

MARTHA RUSKAI & ALLISON LOWERY



*Wig Making and Styling*

A COMPLETE GUIDE FOR  
THEATRE & FILM

SECOND EDITION



# Wig Making and Styling

*Wig Making and Styling: A Complete Guide for Theatre & Film*, Second Edition is the one-stop shop for the knowledge and skills you need to create and style wigs. Covering the basics, from styling tools to creating beards, it ramps up to advanced techniques for making, measuring, coloring, and cutting wigs from any time period. Whether you're a student or a professional, you'll find yourself prepared for a career as a skilled wig designer with tips on altering existing wigs, multiple approaches to solving wig-making problems, and industry best practices.

New to this edition:

- An extensive reorganization of chapters and improved images throughout makes the process of creating and styling wigs clearer than ever
- A chapter on working with hard front wigs and extensions
- Additional diagrams for hand stitching and wig knotting, coverage of the latest synthetic fibers and dyes and wig-care practices, and new tutorials on directly-applied facial hair techniques
- New historical galleries for both facial hair and historical hairstyles
- More diagrams and forms to copy or download from the website: [www.focalpress.com/cw/ruskai](http://www.focalpress.com/cw/ruskai)

**Martha Ruskai's** thirty year career as a freelance wig and makeup artist and designer includes opera, film, print, TV, and dance. When not in the theatre, she can be found at dog shows, agility, and water trials with her Portuguese Water Dogs.

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# Wig Making and Styling

A Complete Guide for Theatre & Film

Second edition

Martha Ruskai

Allison Lowery



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{ *dedication.* }

This book is dedicated with gratitude to Lenna Kaleva



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## *chapter one*

# Wig-Making Terms, Tools, and Techniques



Before you can begin your quest to become a wig expert, you must learn some of the basic lingo and assemble the proper tools. In this chapter, we have provided an extensive glossary of hair wig terms. Familiarize yourself with these definitions before beginning to work on your wig-making and wig-styling skills. We will also discuss what tools are essential for wig making and styling and the different types of tools used. We will also go over different types of hairpins and brushes and when to use each, as well as a few basic techniques for handling a wig.

## Glossary of Wig and Hair Terms

There are many different terms used in wig making and styling. It is really helpful to know these terms before beginning work on your wig. Reading through these terms will help you understand many of the explanations in the rest of this book.

**3/4 Wig** A type of wig that is meant to sit a few inches back from the wearer's hairline. The front of the wearer's own hair is then brushed back over the front of the wig in order to conceal the edge and make the wig look natural. 3/4 wigs are usually best if they are a very good color match to the wearer's own hair color.

**Afro** A hairstyle popularized in the 1960s and 1970s. Many African-Americans let their hair grow out in its natural, tightly curled texture. The hair was then picked out with a comb to form a round shape or silhouette.

**Alopecia** A medical condition that causes the subject to lose their hair; the hair loss can be partial or total.

**Figure 1.1** Kristen Weller models an 1880s wig styled by Emily Robertson.

**“Amazon” Pins** Large, heavy hairpins that are used to pin wigs onto the wearer’s head. They are often sold as “3-inch hairpins.” These pins are best used for pinning heavy wigs that require extra support or for pinning on heavy hats.

**Angora/Mohair** The fine silky hair from either an angora goat or rabbit. This hair ties into very small knots and is often used for the fronts of film wigs.

**Baby Hairs** Fine delicate hairs along the hairline of a wig that help conceal the edge of the wig.

**Backcombing** Another term for teasing hair. The hair is combed down towards the scalp in order to create more volume.

**Beehive** A hairstyle that became popular in the 1960s. The hair was teased, sprayed, and smoothed into a cone shape that resembled a beehive.

**Bleached Knots** Knots that have been bleached from the underside of a wig so that it looks more like the hair is growing from the scalp. Lightening the knots makes them less visible.

**Blocking a Wig** The act of securing a wig to a wig block so that the wig is ready to be worked on.

**Blocking Pins** Round-headed pins, usually called quilter’s pins, that are used to secure the wig to the wig block.

**Blocking Tape** A strip of ribbon, bias tape, hem tape, or twill tape that is used to hold the lace edge down flat when blocking a lace-front wig.

**Blunt Cut** A haircut in which all of the hair is cut to one equal length.

**Boardwork** The European term for the art of wig making.

**Bob** A haircut in which all of the hair is cut to chin length. This hairstyle became very popular in the 1920s.

**Buckle** A term for the side rolls/curls at the temples of an eighteenth-century wig.

**Cascade** A type of hairpiece, usually rectangular in shape, that consists of rows of curls that “cascade” down.

**Caul Net** A type of wig-making net that is characterized by its large, open, diamond-shaped holes. It is often used in wig foundations when the wig needs to have a little stretch or where the wig needs to be easily pinned through. Also called *cawl net*, *cowl net*.

**Chignon** A roll of hair worn at the nape of the neck.



Figure 1.2 Examples of two different kinds of chin blocks.

**Chin Block** A type of wig block that is specially made for building, styling, and cutting on facial hair. They are shaped like a chin and are made of either wood or canvas stuffed with sawdust (Figure 1.2).

**Chin Tuft** A name for the small, usually triangular patch of hair that grows just beneath the lower lip. Also called a *soul patch* or *French dot*.

**Cleaning the Lace** The act of cleaning the glue and makeup residue off of a lace-front wig or facial hair piece.

**Clippies** A term for small, hinged hair clips that are used as a styling aid. They can have either one or two prongs. Also called *roller clips*.

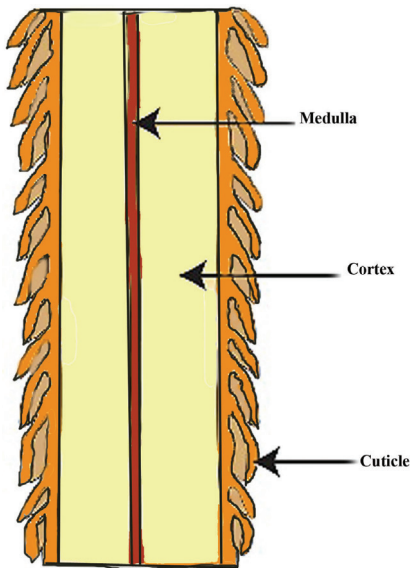
**Cornrows** A style of hair where the hair is divided into sections and braided into small braids that sit very close to the scalp.

