

Why You're Not Getting the Hair Color You Want

A Consumers Guide to Hair Coloring

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Color You Want*

A Consumer's Guide to Hair Coloring

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2023

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INTRODUCTION

We've all seen an amazing color on a TikTok or Instagram model that we'd love to have. You say, "I'll bring this inspo to my colorist and when I leave the salon, it'll look just like hers!"

Only...when you leave the salon, it looks nothing like it. In fact, it might look worse than when you walked in! 'What the heck is going on?!' you say. Maybe you went back...and now it's more damaged, and the color looks EVEN FURTHER FROM THE INSPO...HOW HARD CAN THIS BE?? Desperate, you go to your nearest beauty supply and the clerk says, 'Oh yes, just put this on all over and it'll look great!' Well, of course, now it has varying levels of a greenish tint. Frantic, you get online and start searching for '*hair color correction*', or '*hair color specialist*'.

This is where I usually come in. Except now, it's my duty to tell you that you're even farther from your 'dream' color than you were before the first, second, or third attempt...whichever the case may be. Because now, ALL the different colors and processes must be dealt with. **KEEP IN MIND THAT EVERYTHING YOU'VE EVER DONE TO YOUR HAIR, STAYS IN YOUR HAIR, BECOMES A PART OF ITS STRUCTURE** ...and will influence anything you'll do, or be able to do, to it in the future. (unless, of course, you cut it)

In *Why You're Not Getting*, I hope to explain the *why** ...so perhaps you'll have a better understanding of the **basic** process involved in hair coloring. Definitely not trying to make you a colorist ...but hoping you'll have just enough knowledge to make good decisions where your hair is concerned...whether you do it at home, or in a salon.

*The following guide is one colorist's viewpoints, experience, and perceived knowledge. There are no scientific claims.

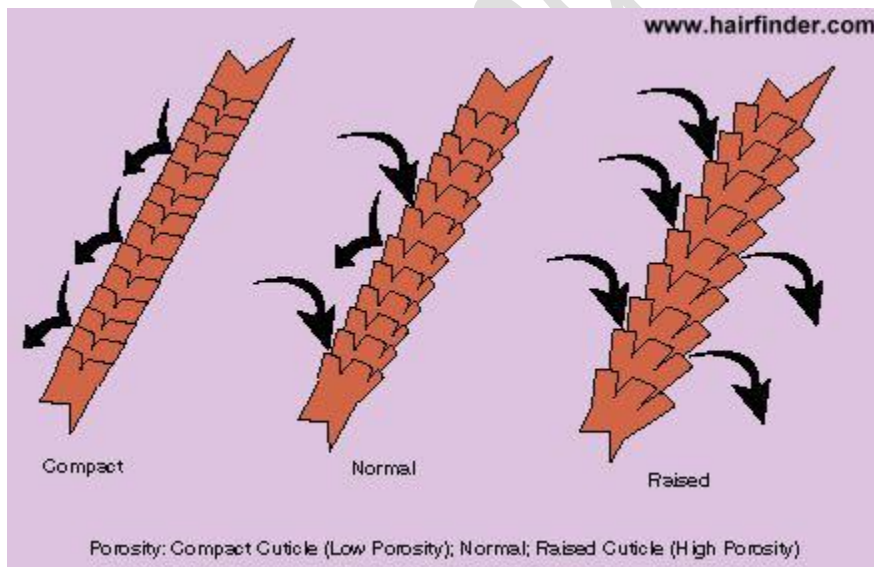
BASIC TERMS

Here is some basic terminology...

