

How to File

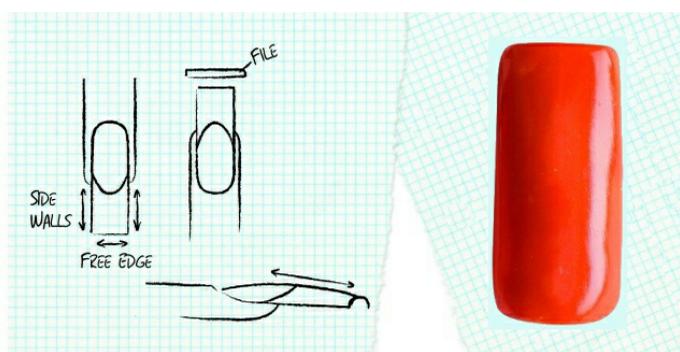
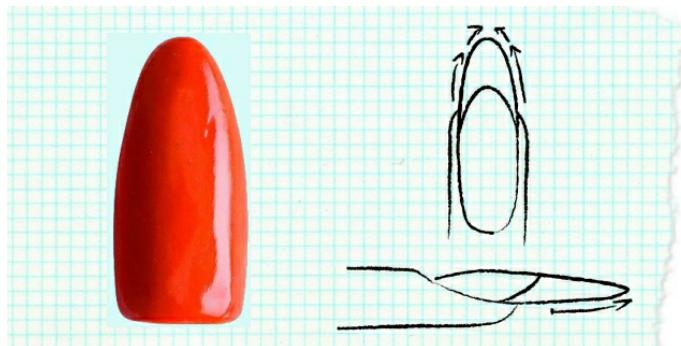
Five Basic Nail Shapes

Most clients lean toward one of five basic nail shapes: square, round, oval, squoval, or pointed. Though other blended combinations of these shapes exist, these five are the most common. Use this guide to help you decide on the proper shape for each client and to learn some techniques for filing it just right.

THE OVAL

The oval shape is an attractive nail shape for most women's hands and can work on long nail beds and short ones as well. Ovals can be longer to accentuate a long nail bed, or they can be shorter to complement a shorter nail bed. The oval can add length to a nail while retaining the softer curves of the round shape.

How to File: Begin by straightening your sidewalls and making sure they are even. Then begin filing from the side of the nail toward the top, using smooth, arching motions with the file. From there, work your angles on both sides and around the free edge to smooth into the oval shape. The finished oval should have a nice balance between the cuticle shape and the free edge.



THE SQUARE

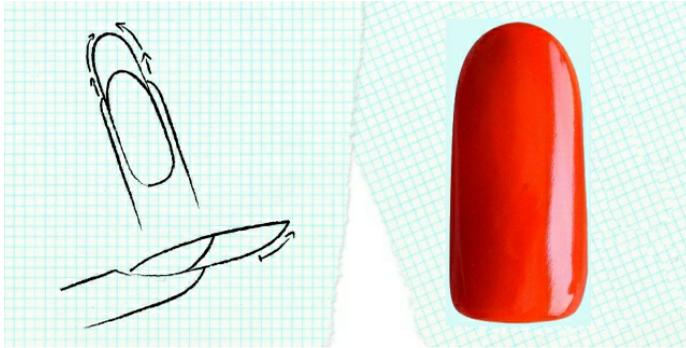
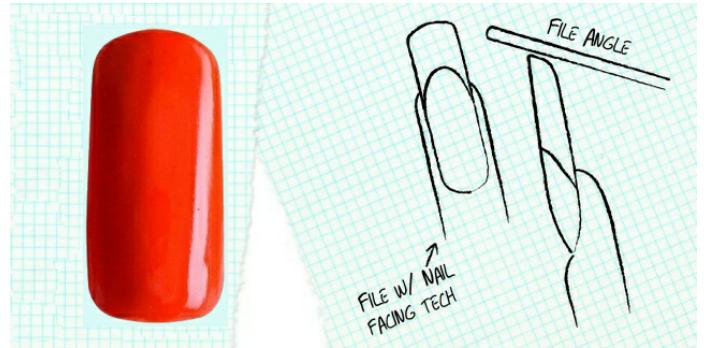
The square nail is the classic acrylic shape — straight side walls, two sharp points on the tips, and a balanced C-curve. It is the staple shape for the traditional French manicure and is used frequently for detailed nail art designs. Avoid this shape for natural nail beds that are shorter and wider, as it will make the nail appear shorter and stubbier. For longer nail beds, the square can complement the nail and add length to the finger.

How to File: Shape the free edge and side walls first with a medium-grade file (150 grit). Then turn the client's hand around to straighten the free edge, noting that when looking at it, the file should be perpendicular to the nail to achieve the hard square. File the side wall straight up and then change the angle to blend. Repeat this on the other side. Once both sides are finished, use angles to lightly feather and bevel the nail and to sharpen the corners.

THE SQUOVAL

The squoval nail is essentially a conservative square with the length of a square nail but the softer edges of an oval. Squoval nails add versatility, enabling short, wide nail beds to carry length without appearing oversized.

How to File: To file the squoval, first begin with the square to make sure the sidewalls are straight. Then tilt the file underneath the corners and file back and forth from the underneath up to gradually take the corners off. Round only the part of the tip that is past the free edge to avoid taking anything away from the side walls at the stress area.



THE ROUND

The round shape is more conservative is frequently used to create a softer, more conservative look, and it's also a common choice for male clients because the shape mirrors the natural contours of the nail. If a client has wide nail beds and large hands, then the rounded shape can make the hands look a bit thinner.

How to File: File the side walls straight out, and then round out the corners with moderate angles to complete the curved shape. Be careful not to take too much off on each side or else it will look unbalanced. The finished round nail should be slightly tapered and extend just past the tip of the finger.

THE POINTED

A pointed shape can create length and have a slenderizing effect on the hand. Smaller hands with smaller nail beds can use a pointed nail to create a subtle appearance of length, while long, slender nail beds take pointed nails to a more noticeable and extreme level.

How to File: Greg Salo of Young Nails uses an "I" technique for filing a pointed tip. The technique is based on the letter "I" where the center of the "I" shape is the upper arch that forms a line running down the nail bed. The top of the "I" is bending the cuticle flush with the natural nail, and the bottom of the "I" is looking down the barrel of the nail to make sure the C-curve is even. The pointed tip requires taking the top of the "I" to a point that meets at the center of the apex. Once the "I" is in formation, it is just a matter of blending everything in so you have perfect harmony in the nail shape.