**Cranial Prosthesis** A medical term for a wig that is worn when hair has been lost for medical reasons, such as alopecia or chemotherapy.

**Crepeing Hair** The act of weaving hair through a set of strings and then boiling the hair so that it has a permanently frizzed texture.

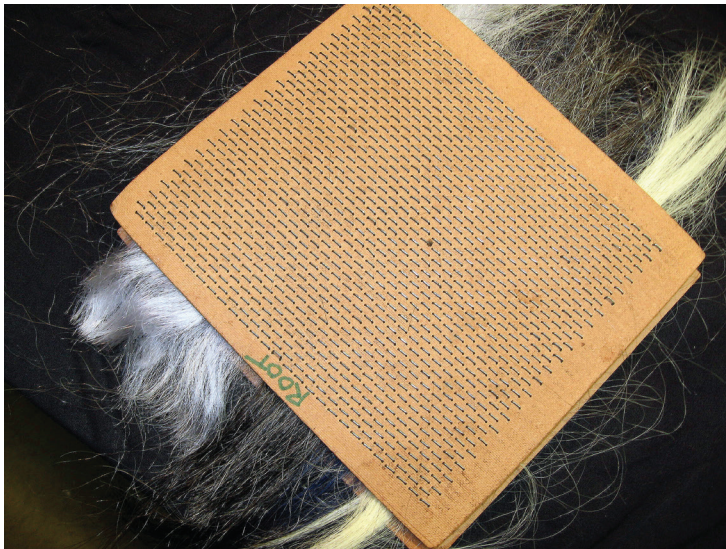
**Crepe Wool** Wool that has been through the crepeing process. It is often used for creating facial hair directly on the face.

**Cuticle** A term used to describe the shaft of a strand of hair. Human hair has a cuticle that looks like scales or the shingles on a roof. Cuticle hair refers to hair that has been harvested with all of the shingles going in the same direction. This allows the hair to lie smoothly and prevents tangles (Figure 1.3).



**Figure 1.3** A diagram of the structure of a strand of human hair.

**Drawing Cards** A pair of cards used for organizing hair that is being used on a wig project. These cards keep the roots and tips of the hair organized and make it easy to transport the hair for a wig-making project (Figures 1.4, 1.5).



**Figure 1.4** A drawing card.



**Figure 1.5** The drawing card opened so that the teeth are visible.

**Dreadlock** A natural hairstyle that is formed when hair becomes matted and eventually twists itself into a column or “lock”.

**Duckbill Clip** A type of clip, used in styling, that is about 3 inches long and opens like a duck’s bill to clamp onto the hair. Also known as an *alligator clip*.

**End Papers** Also sometimes referred to as *end wraps*. They are precut pieces of tissue paper that are sold for wrapping the ends of hair when you are setting it on rollers. They keep the ends nice and smooth.

**Extensions** Small lengths of hair that are added into the wearer’s own hair, usually to add volume or length. There are many varieties, including clip-in, sewn-in, glued-in, or braided-in. Some are clipped in only for a day; others are bonded to the hair for a month or more.

**Fall** Any partial hairpiece with long, hanging hair.

**Finger Shield** A type of metal thimble, worn on the middle finger of the non-dominant hand, that is used when sewing materials on top of a wig block.

**Finger Wave/Water Wave** A method of hairstyling where the hair is styled into waves using only wet hair, the fingers, and a comb.

**Flat Iron** A type of curling iron which has two flat plates that the hair is pulled through in order to straighten it.



Figure 1.6 Two examples of wig foundations.

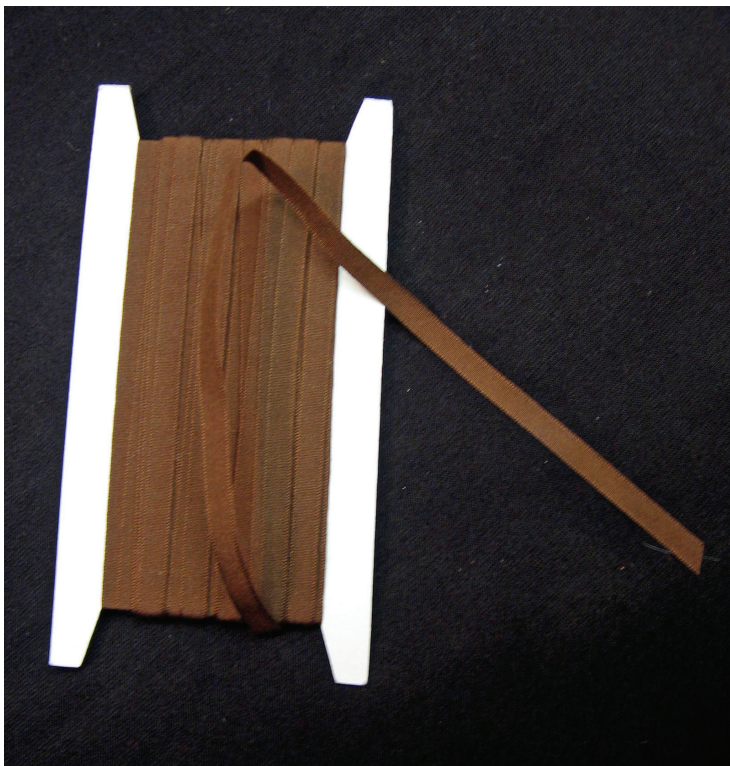


Figure 1.7 A card of galloon.

**Fontange** A hairstyle that is made of curls that are piled high over the forehead. The term also refers to a tall headpiece that sits over the forehead. Named after the Duchess of Fontanges.

**Foundation** A head-shaped base made of wig nets and laces that hair is attached to in order to make a wig (Figure 1.6).