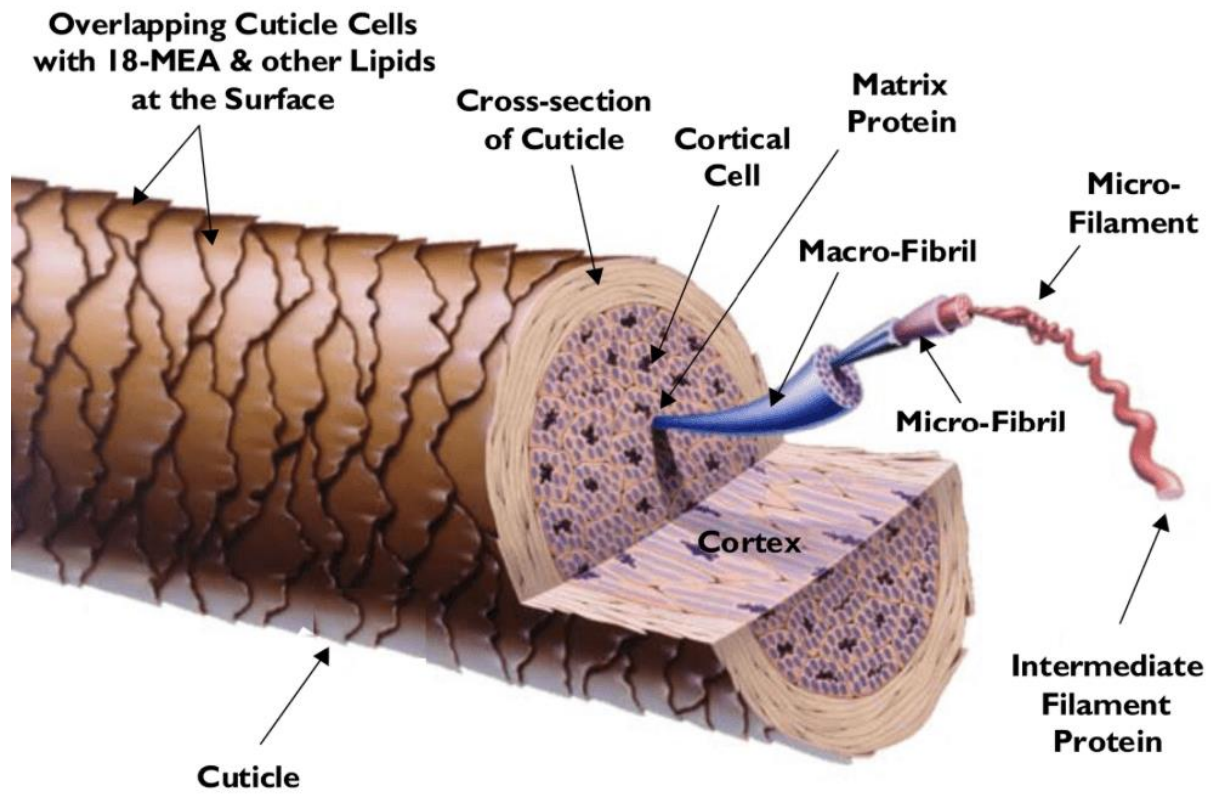
VIRGIN HAIR- Hair that has had no color processes whatsoever.

COLORED HAIR- Hair has had **any** color process applied, be it semi, demi, permanent, lightener, etc.

HAIR CUTICLE- The outermost layers of the hair shaft. Think of the spears on asparagus. When peroxide or heat is applied, the cuticle is raised. The goal if you want healthy, shiny hair is to keep the cuticle flat (Compact) so it can reflect light. (See below)



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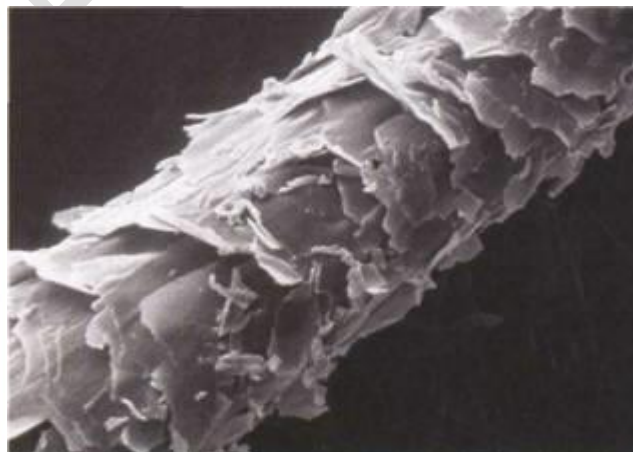


