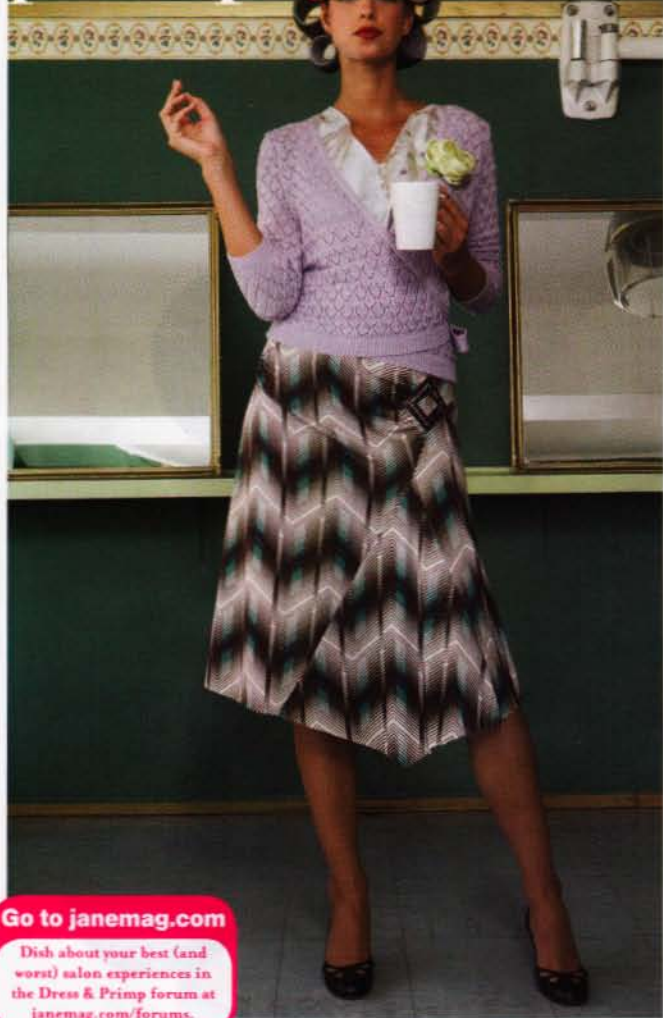


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Salon survival guide

You **asked for a trim** and left with a botched Sienna. Here's **how to get what you really want.**

We've heard it again and again, y'all feel intimidated at salons. So listen up: It's a mechanic's job to fix your car and a stylist's job to make you look *fiine*. And if you're not happy, they're not happy. But it takes effort from both sides (ahem, that would include you) to get it right. To prove the point, we spoke with tons of *Jane* readers, then grilled top industry insiders about the exact steps you should take from beginning to end to ensure that not only will you leave the salon all psyched, you won't feel like you paid a bazillion dollars for hair that's just "okay." —Courtney D.

Before you even pick up the phone ...

The ideal way to find the right stylist/colorist is to ask someone with kick-ass hair where she got it done and who did it. Better yet, ask several people and maybe you'll discover a common salon. And be realistic: If a girl has the opposite hair type of yours, don't bother. Or, stake out salons in your area. Do you want a choppy dark shag? Then don't go to the place with all the blown-out blondes walking out. And if you bring a magazine picture for reference, again, be real. Point to a pic of someone with similar coloring and hair texture, and don't expect the stylist to precisely re-create the 'do, because you'll just end up disappointed. Patrick McIvor, of Patrick McIvor Color Studio in Bethlehem, Pa., suggests that you bypass the token celeb photos and instead "take inspiration from the fashion world" for ideas.

Always get a consultation

Every stylist we interviewed agrees: Get a consultation first. It seems so simple, but for some reason, most people don't do it—even though it's quick (about 15 minutes) and free (no need to tip). BTW, if a salon wants to charge you for a consultation, move on. (Exception: If you want a straightening treatment, there may be a fee because they have to test chemicals on your hair.) The goal of a consultation is to find someone who will really listen and "gets" what you want—and it may take a few consultations at different salons to find him/her. Yasmin Ysmael, events coordinator at NYC's Butterfly Studio, says it helps to be up-front about your hair type and budget so they can set you up with the right person. According to Patrick, the worst mistake is going in with no idea of what you want, hoping someone can "fix"

your hair. Indeed, the most dangerous thing you can say is, "I'm up for anything," because you might just get... anything.

You have no money. We know.

Hey, it takes bucks to get your hair done, especially if color is involved. If you're willing to make the initial investment, we can help you get your money's worth and str-r-etch out the weeks between costly appointments (see "3 Sneaky At-Home Tricks to Prolong Your 'Do" on page 64). Peter Oon, color director at NYC's Julien Farel salon, says that even though a single process is cheaper up front, it requires more upkeep—and more money—in the end because roots are super-obvious when they start growing, especially when you go from dark to light. Highlights take more work and are more expensive, but **continued**

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Headed they look natural for a longer time period because your real color is still mixed in. A whole head of stripey highlights can end up being mace high-maintenance, too, so start with subtle thin pieces that frame your face.