**Frontal Bone** The bone that makes up the forehead of the skull (Figure 1.10).

**Fronting Lace** Any type of wig lace that is suitable for using at the hairline of a wig. The more closely the wig is going to be viewed, the finer and more delicate the fronting lace needs to be.

**Galloon** A tightly woven silk ribbon that is used to reinforce the edges and interior structure of a wig foundation (Figure 1.7).

**Goatee** A type of facial hair that consists of the hair in the chin area only, not a full beard.

**Growth Pattern** The unique set of directions that the hair grows in on an individual's head. They are specific and unique to each individual person.

**Hackle** An extremely sharp metal comb that is used for detangling extra long hair and for blending several colors of hair to create a new color. A hackle usually resembles a bed of nails (Figure 1.8).

**Haircutting Shears** Scissors made for cutting hair.

**Hairpiece** Any piece of artificial hair that does not cover the entire head.

**Hank of Hair** A bundle of loose hair.



Figure 1.8 A hackle.

**Hard-Front Wig** A type of wig where the front edge is finished with rows of hair or material, resulting in a heavy, blunt edge. Most commercially purchased wigs are hard-front wigs.

**Hero Wig** The term used for a very finely made wig that is used only for close-ups on a film production.

**Horse Hair** Either hair from the tail of a horse, used in wig making, or plastic fibers that are woven into a fabric braid, of which small pieces are sewn onto hats and headpieces to aid in pinning them on securely.

**Human Hair** Hair from the head of a human.

**Invisible Thread** A clear nylon thread that is used for sewing together wig foundations.

**Lace-Front Wig** A wig that has had the original hard front cut off, replaced with fronting lace, and had its hairline knotted onto the lace. This term can also refer to a wig that has been custom made from scratch with a tied lace front.

**Mane-Sta' Lace** The very finest, long-lasting fronting lace used for HD film and television work.

**Marcel Iron** A type of curling iron that is heated up in an oven, allowing it to get very hot (Figure 1.9).

**Marcel Oven** An oven used to heat up metal curling tongs or irons. Prior to the invention of this oven, curling irons were heated in fires.

**Marcel Wave** A type of wave styling method, introduced by French hairdresser Marcel Grateau, in which a curling iron is used to clamp waves in alternating directions into the hair, instead of wrapping the hair around the curling iron.

**Medical Adhesive** A clear adhesive that is used to glue down wig lace when spirit gum is not a strong enough option.

**Mohawk** A hairstyle in which the hair is shaved on both sides, leaving a strip of hair that runs down the center of the head from the forehead to the nape. The hair is often spiked up.

**Monofilament Top** A type of wig made with a translucent, monofilament material on the top that the hair is knotted into. This fabric gives the appearance of a scalp underneath the hair. Also called *mono-top wigs*.

**Mullet** A hairstyle in which the hair is cut short in the front and left longer in the back.

**Nature Lace** A very fine and delicate type of fronting lace, made of clear nylon fibers with hexagonal holes. It is suitable for use on film wig fronts.



Figure 1.9 A selection of Marcel irons.

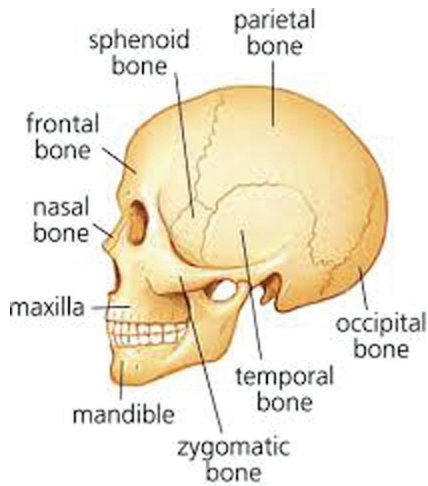
**Net Lace** A type of wig-making lace that is made of opaque cotton fibers with hexagonal holes. It is used for either fronting lace (very large venues only) or as the lightest weight foundation lace.

**Occipital Bone** The bone that makes up the back and base of the skull (Figure 1.10).

**Parietal Bones** The pair of bones that form the top and sides of the skull (Figure 1.10).

**Periwig** A British term for a wig, used especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This term also often refers to a men's wig that is pulled back into a queue.

**Perule** A French term for a wig, used especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This term also often refers to a men's wig that is pulled back into a queue.



**Figure 1.10** A diagram illustrating the bones of the skull.

**Pin Curl** A type of curl where the hair is rolled flat into a circle and secured with bobby pins or styling clips. Pin curls are used both as a styling technique and also as a way to prepare the hair for a wig to be put on over it.

**Pompadour** A hairstyle where the hair is combed up high off of the forehead. It was named for the Marquise de Pompadour.

**Postiche** Any piece of false hair.

**Queue** A ponytail on a man's wig, especially in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century hairstyles. This style is also sometimes called a *tieback wig*.

**Rat** A pad of hair that is used to stuff a hairstyle in order to add volume. These can be made by collecting hair and forming it into a pad. There are also premade rats available commercially for purchase.

**Remy/Remi Hair** Human hair that has been harvested from root to tip with all of the hair going in the same direction. It is finer and silkier than most processed human hair and is more expensive.

**Ringlet** A long, spirally curled section of hair.

**Roots** The part of the hair that is attached to the scalp.

**Shag** A haircut that is choppy and layered all over.

**Skin-Top Wig** A type of wig that has a plastic top that has hair mechanically punched into it. This plastic gives the appearance of a scalp underneath the hair.



**Figure 1.11** Thinning shears.

**Spirit Gum** A type of adhesive, derived from tree sap, that is used to glue down the lace edges of a lace-front wig or facial hairpiece.

**Steaming a Wig** The act of applying steam to a synthetic wig in order to either straighten the hair fibers or set the curl into the hair fibers.

**Stock Wig** A wig that is built to be used over and over again by a company or person, or a wig that is already owned by a company.