Hair strand

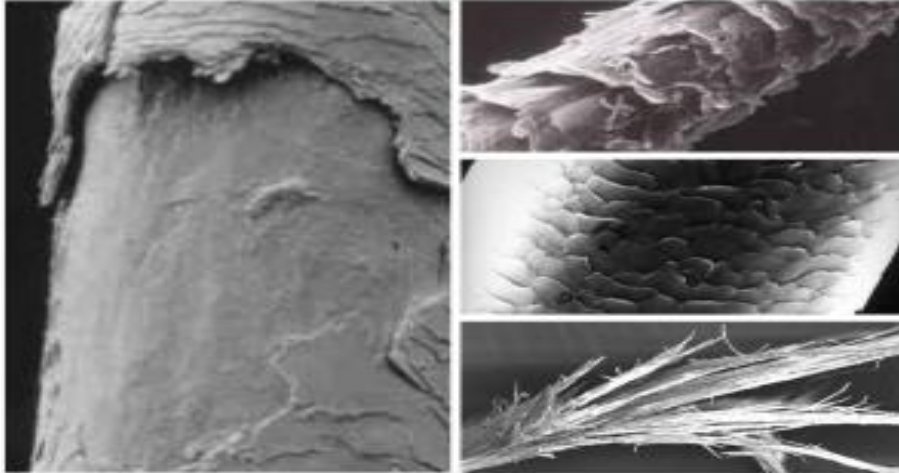
And here are actual magnified photos...



Smooth cuticle



Jagged, lifted cuticle



More examples of cuticle, last picture being what we call 'split ends'

POROUS/POROSITY- The ability of your hair to absorb. The more damaged the hair, (cuticle raised) the more *porous*, sponge-like (absorbent) your hair will be.

BASE COLOR- Referred as the color applied to the root on your scalp.

ASH- It is referred to the colors blue, violet, and green. Ash colors by themselves will not cover white hairs aka 'your grays'.

WARM- Referred to the colors red, yellow, and orange.

PROCESS- Refers to the 'process' used to color your hair.

SINGLE PROCESS COLOR- A color applied that is complete on its own, with one process/application.

DOUBLE PROCESS- Needs two separate processes to accomplish the desired result. One example: Lighten the hair, let it process, rinse, apply a toner, let that process, rinse. If another process is required, it's not a triple process, it's probably a color correction.

BALAYAGE- French translation is 'sweeping', ie: to sweep...initially painting freehand with no foils, etc. In modern times the definition of balayage has widened to include many techniques and tools and is defined; a technique for highlighting hair in which the hair color is painted on in such a way as to create a graduated, natural-looking effect.

HIGHLIGHTS- Hair that is separated (with foils, plastic wrap, balayage, etc) from the rest of your hair and made a lighter color.

LOWLIGHTS- Same as HIGHLIGHTS...except a darker color is applied. Lowlights can be any color from blonde to black. Just means you're depositing color, not lightening it.



1Auburn base with highlights and lowlights

THE LEVEL SYSTEM

HAIR COLOR LEVEL SYSTEM – Simply put, hair color levels is on a 1-10 scale. (some brands use 12) It is the level of lightness or darkness in your hair. Level 1 is black, to level 10 being lightest blonde (platinum). For example, If you have light brown hair (also referred to as dark blonde), you are a level 6, or medium blonde is a level 8. Redheads are not listed, they still follow the level system, but red is dominant in all levels.

This is important... All natural hair ...that means everybody on the planet, has some combination of the primary colors yellow, red, and blue in it. With light blonde, the dominant primary is yellow, then moves to primary red, and then primary blue dominates as you get to black. Ever seen black hair in the sunlight that has a blue cast to it? This is why.

Another analogy... get a paint set and put down a blob of yellow. Then a drop of red, and a tiny drop of blue. Mix that together and you get that beautiful natural blonde of a child. To get a medium brown, mix a blob of red, drop of yellow, tiny drop of blue. Are you starting to see why we are always fighting 'brassy' hair color? Blue is the only cool primary, and it doesn't show up in larger quantities until you get almost to black.

