction or redo rate

- Client rebooking rate for color services

9. Common mistakes

- Skipping the patch test or its waiting period because the client seems familiar with the product.
- Mixing color and developer at the wrong ratio without checking the manufacturer's label.
- Not recording the exact formula used, causing inconsistent results at the next visit.
- Continuing a service after a client reports burning or discomfort instead of stopping immediately.

10. Revision history

Revision	Date	Description	Reviewed by
1.0	September 15, 2026	Initial release	Alexa Uskova

Approval

Prepared by	Approved by	Date

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