**Super Lace** A type of fronting lace, often used for theatrical wigs, made of clear nylon fibers with hexagonal holes.

**Switch** A false ponytail, often made with a loop on one end for easy attachment.

**Synthetic Hair** Plastic fibers that are made to resemble hair. It is the cheapest and most versatile material that wigs are made of. Some other names for synthetic wig fibers include *modacrylic*, *kanekelon*, and *elura*.

**Tendrils** A small, thin, curling wisp of hair, often located around the face.

**Thinning Shears** A special type of haircutting scissors in which one of the blades is notched, so that all of the hair is not cut ([Figure 1.11](#)).

**Thin Skin Material** A special wig-making material that consists of a polyurethane coating applied to a fine fabric or netting. This material is often used around the front and back hairline of a wig—it is often more comfortable to wear and may not even require gluing. The material does not allow the head to breathe, which makes it unsuitable for use for an entire wig cap ([Figure 1.12](#)).



**Figure 1.12** An example of thin skin used inside a wig.

**Tips** The part of the hair shaft that is farthest away from the scalp; the ends of the hair.

**Tonsure** The shaved crown of a monk's or priest's head.

**Toupee** A hairpiece meant to fill in the top section of a balding head.

**Toupee Clips** Small rubberized snap clips that grab onto very small amounts of hair; often used to secure toupees. These clips can also be sewn to wefts of hair in order to create clip in extensions.

**Toupee Tape** Double-sided, skin-safe tape that is used to either hold on toupees or to hold down lace edges of hairpieces. Toupee tape is very shiny, so it should be used only to hold on lace-front wigs when there is no other choice.

**Tracks** Small sections of hair that have been braided or cornrowed close to the scalp so that *wefts* of hair can be sewn onto them.

**Trichotillomania** A nervous condition that causes the sufferer to compulsively pull the hair out of their face and off of their head. Sometimes this condition also causes the sufferer to ingest the hair.

**Vegetable Net** A type of wig lace, made of cotton fibers, that is very heavy and has hexagonal holes. It is the best choice for building very sturdy foundations.

**Ventilating** The act of knotting hair to wig lace in order to give the appearance that the hair is growing directly out of the head. Also called *knotting* or *tying* hair.

**Ventilating Hook/Needle** A specially made hook that is shaped like a crochet hook and is used to grab the hair to be knotted onto a wig. Ventilating hooks come in sizes that refer to approximately how many hairs the needle will grab at one time (for example, a size three hook picks up three hairs).

**Virgin Hair** Hair that has never undergone any type of processing (perming, dyeing, etc.).

**Waving Iron** A type of curling iron that sandwiches the hair between shaped plates in order to create a wave.

**Weft** Hair that has been woven together on strings to form strips of hair. Weft is used to make hairpieces or to quickly fill in full wigs ([Figure 1.13](#)).

**Wefting** The act of weaving the hair onto strings in order to form strips of hair that are used to create wigs and hairpieces.

**Wig Bag** A bag, often made of black velvet or silk, that men in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries wore over their powdered ponytails



**Figure 1.13** A piece of weft.



**Figure 1.14** Wigs on display at the Colonial Williamsburg wig shop, including three with wig bags.

at the napes of their necks and secured with a bow. These came into fashion as a means of keeping the hair powder off of their expensive coats (Figure 1.14).

**Wig Block** A head-shaped block, made of either wood or canvas stuffed with sawdust, that is used to mount wigs onto for styling or construction.

**Wig Cap** A thin nylon cap that is used to flatten down, contain, and secure the hair underneath a wig.

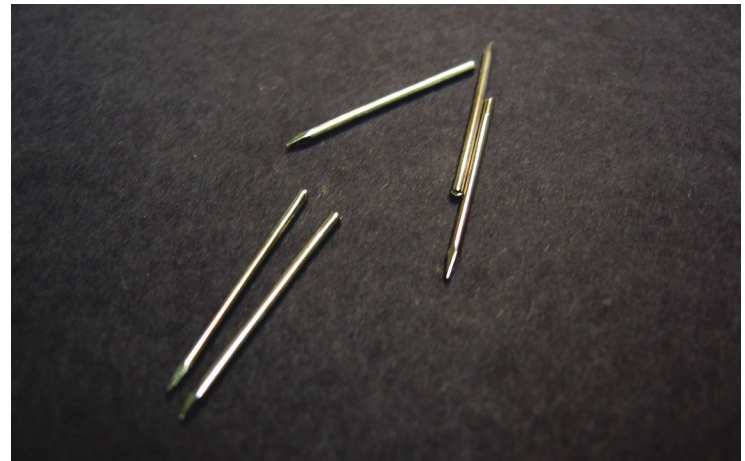
**Wig Clamp** A device that clamps to a table edge and has a post that a wig block sits on; it allows the wig to be worked on without having to worry about it falling off of the table.

**Wig Dryer** A device used to dry wigs. These are usually large wooden boxes with a current of warm air flowing through them.

**Wiglet** A type of hairpiece that consists of a small circle of hair mounted on a round base. They are used to fill in thin places in a hairstyle or to add a little extra volume in the style (Figure 1.15).



**Figure 1.15** A wiglet.



**Figure 1.16** Wig points.

**Wig Pins** Large hairpins that are used to pin through a wig in order to secure it to the wearer's head.

**Wig Points** Tiny headless nails that are used to hold a wig or wig-making materials to a wooden wig block (Figure 1.16).

**Wig Prep** The act of preparing a person's hair as flat as possible to their head so that a wig may be put on over it.

**Wig Stays** Small pieces of metal, plastic, or springs that give extra support to a wig in high-stress places. Common places to find wig stays in a wig

are over each ear, on either side of the nape of the neck, and at the center front of the wig.

**Wonder Lace** A type of wig lace that is made of clear nylon fibers with hexagonal holes. It is heavier and shinier than super lace and can be used either for fronting lace or for making wig foundations.

**Yak Hair** Hair from a yak that is used for wig making. It is slightly coarser than human hair. It is the most readily available source of white hair. The softest yak hair comes from the belly of the yak.