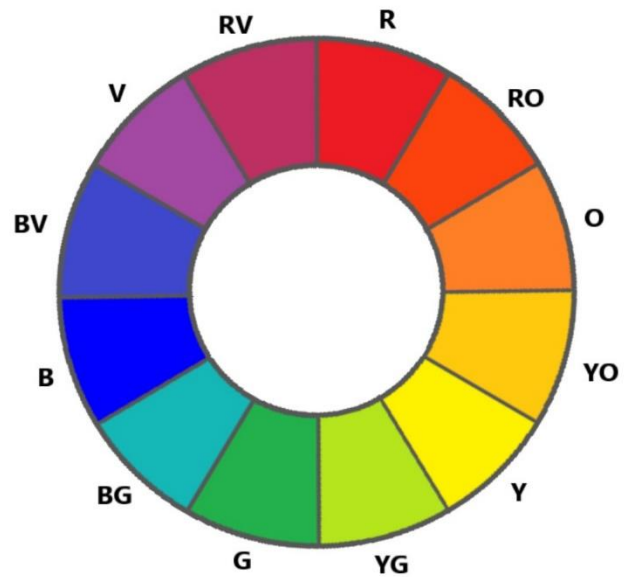
CONTRIBUTING/UNDERLYING PIGMENT- The color of pigment that is present at every level that 'contributes' to your color result. Here are the levels and the contributing pigment for that level...

HAIR COLOR LEVEL SYSTEM AND CONTRIBUTING PIGMENT

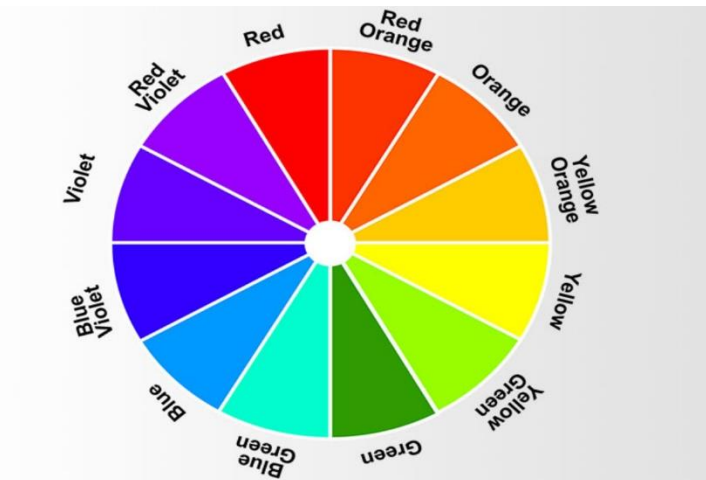
<u>Level</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Contributing pigment</u>
10	Lightest blonde	Palest yellow
9	Very light blonde	Pale Yellow
8	Light blonde	Yellow
7	Medium blonde	Yellow/Orange (yellow/yellow/red)
6	Dark blonde	Orange (red/yellow)
5	Light brown	Red/Orange (red/red/yellow)
4	Medium brown	Red
3	Dark brown	Violet = (red/red/blue)
2	Very dark brown	Violet Blue (dark red/dark red/blue)
1	Black	Blue = (blue/blue/darkest red)



Level	Underlying Pigment	Neutralizing Tone
10	Paletst yellow	Violet
9	Pale Yellow	Violet
8	Yellow	Violet
7	Yellow - Orange	Blue - Violet
6	Orange	Blue
5	Red - Orange	Blue - Green
4	Red	Green
3	Red - Brown	Green
2	Dark Red - Brown	Green
1	Black	



COLOR AND THE COLOR WHEEL



This is a COLOR WHEEL. A visual representation of colors arranged according to their relationship to each other. It could go on into infinite color possibilities, but I will just go into the first three layers, as shown above.

PRIMARY COLORS- The three primary colors are blue, yellow, and red. This is where all color begins. They are colors that cannot be created by mixing others.

SECONDARY COLORS- A color produced by mixing two of the primary colors. They are: Green (blue + yellow) Violet (blue + red), and Orange (yellow + red)

SECONDARY COLORS



TERTIARY COLORS- Colors created by mixing a primary and secondary color together. For instance, yellow (primary) + orange (secondary) = gold.

