

Men's Issues

The Art of The Shave

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I am asked, every day, by my clients and, by aestheticians, whenever I speak publicly, how to shave properly.

It's a loaded topic and one that creates apprehension among men and professionals alike.

To that end, I wanted to give you something that, I hope, can help. A tutorial.

Use this to familiarize yourself with The Art of The Shave. Then, cut it out and make copies for your male clients. It's a little piece of magic that will help you help your clients, showing your guys that you truly care about their skin health and their plight among the Brotherhood of Shavers.

This Brotherhood is as diverse as the World. Regardless of age and race, most daily shavers encounter three main "issues": Discomfort or Pain when

shaving, Razor Burn/Bumps and In-grown hairs.

It doesn't matter **when** you shave. It **does** matter where: In the shower or at the sink, immediately after. Before is no longer allowed. For everyone. Period.

1. Skin Prep: Every guy (issues or not) needs to prepare his face for battle.



Normal, Normal/Dry, Normal/Oily skins, with & without mild breakouts:

1. Wash and Exfoliate: Your mug is the final thing to wash and exfoliate in the shower. Skin has been warmed and moistened during the shower; pores are open and beard hairs have been plumped with moisture. Now is the time to cleanse and "scrub".

By "scrub" I don't mean pasty concoctions of seeds, shells, nuts or boulders...way too aggressive. They scratch more than exfoliate. You're about to do damage, so the less you cause pre-shave, the better. Look for an exfoliant that has the texture of fine sand.

You need to **feel** an exfoliant before you buy it. Hit a professional skin centre or somewhere where testers are available. Once you've found the right texture, grab it. If it isn't a cleanser/exfoliant combo, save time by dosing out the recommended amount in your hand and mix it with your usual dose of cleanser. Wash as usual...**gentle** circular motions (fingertips only) over non-bearded areas focusing on areas of excess oil production/congestion. Use more pressure on bearded areas, still using fingers/circles. Rinse well.

Dry, Sensitive/Sensitized, Acneic skins, or those with numerous breakouts:

1.1. Scrubs are out for you guys. Across the board. Abrasives will irritate dry and/or already sensitive skins and can spread acne and breakouts. Instead, dry/sensitive skinned dudes, look for enzymatic exfoliants (you won't be exfoliating everyday) and, for acneic and breakout prone guys®, look for

cleansers with glycolic acid or salicylic acid bases which exfoliate without grit. Find these types of products by seeing a skin therapist at a skin care centre/spa or aesthetician.

**For truly acneic and heavily breakout prone guys, shaving is something you should avoid altogether or, at least, until your lesions are healed. Instead, embrace your scruff and use a beard trimmer to keep your facial hair looking trimmed and sharp!*

2. Shave Prep: Every guy (issues or not) needs to prep for battle.

All beards, All skins:

1. Pre-Shave Oil or Pre-Shave Guards: These provide an invisible layer of "cushioning" and slickness. Some are, indeed, oil-based (Oil is not a dirty word!), others utilize silicones or silicone/oil blends. For some, a good Pre-Shave Oil/Guard is all you'll need for the shave...you can see where you're going and the slickness is enough to execute a pain-free, super-close shave. Most of us, however, will need to use it as a base layer for protection. You won't blitz through these products...the dose is a few drops!

2. Shave Mediums: Rich, cream-like mediums are the ideal for everyone. Fine to medium hairs, use your fingers to massage the product into the beard. The cream will almost disappear leaving a thin, slick residue. You don't need a lot. Re-moistening the areas with water will slick it back up.

Gents with denser, coarser beards might want to opt for a badger hair shaving brush. Very vintage, these dapper tools actually serve an important role. The bristles physically lift the hair and exfoliate the under-brush, while ensuring that

the skin beneath is properly lubed. Badger brushes range widely in price. In this case, spend as much as possible. Higher prices denote the quality of hair used in the brush. A superior quality brush—when properly cared for—can last you 15 to 20 years.



3. The Shave:

1. Choose your weapon: While nothing gets a closer shave than a classic straight-razor or similar "Safety Razor"...both require time and education to master. Visiting an old-school barber or grooming specialist you can learn the ways of "the force". The road is long but, for those who dare to, the results are unmatched.

For the rest of us, a modern cartridge blade is the way to go. **Take heed: No more than 3 blades!!**

DO NOT BE FOOLED by the 4, 5 or 42 blade incarnations. They are unjust punishment.

No man shaves with a single pass over an area. It's usually 2, and more often

(unnecessarily) 3 or more. Work with me: using a 3 blade cartridge, three passes over one area then equals 9 blades passing over skin that was damaged by the first pass. That's six blades too many. Do the math with a 5 blade cartridge.

Just listen: Prep your skin, apply Pre-shave, Shave Cream, grab your 3 blade and then...

2. Attack!

Become intimate with the direction of your hair growth. For most, from cheeks to jaw-line hair grows downward. Lift your chin, tilt your head a bit to the side and gently pull the skin on your throat downward. This creates the tautest skin possible. Starting at the side-burns, and in one fluid motion, bring the blade down to the jaw-line using light to medium pressure. You don't need to re-shave the same pass. Rinse the blade under hot **running** water. Repeat until you're at the nose. Now do the other side, same procedure.

Next, neck up to jaw-line. Usually the hair starts growing upward, often a spiral (or cowlick) is also present. Ignore that for now. Lift, tilt, tauten and, again, starting near the ears, shave in single passes upward until you reach the chin area, rinsing after each pass.

Re-moisten the entire shave area to slick it all back up. Now, upper lip. Draw your top lip down, stretching and tightening it. Shave down again, from nostril to lip, outside and middle in two passes. Rinse blade. Repeat on the other side.

Then, lastly, lower lip and the chin. This usually grows down. Curl your bottom lip over your bottom teeth and, again, lift your chin, gently pulling the skin down-

ward. Single, short, even strokes in the same direction as growth from lip, over the chin. Part one is complete.

Re-moisten again. If patches are dry or no longer slick, add a touch more product, but just enough to slicken it again. Following the direction of the hair, feel for patches that may have been missed...particularly under the nose, and on the throat. If all looks/feels good, stop here!

If you feel any stubble, or are the type of guy who always shaves against the grain, don't! Instead of going dead against the growth, come at it diagonally. This prevents tearing, blunting or ripping out the hair and leaves an unperceivable point—generally enough to prevent an in-grown.

Give your face a quick splash with luke-warm water; then cool. Ta-dah!!

4. Post- Shave: As important as Pre-Shave prep.

All beards, All skins:

1. Post-Shave Balm: A Post-Shave Balm does a few very important things. It works as a mild astringent to ensure pores are clean and closed, has mild anti-bacterial properties preventing any bacteria migration, soothes any irritation and rehydrates, aiding the healing process and going a long way to prevent in-growns. Smooth it on after the cool water splash.

2. Moisturizer: Like any skin care regimen, finishing with an appropriate moisturizer is key. This continues to calm and soothe, repair and nourish your shredded manliness. Check with a skin therapist/aesthetician for your appropriate moisturizer and other skin needs.

I hope this helps to demystify and calm anxieties around shaving. Remember, it is an art and, as such, requires practice to perfect. Patience, good products and proper technique will be rewarded with skin that is calm, cool and collected. ■



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