## Wig-Making Tool Kit

Wig making is the art of adapting existing wigs or making wigs from scratch. Because a lot of the work is similar to sewing, many sewing tools



Figure 1.17 A wig maker's tool kit.

are used. Other tools are specific to building wigs, and must be purchased from wig suppliers. Many kinds of containers can be used to keep all of these supplies in. Tackle boxes are ideal, but other options are lunchboxes, cosmetics cases, pencil cases, or shoeboxes. The most important thing is that your kit be lightweight and portable.

Items to include in your kit:

- **Ventilating needles.** The art of tying hair onto wig bases is called ventilating. This is done with tiny needles that have a small barb on the end, like a fish hook or a crochet hook. Ventilating needles come in different sizes. The size refers to the number of average hairs that the needle will easily grab. Thus, a size three needle should pick up three average hairs.
- **Ventilating needle holders.** When ventilating, you hold your tool much like holding a pencil. Because of this, the needle must be inserted into some kind of holder. Holders are available in plastic, metal, and wood; what you choose is a matter of personal preference.
- **Something to keep your ventilating needles and holders in.** When you find a needle that you like, keep it stored with the holder. As the needles will snag or catch on everything else in your kit, you want to store them in something hard.
- **A drawing card.** This is for organizing and holding loose hair while you are working. These must be specially ordered from wig supply



Figure 1.18 Examples of ventilating holders and needles.



Figure 1.19 A finger shield.

stores. If you are unable to find one, you can substitute two wire brushes sandwiched on top of each other.

- **Finger shield.** A finger shield is a special type of metal thimble used by wigmakers.
- **Small sharply pointed scissors.** You will need your scissors to have very sharp points so that you can carefully cut into tiny areas.
- **Seam ripper.**
- **Slant-tipped tweezers.**
- **Hand sewing needles in a variety of sizes.** It is good to have a mix of heavier needles and delicate needles.
- **Curved needle.**
- **Soft measuring tape.**
- **Several different colors of thread.** Keep gray, beige, brown, black, and a bright color. It is good to have sturdy cotton thread for sewing on wig foundations. The bright color can be cotton or embroidery floss, as it will be used only for marking on wig foundations.
- **Invisible thread.** Clear nylon thread in a light to medium gauge that will be used to sew on fine laces.
- **Small needle-nosed pliers.** The kind that have built in wire cutters are the most useful; these can usually be found in the artificial flower



Figure 1.20 Needle-nosed pliers.

department. Beading pliers are also a good choice, because they are small and can get into delicate areas of the wig easily.

- **Thimble.** You can use either a metal or leather thimble. Go with your personal preference.
- **Haircutting shears.** These do not have to be the expensive ones. You will want to have a pair of shears in your kit that are used only for cutting hair. Cutting other materials will dull your scissors, so keep a pair for hair only. Thinning shears are also nice to have in your kit.

For craftier wig projects, it is useful to have a supply of **millinery wire** (fabric-covered wire that is sold by hat-making suppliers), **floral tape**, **buckram**, **Fosshape®**, **felt hoods**, **sturdy thread**, and sturdy **craft scissors**. These materials will be further discussed in [Chapter 14](#).

These items will give you a good start to building a wig-making kit. As you develop more skills, you may discover other tools that you would find useful. By all means, add them to your kit!

## Wig-Styling Tool Kit

A huge variety of different kinds of combs and brushes are available for purchase. There are a few basic kinds of tools that are essential to wig styling which you should have on hand:

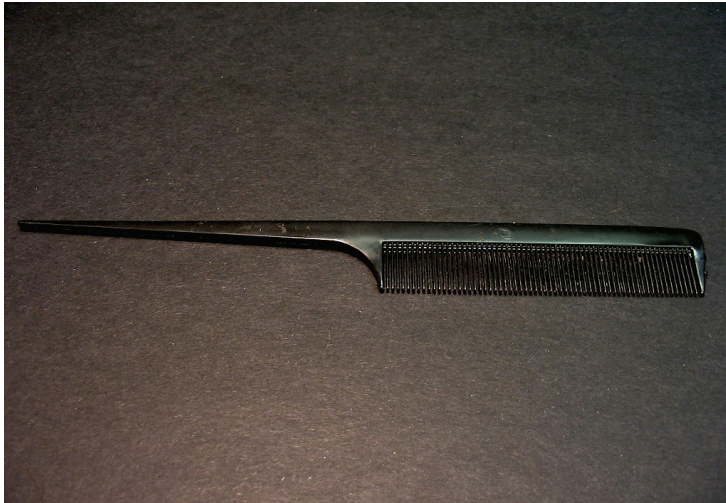


Figure 1.21 Rat-tail comb.



Figure 1.22 Large wooden brush.

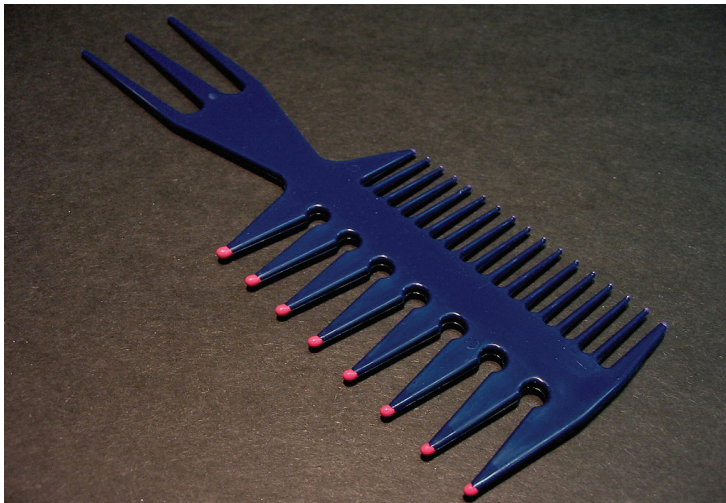


Figure 1.23 Wide-toothed comb/pick.



Figure 1.24 Teasing/smoothing brush.