TERTIARY COLORS



COMPLIMENTARY (neutralizing) COLORS- A primary and secondary color that when mixed, neutralize each other...meaning, they create a tan to brown (depending on level). Notice these color are opposite each other on the color wheel.

They are: Green (blue+yellow) + red = brown/beige

Purple (red+blue) + yellow = brown/beige

Orange (yellow+red) + blue = brown/beige

Colorists use the complimentary colors to neutralize, or tone, a color we don't want.

If your hair is too yellow, we use violet to neutralize, for orange, it's blue, and for green, red does the trick.

IMPORTANT: Colors change from darker to lighter when applied to the level system. EX: The blue in a level 2 is midnight blue. The blue in a level 9 is sky blue. This is important to know especially when neutralizing (toning). If your hair is an orange level 5, the blue in a level 9 blue based toner is not pigmented (strong) enough to neutralize it.

A hair colorist thinks in terms of what combination of primary colors is in a formulation. You say Strawberry Blonde...I think yellow with some red, and a dash of blue. Carmel? That's 1 part blue, 2 parts red, 1 part yellow. ALL HAIR COLOR STARTS WITH THE PRIMARY COLORS.

TYPES OF HAIR COLOR

There are many different types of hair coloring products. Each one is designed to do something specific to help you reach your desired outcome...

PEROXIDE/ACTIVATOR- The catalyst that makes color work...it 'activates' the color. If you just put a tube of color on your hair, it wouldn't do a thing. Peroxide comes in volumes (strengths). The most common are 10, 20, 30, and 40. Simply put, the higher the volume, the more aggressive and faster it works...and the more it raises the cuticle.

GLOSS / TONER / GLAZE- Not any specific product, level, or color. It is any color you put on the hair with the specific goal to darken and/or change the tone of the hair. For instance, while not typical, a permanent or semi-permanent color may be used as a 'toner'.

SEMI PERMANENT COLOR – Basically sits on top of the hair and can only deposit color. It has no ability to lift...and usually fades away, unless your hair is porous. It requires no activator (peroxide). Think of it as a coating over the hair.

DEMI PERMANENT COLOR –Coats the hair, temporarily closes (forms a coating) over the cuticle, therefore adds shine. Has no lifting ability but is a little stronger, can go deeper into hair shaft, so it's a bit more permanent...especially if heat is used to process, or your hair is porous. It's usually used with a liquid-like activator and has minimal peroxide. Demi's are popular for toning. The entire processing time, it is depositing.

PERMANENT COLOR - Permanent color goes deepest into the hair and actually changes the internal structure. It requires an activator to work. It lifts (approx.) the first half of the processing time, and deposits tone the rest.

NOTE: If your hair is severely damaged (porous), even a color enhancing shampoo can become a 'permanent color'.

HIGH LIFT- Is usually used to get the lightest blonde possible (depending on your natural level) while depositing a tone in the same process. HIGH LIFT colors are typically ash based (blue, violet, green) so they will not cover white (aka gray). The white will blend with the blonde so it's not so obvious though. They produce the prettiest blondes when used on levels 7-10 (some 6's if hair is fine enough with very thin slicing) When used with the proper base color on levels 1-6, you get more of a caramel light brown. It requires an activator. 2/3 (approx.) of the processing time is spent lifting, the last 15 min or so it is depositing the tone. Tip: Anything level 6 or below, place a towel on the head (heat from your scalp helps the processing), and let it process for 55-60 min for a better color. I've read where some process up to 90 min.

LIGHTENER aka BLEACH- Bleach is the name that's commonly used. It's actually nothing close to being the bleach you wash your clothes with. In fact, your hair will melt fairly quickly when exposed to it. It got the nickname because ALL it does is take color out of the hair. A proper name is lightener, that's what I call it. This is the only color product that will significantly lift hair color that's been previously applied. Requires an activator and is lifting the entire time. Generally, the effectiveness fades gradually within an hour. You can leave it on longer than that, but fresh lightener should be applied over it if it's not to the lightness you want. It might not even get to the lightness you need in one sitting if there's stubborn layers of residual color(s). Don't forget the Olaplex!

