

beauty news

12 Expert Nail Polish Hacks To Step Up Your DIY Manicure Game

BY DANA BURKE, ASSOCIATE SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER, JANUARY 11, 2016, 9:30:00 AM



Anyone who says they've never struggled through an at-home manicure is lying. (Let's be real: painting with your non-dominant hand is basically torture.) While it's nice to pamper yourself to a professionally done set on the regular, not everyone has the time—or the disposable income—to make it to the salon. On team DIY? We polled 10 beauty experts for the nail polish hacks they use every day to make your next foray into nail art go a little more smoothly.

Set polish and add shine. "Hair spray can be applied to nails to help your manicure set faster. Not only does it cut drying time to a quick two minutes, it also adds a level of shine."—Nick Penna, owner of SalonCapri

Create a cuticle shield. "Take a small amount of Elmer's Glue and outline your nail along the cuticle, apply polish, wait for the glue to dry, then peel off. This will peel off any polish you may have gotten on your cuticles."—Erica Marton, manicurist at Face Place New York, who has worked with Queen Latifah, Cameron Diaz, and Rashida Jones

Wipe away mistakes. "One of my favorite things to do when I'm painting my own nails is use a topcoat as a cleanup tool. If you get lacquer anywhere on the cuticle area, just keep working until you finish your manicure. Then at the end, dab on a small drop of the same topcoat you used for your manicure and wipe away the mistake with an orangewood stick. You don't want to do this right away because the lacquer needs to set to avoid a smeared mess. The dab of topcoat will reactivate the lacquer just enough to get it to come off your skin cleanly."—Taylor Daniel, [Morgan Taylor](#)

Smooth over imperfections. "When drawing or dotting a nail art design with nail lacquer, mistakes or imperfections can happen. Instead of starting over, what I do to fix it is dab my nail-art brush into polish remover and slightly go over the mistake. This will allow you to erase the mistake rather than starting all over. Don't press too hard or you will ruin your design instead of fixing it."—Morgan Haile, [Morgan Taylor](#)

Avoid discoloring. "The only surefire way to keep a manicure from discoloring is to not expose your nails to elements that can stain them. The best solution is to wear gloves while cleaning and definitely while cooking, because sometimes spices and food coloring additives discolor manicures."—Danielle Candido, lead educator for [Gelish](#)

Start clean. "To avoid the accidental mishap of polish on the skin, apply lotion or oil on your hands before polishing. Then, carefully, with a lint-free pad, gently rub alcohol on the nail plate only. The oil or lotion will allow any polish to be removed easily from the lateral folds or cuticle, and not stay in the dry areas of your fingers. This will give you that perfect, clean look after polishing."—Julie Penton, nail technician at Frenchies Modern Nail Care

Quick dry. "If you don't have a lot of time and need your nails quickly dried, use a blow dryer on a high temperature and a high speed between coats. It dries really well and it's smudge-free."—Tristan Terrell, Los Angeles-based mobile nail technician

Simplify glitter removal. "Elmer's Glue can also be used as a basecoat for temporary party nails! Love glitter but not ready to make the commitment? Use glue as a basecoat, then apply glitter. It will peel right off the next day."—Erica Marton

Make it matte. "If you have a favorite nail polish but want to try it out in a matte look, add a little cornstarch to it to give it a matte finish."—Lauren Carelli, director of operations at Blushing Brides Boston

Store bottles correctly. "Store your nail polish bottles upright, and look for nail lacquers that contain no harmful toxins such as formaldehyde and formaldehyde resin, which are commonly used to prevent the formula from separating in the bottle. Without these harmful toxins, it is important that the bottles be kept upright to prevent separation, and to shake the bottle before each use so your nail lacquer is as good as new."—Elin Dannerstedt, founder of [NCLA](#)

Layer in luminosity. "Tired of your sheer color going flat and dull? Use a metallic/pearly light color first. Next, layer your favorite sheer over it as a second coat. This makes the lacquer shine and not lose its luster. This trick can be done with all colors."—[Elle](#), celebrity nail stylist who works with Jennifer Lopez, Lena Dunham, and Blake Lively

Fix your black mani before your next appointment. "Use a black Sharpie to fill in chips in your black manicure, then apply a topcoat to even things out. This will hold you over until your next manicure."—Erica Marton