- **Rat-tail combs.** Useful for making clean separations in the sections of hair you are working on. They are also useful for fine detail work (Figure 1.21).
- **Large wooden brush with wire bristles.** Useful for brushing out large, thick sections of hair. Dog brushes are a good source for these (Figure 1.22).
- **Wide-toothed comb or pick.** Good for combing through hair when you want to keep a lot of texture, but still untangle the hair.

Wide-toothed combs are also essential for gently combing out wet hair (Figure 1.23).

- **Teasing/smoothing brush.** We often refer to this as the “magic brush,” because it is good for so many jobs. Like the name indicates, it is good for teasing hair. It is also good for smoothing over sections of hair that have been teased and for smoothing curls around your finger (Figure 1.24).

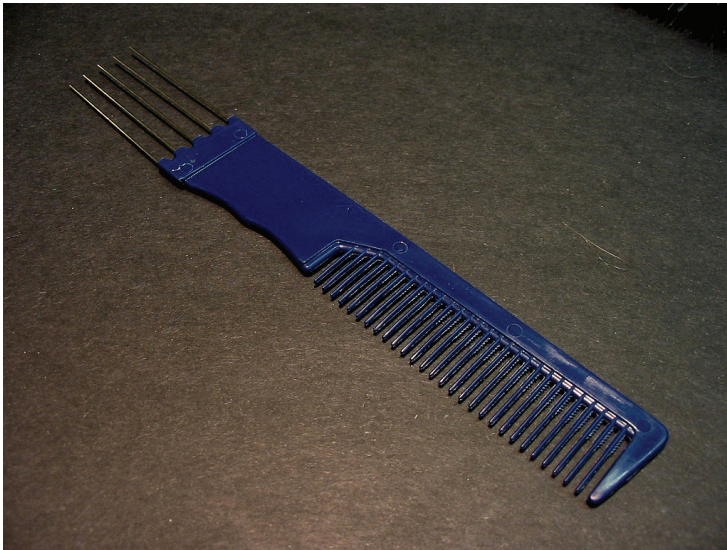


Figure 1.25 Lifting/teasing pick.

- **Lifting/teasing pick.** This tool has a teasing comb on one end and a wire pick at the other. If you look closely, the comb end has little ridges on the teeth to allow you to pack the hair tightly when teasing. The other end allows you to lift more volume into already styled hair (Figure 1.25).

## Hairpins and Clips

When working, you will need a wide variety of hairpins. Each hairpin has a different name and purpose:

- **Bobby pins.** This type of pin can be distinguished by its shape: one side is usually straight and one side is crimped. The sides almost meet at the open end, giving them a strong grip. These pins are used when you want a lot of hold; they hold pin curls tightly and add stability to hairstyles (Figure 1.26).
- **Hairpins.** A more open, U-shaped pin. They are used to hold small sections of hair or curls in place; these pins do not hold the structure of the style together. They hold better when they are holding together a coil or twist of hair (Figure 1.27).
- **Roller pin.** (Also sometimes called a *curler pin*.) A large version of a pin that is similar to a bobby pin shape. They do not usually have the crimped side that a bobby pin has. They are designed to hold a curler

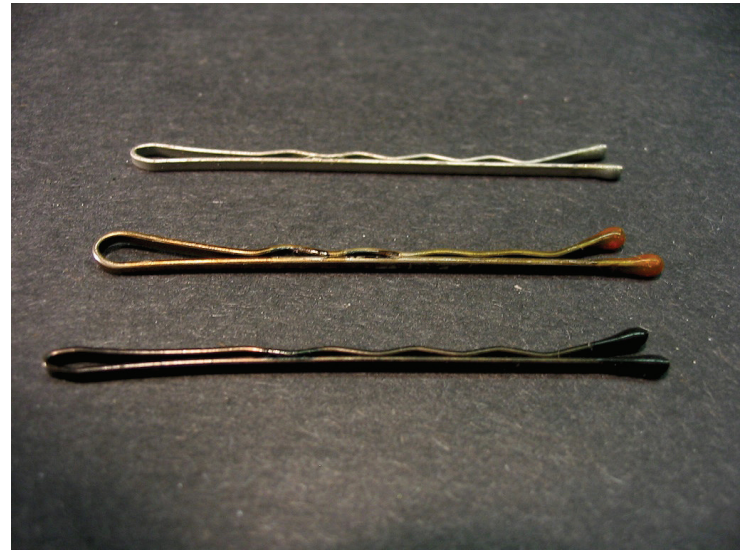


Figure 1.26 Bobby pins.

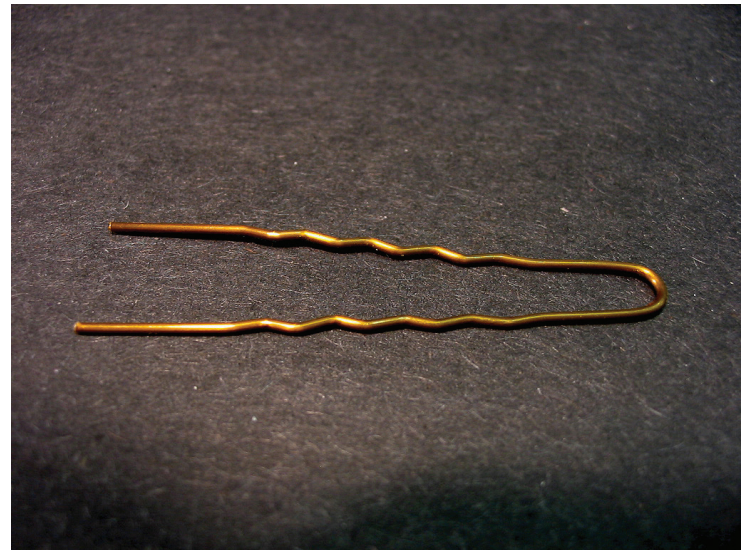


Figure 1.27 Hairpin.

in place once it has been rolled. They are also good for holding large sections of hair in place when styling (Figure 1.28).

- **Wig pin.** A large version of the hairpin. These pins are used to pin a wig onto the head of someone with pin curls underneath (see Figure 1.29).