BASED ON THE INFO ABOVE, THIS IS WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO STICK TO RECOMMENDED PROCESSING TIMES...SO THE COLOR IS ALLOWED TO COMPLETE THE CYCLE OF LIFT AND DEPOSIT.

HAIR COLOR 101

It's all about, well, color...and how colors interact with each other. If you've ever picked up a paint brush, you know if you painted a blue sky and tried to paint a yellow sun on top of it before it dries...the sun turned green. Ugh, why'd that happen? This is the same principal that is the foundation of *hair* color.

The same formula can be put on 10 heads, and I promise, you'll get 10 different color results. Why? To put it simply, there are many, many variables that go into the final result. Some of them are...Starting color, prior processes, contributing pigment, percentage of white, texture, thickness, porosity, age of hair, body temperature, care of hair, build-up on hair (this could be tons of different stuff), the list goes on. An experienced colorist knows how to use the variables as it applies to each client to produce the desired result... because no two people have done the exact same things to their hair with the exact same type of hair. See how it can get complicated?

Texture- All the variables are important, but texture is up there near the top. Fine hair processes must faster than coarse because it's not as dense. Think of a twig vs a branch. It would take more effort to cut through a branch, yes? EX: On clients with coarse, and/or thick hair, it is much more difficult to avoid brass. If applied with smaller sections, more product, and a longer processing time, you can avoid it somewhat. There's more to consider where texture is concerned...

Expanding on texture... Ever wonder why the hair in front of your ears is always darker right after it's been colored? It's because the hair is thinner and finer there. Finer hair processes quicker...the color should be put on last in this area, or a slightly lighter color. Hair that is dense, requires more product because there's more hair to process...and you should take smaller sections to get desired results. One head of hair usually has three different textures. Fine in the very front, medium in the body, and coarser, and/or thicker at the nape.

As you saw in the Level and Contributing pigment chart above, everyone's hair has some combination of the 'primary colors'. They are blue, red, and yellow. When you mix these three colors together evenly, you get brown. As I touched on previously, you've heard of 'blue black' hair? It's when the hair is so dark, it looks blue when light shines on it. That's because on our hair color scale of 1 to 10...1 being black, you have dominate blue pigment, mixed with a little red and yellow. Going up the scale, at mid-level 5 (light brown), your dominate color is orange (less blue, mostly red and yellow). At level 10, being lightest blonde...your dominant color is yellow (hardly any blue and red). This is why when you lighten your hair, it 'turns' a brassy orange...because most of us are in the mid-level ranges of 4-6...and orange is the dominant pigment. If you try to tone it and it's still looks orangey, what happened was the color formulation you put on it wasn't strong enough to lift out/control the contributing orange pigment. So when you say your hair pulls a lot of red or orange...well, everyone's hair in your level does, and even more if you have warm-toned eyes and skin.

The lesson here? And it's a big one. **YOUR FINAL RESULT IS A COMBINATION OF YOUR CONTRIBUTING PIGMENT, THE COLOR OF THE HAIR YOU'RE STARTING WITH, AND ALL PREVIOUS PROCESSES.**

Colors reflect off each other so be careful which colors you combine. Example: If your hair is a dark, cool red and you add yellow highlights...the red will now 'look' orange. The greater number of highlights, the more you will diffuse the red. So, if you want to maintain the integrity of the red, just put a few face-framing highlights in. This is the reason why your eye color 'changes' depending on the color of your clothing. Also, your 'gray' hair is not gray, it's white...it's the white and brown hair together that makes it look gray. **IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW THAT COLORS 'ABSORB' THE CHARACTERISTICS OF OTHER COLORS AROUND IT.**

DO'S AND PLEASE DON'T

Random things you should and shouldn't do...

