

Chapter 4: Straightening and Curling

SAFELY Straighten Any Wig

“Katie Bair’s method totally doesn’t work!”

This is a direct quote from an internet blog belonging to a girl who tried to straighten her wig using the tutorial on my website, but couldn’t get it to work. She went on to call me an idiot and a liar, and accused me of posting a tutorial that didn’t work at all just to get attention.

One look at the “in progress” pictures she took explained *exactly* why she didn’t get the results she was expecting: she hadn’t followed *any* of the directions. Instead, she had merely skimmed the tutorial, and only took *bits* of information from it and tried to create a complete process. Because she didn’t take the time to read *why* each step was done, she didn’t understand that the important part of the process was to create prolonged heat while the fiber was **in the desired shape**. She thought the point was to get the wig *wet*.

So, as with any tutorial in this book, or anywhere else for that matter, it’s important to *carefully* read and follow the steps. If the results don’t match what you anticipated, try going back through the steps to see if there was something you missed. Also, some techniques just take practice to perfect. So if it’s working but doesn’t look as *good* as you’d like, just keep at it until it does.

Also, take your time. There is no trophy for speed in Wigcraft. While you might find you get faster at some techniques with practice, most of the time there’s going to be a point at which you just can’t do something any faster without getting sloppy, or skipping steps. So, don’t rush it.



Invest in a meat thermometer for testing water temperature. Precise measurements eliminate guesswork.

“My friend said I should use a flat iron on my wig.”

You’ve got an awful lot of these “helpful” friends and relatives, don’t you?

I don’t recommend that you use any sort of iron to safely straighten wigs. There are several reasons for this.

Firstly, Steam irons, curling irons, crimping irons, and straightening irons all have one thing in common: they use hot metal or ceramic plates to change the shape of whatever material they’re used on. *None* of these tools were designed to work with synthetic wig fiber. The one hot metal tool that *is* designed for it is called a Heat Sealer, and is used specifically to turn the fiber into *hot plastic slag*. Any of those other irons have a chance of producing the same effect. (Although not as precisely and reliably as the Heat Sealer will.)

Secondly, the key word here is “safely”. I can think of ten ways to straighten a wig that involve risk to either the fiber or myself. If you follow the directions, the hot water method is “no risk”. Even if you mess up, you can try again. The same cannot be said for messing up with an iron.

And finally, because hot water is *free*. If you accidentally melt your wig with a curling iron, you’ll need to buy a new wig *and* a new curling iron.

Hot Water Straightening

In this example, I am using a “Blink” style wig from Amphigory, which comes with strongly crimped fiber.

Step 1: Start by pinning your wig to a foam head, and putting the head on some sort of stand. (I’m using a 2 liter bottle.) If you’re working with a long wig, you should use a tall wig stand. This method will not work if you are merely dunking the wig in a sinkful of hot water. It needs to be able to *hang straight* during the process.

Set the stand in a bathtub or outdoors so the water has somewhere to go.

Step 2:

As you can see in the shot above, I’ve put a small squirt of hair conditioner (Dollar Store) on top. Using the detangler comb, I pull some of the conditioner down into the crimped fiber.

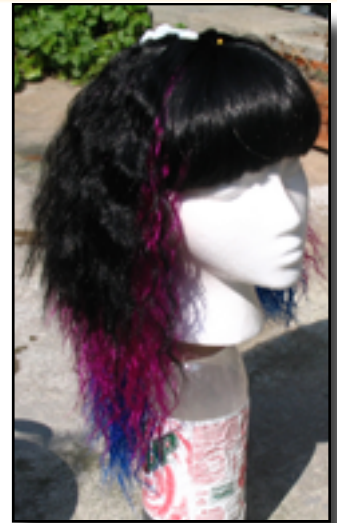
As with most Wigcraft techniques, starting with tangle free fiber will save your sanity. It’s especially important when straightening very long wigs or extensions. The conditioner will act as a lubricant to help you get all of the fibers going the same direction.

Step 3:

Begin pouring the hot water on at the top of the section you’d like to straighten. The water should be between 175° and 180°F. You can go as high as 185°, but you shouldn’t need to for most wigs. Also, more heat creates more defined results, so be careful not to use too much near the scalp unless you want the fiber to lay *very flat* there.

Pouring the water on *slowly* will help it flow to the interior and underside of the fiber as well. As you pour, you will begin to see the fiber flatten down and relax under the weight of the water.

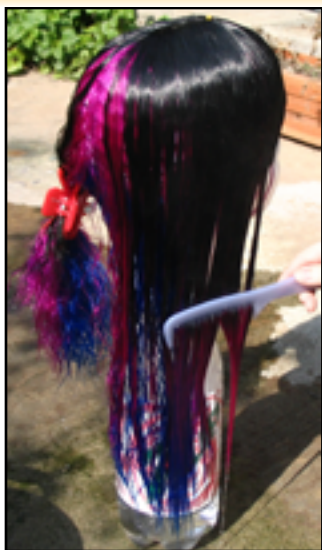
Tip: With long wigs, you should pull the top-most layers up into a clip and straighten the under layers first. Otherwise, it can be difficult to get to the interior sections with the hot water.



Chapter 1: Straightening and Curling

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Hot Water Straightening (continued)



Step 4:

Continue to pour hot water on all of the parts you want to straighten, carefully pulling the detangler comb through any parts that aren't going straight down.

While normally you shouldn't try to comb or brush wet wig fiber, you put all that hair conditioner on it first, and the fiber is sopping wet, allowing the comb to easily slide through.

However, if the comb feels like it's hitting a snag, stop combing right away, and pour on more water to gently dislodge the fiber. Apply more conditioner if needed.



Step 5:

As you can see, the side I straightened now looks quite a bit longer than the crimped side. This is something to keep in mind if you aren't sure if a wavy or curly wig will be long enough for your project. Depending on the depth of the starting curl, the straightened fiber may appear up to twice the length.



Finished Result:

The side on the left is the straightened side, and the side on the right is the starting texture. Since I used 185°F water, the fiber flattened down to its maximum potential, resulting in a very straight "zero body" look.

Varying the temperature within the 175°-185° range will give you different results. Always start at the lowest temperature first, only raising it if your fiber seems particularly resistant. In most cases, repeated treatments at the same temperature will cause continued relaxing, until the fiber reaches the most straight it can go.

“I straightened my wig to its maximum potential, but the wefts made weird dents in the fiber. What happened?”

“Overstraightening” is the result of too much heat, or too much duration of heat on the top of the wig. The longer you expose the fiber to the hot water, the closer it will get to the water’s temperature, and the more pliable it will be during that time. Remember that the fiber will reshape itself to match *whatever shape you leave it in*, so if you are heating it up and plastering it down against the foam head and wefts, it’s going to be shaped like the foam head and wefts.

To avoid overstraightening, only pour the hot water on the sections you want to straighten. If you don’t want the scalp area to be flattened, then don’t pour the water directly on the top of the wig. Instead, pour it around the perimeter of the scalp.



“I don’t want it this flat. Can I fix it?”

Of course! You can “reset” the wig with hot water.

Take the wig off the head, and drop it into a large pot of 180°F water with a squirt of human hair conditioner in it. (I use Suave.) Gently swish it around with a long spoon for about 30 seconds to get the fiber moving. Pay special attention to the scalp area, as you want to get the fiber to not be flattened down here.



Take the wig out of the water, and drop it directly into a large bowl of ice water. Let the wig sit in there for about 30 seconds, then take it out and lay it on a towel to dry. The wig it will probably be kind of wavy, depending on how it landed in the ice water, but that can be removed by straightening it again.