Figure 1.28 Roller pins.

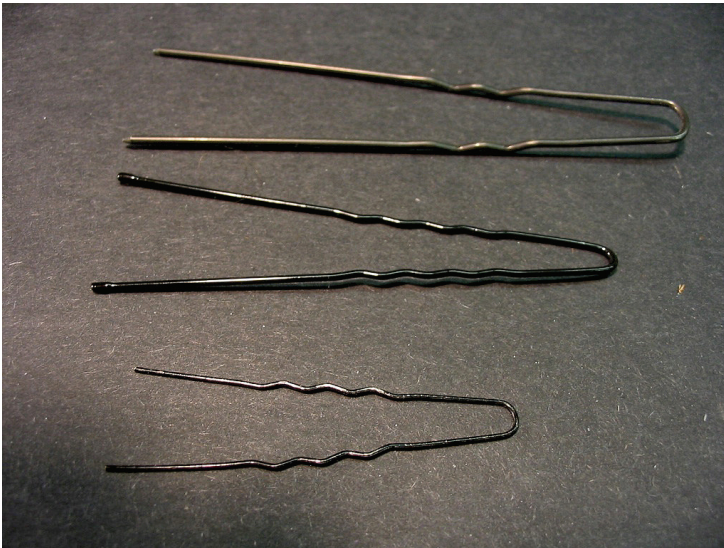


Figure 1.29 For comparison, from the top: an Amazon pin, a wig pin, and a hairpin.



Figure 1.31 Duckbill or alligator clip.

- **Amazon pin.** An extra large version of the hairpin. They are used to hold heavy wigs and hats on the head. Ballerinas also like these pins to hold their hair buns in place while dancing (see [Figure 1.29](#)).
- **T-pin.** A T-shaped pin that is used when roller setting a wig on a wig block. They are long enough and strong enough to pin through a curler all the way into the wig block. Be careful with these pins—they snag on everything ([Figure 1.30](#)).
- **Duckbill clip.** (Also sometimes called an *alligator clip*.) These clips can be used for holding divided sections of hair. They can also be used to create finger waves in a hairstyle ([Figure 1.31](#)).
- **Clippies.** (Also sometimes called *single-pronged clips* or *double-pronged clips*.) These are small clips that are used to hold small sections of hair while styling. These can also be used to hold styling-pin curls ([Figure 1.32](#)).
- **Toupee clips.** These are small comb clips designed to grab very short or thin sections of hair. They can be used to attach wigs to people with

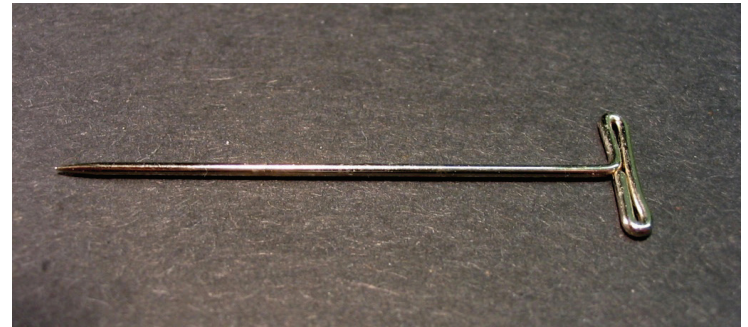


Figure 1.30 T-pin.



Figure 1.32 Clippies. Top: double-pronged clip. Bottom: single-pronged clip.



Figure 1.33 A toupee clip.

very small amounts of hair. They come in a variety of sizes and colors. They are often rubberized. They can be sewn to wefts of hair for an easy and secure attachment (Figure 1.33).

## Rollers/Curlers

Simply put: you can never have too many rollers. There are many rollers with different purposes out there; it is good to buy new varieties when you see them. There are some basic rollers you want to have around. The plastic mesh rollers that have a metal spring inside are great—they are easy to pin through and it is easy to steam synthetic wigs through them. These rollers are available at most beauty supply stores. They often come with a little round brush inside; we usually remove these brushes before using the rollers. Plastic rollers work perfectly fine as well. We do not like to use Velcro® rollers on wigs because they tangle in the hair easily and also often create static electricity problems. For ease of reference, we often refer to rollers by size names, using the size of the opening at the end as the guide. You will need at least one dozen each of pencil-sized, dime-sized, nickel-sized, quarter-sized, and silver dollar-sized rollers. It is also very helpful to have very tiny rollers and perm rods on hand. Very large rollers (anything larger than silver dollar-sized) are good for adding just a little body and lift to straight wigs. You can also use things like straws and chopsticks as very tiny rollers in order to create a tight curl.

## A Well-Equipped Wig Area

There are a few other supplies and tools you will need to begin setting up your work area:

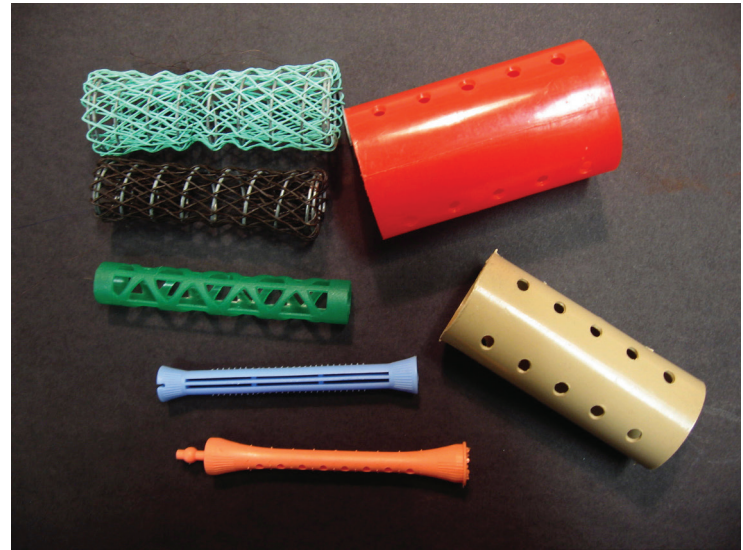


Figure 1.34 A selection of rollers for wig styling.