Want your hair color to reach its upmost potential every salon visit? Do an exfoliating treatment just before your appointment. The treatment will take off any build-up and even out porosity for consistent, even deposit throughout. The color will last longer also. Explained in more detail in my ebook, **FIGHT THE FADE**. **DO:** exfoliate at least once a month. **PLEASE DO: Use MalibuC, Redken Pre-Art, or an equivalent exfoliating/clarifying treatments.**

No matter what, it is very important that you let your colorist know everything you can remember that you've done, or had done, to your hair...going as far back as the length of your hair. For instance, if your hair is 6 inches at its longest point...tell them what processes it's had in the last year. 12 inches...two years, etc. (hair grows about ½ inch per month) **PLEASE DON'T: take the chance that they'll be able to tell.**

FYI: The color black is achieved by a saturation of colors. EX: If you have a can of paint and you kept adding various colors to it, eventually it would turn black. If you keep pulling your permanent color through to the ends, it will continue to get darker. Keep this in mind as you read the next point...

Perhaps this has happened to you because I hear this a lot... 'I went to a salon and told them I wanted light brown on my previously colored hair, and it turned dark brown! So I applied a light blonde on it, and it turned black!!' Here's why that happened... AS A GENERAL RULE, color won't lift color, especially browns. Only lightener will lift previously colored hair with any consistency (well there's clear and highlift situations, but you have to know when to use it). **PLEASE DON'T: once you color your hair (especially with a 'permanent' color), apply further applications on top of it, too many times and too often, because it will begin to absorb the color, not lift it.**

What *really* causes 'brassy' hair? I hear that word a lot with new clients. 'It looks brassy.' 'I don't want brassy hair!' Rightfully so. What is the color combination that causes that ugly orangey color? (in addition to reasons we've already discussed) Brassy hair color happens when you mix the orange of your contributing pigment with, not enough, or too much blue (ash). I RARELY use 'ash' in my formulations. Remember, you need all the primaries in a color formulation. **PLEASE DON'T: use too much, or all 'ash' in your formulas.**

Ever wonder why your hair color seems to change as your roots grow out? Letting darker 'roots' grow out more than 1/2 inch will reflect a 'brassy' tone to rest of hair. Why? Remember we just talked about colors reflecting off each other? Your cooler, darker natural base amplifies the warmth in the lighter hair...and vice versa. Also, the heat from your scalp is instrumental to optimal lift and tone. The further away the scalp, the less strength the hair color has...simply speaking. Optimum time between touch-ups should be no more than 3 weeks if you're lifting more than 2 levels (unless you're highlighting). And get on a regular schedule...consistency is the most important element to avoid banding and striping. **Please DON'T: wait too long between touch-ups**

Nature has a way of keeping it all together as far as hair and skin color compatibility. For instance, as your hair gets more white, your skin tone changes to accommodate. Point being, that just because your hair was dark brown when you were a teen, does not mean you should maintain that color in your 50's, it's no longer your 'natural' color...and your skin tone is no longer compatible with it. My first determination in deciding what color level to use...is to match/stay within two levels of what your natural color is present day. If you're still coloring your hair dark brown and your natural hair is mostly white, you need to lighten up...literally! Also, if you lighten up, your roots won't look 'screamin white' after only 1-2 weeks! (you know what I'm talking about) Stand back and wait for the compliments! The only exception is if you've 'grayed' prematurely. That means your skin will support a slightly darker color. ***PLEASE DON'T: color your hair dark brown if your natural color is white (or predominantly so)***

If your eyes are warm (brown, green) you are complemented best with warm colors. It also means that you have a higher concentration of red/orange pigment...that is tougher to lift out. Maybe you should give up on that desire for platinum hair because your hair will continue to fight the process unless you have a lot of patience, time, and money to get it there. 'But Gwen Stefani does it!' you say. If you watched closely, it took over a year for her hair color to be consistent throughout, and healthier. Like I said, it's possible...but it's a long hard road...***especially*** if you have previously colored hair. My point is, I'm not saying it *can't* be done...I'm saying in most cases, it *shouldn't*. *It will be a long time before you like your hair again.* ***DO: seek out a hair color specialist if your hair needs to be lifted more than 2-3 levels...and you want a pretty color.***

'Too cool' color brows can make your hair color and skin take on unwanted brassy tones. ***PLEASE DON'T: forget the brows!***