To maintain highlights, Peter Oon of Julien Farel salon says you should make at most four appointments a year for minimally damaged, natural-looking hair. If you absolutely hate your natural color and want it all gone, Peter says, "it's more cost-effective to change the tone, not the color. So get your mousy brown colored to a rich chestnut or chocolate," instead of, say, bright red. "Then when you need a touch-up, get a gloss, which can be half the price and extends color for another four to six weeks."

As for cuts, Antonio Prieto, owner of NYC's Antonio Prieto salon, says that long layers are budget-friendly because if cut correctly, they last a long time. "A good haircut should last about eight weeks," Antonio explains, "and even though short hair requires more maintenance, if after two weeks it starts to look shapeless, the cut isn't great." In that case, maybe you need to try something (or someone) else. Also, some stylists argue that razor cuts cause split ends, so if you're split-end prone, ask for someone who's down with scissors.

Learn to be specific

If you get salon amnesia—meaning you know what you want until you get to the appointment and your head goes blank—Patrick McIvor of Patrick McIvor Color Studio suggests that you write your ideas down. Hell, bullet-point 'em! Just be extra specific and beware of vague terms like "boy cut" and "piecey layers," because they can conjure up a variety of styles. For instance, "people have different definitions of 'short,'" Antonio says. "To some it means shoulder-length, but to me it's a crew cut."

Also, you need to tell your stylist/colorist everything about your likes and dislikes, your lifestyle, your hair history and, most important, how much time you devote to your hair. Here are some examples:

I love bangs, but I don't want to get a trim every month.

I like that my hair is very light, but I think it looks banana-yellow.

I don't own a blow-dryer and I spend just

five minutes on my hair every day.

In the past, my red color has turned brassy.

Yasmin Ysmael of Butterfly Studio adds that if you're getting a chemical process, be honest about any processes you've had in the past year, or risk fried hair. No one will judge, we promise.

Say something if you hate the way it's going

A stylist or colorist will not be insulted if you ask for a breakdown of what's happening during and after the process—it's better to speak up than to sit there cringing. Antonio recommends saying, "Hey, since this is our first time together, I might ask for some explanations as we go." Simple but effective. If you're nervous, it's okay to vocalize that and ask the stylist to snip little by little. If you look up and the person is taking out an unauthorized chunk, say something immediately. Adrian Castillo, from Sally Hershberger at John Frieda salon in L.A., advises, "Politely reiterate what you want specifically, even if it means saying the same thing over again."

In the end, if you flat-out don't like the results, don't slink out and go somewhere else. Tell the stylist what you don't like, such as, "It's too dark." When it comes to color, almost anything can be fixed, and hair will always grow back from a cut gone awry. Most problems stem from a breakdown in communication, but if you think you spelled out what you wanted and the stylist still didn't do a good job, talk to the salon manager about finding someone else. The fix-it appointment will probably be free because, again, they want you to be happy when you leave the salon.

Be prepared to tip

Bring cash for tipping, because most places don't allow tips on a debit or credit card. Standard tipping is 20 percent for the cut/color, and anyone else involved in the process—shampooer, blow-dryer—should also get a few bucks (Yasmin recommends \$3 to \$5, or whatever you can afford). Don't be embarrassed to ask about tipping at the front desk if you aren't sure what's appropriate. PS: Bad at math? Ask the receptionist to calculate the numbers for you.



The most awkward moment of all

There are two ways to handle a Chatty Cathy who gives you the hard sell in pushing the salon's products. Antonio suggests beating him/her to the punch by bringing your own products and tools to the appointment and asking the stylist how to use them with your new cut. And Yasmin says to use this line: "No thanks, I have stuff at home that I like—maybe next time." No explanation needed. See the goal here? It's for you to be all cool and collected so you can leave worrying about nothing but how jealous your friends will be of your slammin' hair. Keep us posted.

3 SNEAKY AT-HOME TRICKS TO PROLONG YOUR 'DO

1 Cut your own bangs. On dry hair, pick up a pair of professional shears (\$24, Sally Beauty Supply stores) and hold them vertically to your bangs. Starting at one side, use your free hand to pull a section of bangs tight between your index and middle fingers. Snip teeny-tiny bits across that section. Keep cutting in sections all the way across your forehead.

2 Refresh fading color. Colorists tell us their secret is L'Oréal Professionnel ARTec Color Depositing Shampoo, \$13. Apply when the fourth-week fade starts in.

3 Trim split ends without screwing up your layers. First, brush your hair over your head and in front of your face, so it hangs like a curtain. Then take your shears and snip across the bottom, and in the middle, cut a slight upside-down V.