Think very carefully before covering highlighted hair with a much darker color, especially black, or even dark brown. It's an expensive, and damaging road back to a lighter color once you tire of your dark hue and want a change. Here's why... Black/dark brown hair is heavily pigmented, very unpredictable and inconsistent when lifting. This is because of the varying degrees of porosity, and the number of times you've applied the dark color. For instance, the hair near the root will lighten to a pale yellow while the ends will not lighten to more than burnt orange because the hair on your ends is more porous (its older and its had more color applications) so it absorbs and holds color much more than the younger, less processed hair near the root. If you lighten it more than it wants to go, it will be severely damaged...that is, if it stays on your head. Also keep in mind, that just because you cover your highlighted hair with a darker color, it's still highlighted (compromised) hair underneath. In my experience, you can get away with lightening hair twice...maybe three times if it's low and slow and with a bond builder. After that, it's likely gone. There are treatments available that allows us to take the lightening further, and limit damage, but you have to know what you're doing when using them. **PLEASE DO: Seek out a color specialist before making substantial color changes...and please resist the temptation to go from light to dark and back again.**

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE LIGHTING

Here come the primary colors again! What you need to know about how lighting affects your hair color...

Below are before/after pics when I moved into my new salon and changed the lighting they provided. Wow! You don't realize how warm lighting is until you see it side by side with more neutral lighting. In the ballast on the left are the bulbs I had just changed. In the second pic, I was amazed at how the walls look tan on the left. Also note warm tones reflecting onto the cabinet (bottom right)!



er Salon



The lighting and decor in my salon are now specific for hair coloring. The lighting is such that it mimics natural sunlight at the perfect balance of warm and cool...early afternoon. Simply put, outside lighting reflects coolest (dominant color blue) in the morning, warmer (dominant color red) as the day progresses. 'True' color refers to that time in the day when the reflection of the sun has the perfect mix of warm and cool. By using this neutral lighting in the coloring process, a client's hair looks good in both warm and cool lighting. (Note that I did not say it looks the same). The walls in my salon are white, because again, it will reflect...as you saw in the salon pics.

Here's a common scenario... client comes in, sits in my chair, and says, "Well, my color looks great here but looks so different in my bathroom mirror, so please make it ashier!" To this I explain...All lighting has different 'tones'. Home Depot has a display that has 5 different examples of the tones their bulbs come in. When you see them all together...you can really see the difference. For instance, bathroom lighting is softer/warmer (more red and yellow) to make our skin look more appealing. Kitchen lighting is brighter and cooler (more blue) for optimal sight when preparing food. When you go to a fine restaurant, the lighting is even warmer...makes us feel relaxed. It can also make platinum hair LOOK gold...or brown hair LOOK red. An extreme example if you would walk into a room that has vivid green lighting...your hair would look green, right? That doesn't mean your hair is now green. The yellow or gold in your bathroom lighting is more subtle, but that doesn't mean that's your actual color. Your hair takes on the reflection of the lighting that surrounds it. Does this explain why you notice your color 'changing' depending on where you are?

CONCLUSION

I hope you have a better understanding of how hair color works. Your new knowledge should show that a woman with dark brown hair can't just buy, say, a Medium Ash Blonde box color, and expect her hair to be the color on the box. At the salon, you can't look at the color samples and say, 'This is the color I want' ...and expect that there is a corresponding tube that will automatically give you the desired color. It's a bit more complicated than that. 😊

Successful hair coloring requires respect for the canvas (your hair), a deep understanding of color, color formulating, experience in how the many variables work together on each individual head of hair, and what your hair will and will not do. Even with vast experience and knowledge, no two heads are the same, so know that the most experienced colorists have the Color Gods in their contact list.

It's not 'rocket science'...but there is a creative skill required to put art and science together to produce a beautiful color, while respecting the integrity of the hair.

Treat your hair like it's a fine fabric...respect it, coax it, understand its limitations. Never demand more than it can give you. The reward is beautiful hair that everyone will notice and compliment.

If you have any questions, or need further clarification... please DO send me an email at sherrie@sugarlandcolorsalon.com

Thank you for allowing me to share my passion,

Sherrie

Last, but most definitely not least... I'd like to thank my supportive family of 'non-colorists' whom, with their tireless input, kept me on point to successfully finish this ebook.