Figure 1.35 The wig making and styling area at the University of Texas.

- **Work table.** Your work table must be a good height for you to work at, both when sitting and when standing. It also needs to have an edge that a wig clamp can be screwed onto.
- **Good lighting.** Natural light is preferable. If you do not have a space with windows, use a mix of fluorescent and incandescent light bulbs

to provide a good balance of light. It is also a good idea to have some swing-arm lamps so that you can direct light exactly where you need it.

- **Adequate ventilation.** You will need ventilation when you are cleaning wigs with solvents.
- **Safety equipment.** Chemical-resistant gloves, a properly fitted respirator, a protective apron, and eye goggles are a must-have when cleaning wig laces in order to be safe.
- **Head forms/blocks.** Wig making and styling both require some sort of sturdy head form to work on. Canvas wig blocks are the most versatile, but there are also blocks available in wood and foam. Styrofoam head blocks are really only good for storage once the wig is made and styled.
- **Wig clamp.** This is a special type of device that clamps onto the edge of the table; it has a post that fits the hole in the bottom of your head form. This way, you do not have to worry about knocking the wig and wig block off the table every time you try to do something to it.
- **Blocking tape.** Whenever you are working on a wig, it should be properly blocked on the head form (see the end of this chapter). This is so that the delicate materials wigs are made from do not get damaged while you are working. For blocking tape, you can use bias tape, hem tape, or twill tape from a sewing store. Narrow ribbon or cloth shoelaces also work. Blocking tape should be between  $\frac{1}{4}$ " and  $\frac{1}{2}$ " wide.



Figure 1.36 A selection of canvas and wooden head blocks.

- **Blocking pins.** Round-headed pins used to hold the blocking tape in place. Quilter's pins are ideal, because they are longer.
- **Corsage pins.** Longer, sturdier pins with round heads that are sold for pinning on corsages. These are great for holding a wig on a Styrofoam block after it has been styled, especially when the wig has a lot of volume and a shorter pin would otherwise get lost.
- **Straight pins.** These are used whenever round-head pins get in the way (usually when making facial hair).
- **Magnetic pin cushions.** For all those pins.



Figure 1.37 Wig clamp.

- **End papers.** Papers that are sold in beauty supply stores that are used when rolling hair to help keep the ends of the hair neat.
- **Steamer.** Small hand-held steamers that are sold for steaming out clothes when traveling are great. If you buy a small steamer from a wig supply company, you can get one with a plastic tube attached that will allow you to get in to steam each individual curler. Larger industrial steamers also work.

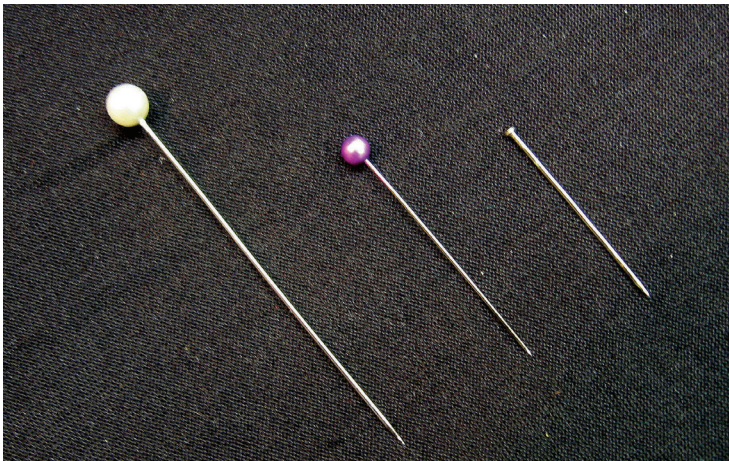


Figure 1.38 From left: corsage pin, blocking pin, straight pin.



Figure 1.39 A steamer with a nozzle/tube attachment, sold specifically for working on wigs.

- **Wig dryer.** There are wooden cabinets that are specifically sold for drying wigs. If you do not have access to a wig dryer, you can also use an old-fashioned bonnet hairdryer or make your own by cutting a hole for the nozzle of a hairdryer in a large box. If you use the homemade box method, please make sure you keep an eye on the materials as the drying is happening. Sometimes the hairdryer or the wig can overheat!
- **A variety of spray bottles filled with water.** Make sure your spray bottles have a spray setting—one with a stream-only setting is not useful. You can also use your spray bottles to hold diluted styling products.



Figure 1.40 A commercially made wig dryer, opened to show wigs inside.

- **Styling products.** Especially setting lotion, gel, hairspray (both pump and aerosol), and pomade. Setting lotion is a thin lotion that is combed through hair before setting in order to help a style hold shape. Pomade is a thicker styling product that is used for more control in the hair, especially on short hairstyles.
- **Shampoo and conditioner.** It is nice to have shampoo and conditioner made especially for wigs, but it is not absolutely essential. Cheap drugstore shampoos and conditioners work just fine.
- **Towels.**
- **Tiny rubber bands.**



**Figure 1.41** Temporary wig dryers can be made using wood cabinets or storage bins in combination with regular hair dryers. Use of such devices does pose an increased fire risk so never leave these unattended.

- **Hair elastics.**
- **Spirit gum.**
- **Chamois cloth or powder puffs for blotting wig glue.**
- **Spirit gum remover.**
- **Rubbing alcohol (99 percent).**
- **Cotton swabs.**
- **Wig caps in a variety of colors.**
- **Natural-bristle and wooden-handled stencil brushes or toothbrushes (used for cleaning laces).** Wig glue solvents will melt plastic stencil brushes or toothbrushes.
- **Multiple colors of permanent markers and colored pencils.**
- **Crepeing and wefting sticks.** These sticks come in kits with weaving strings. These sticks are used to make both creped hair and wefted hair. Crepeing hair will be discussed in [Chapter 6](#); wefting hair will be covered in [Chapter 10](#).

## Handling a Wig

Whenever you are handling a wig, make sure you do so carefully. Never grab a lace-front wig by the front lace—the lace is fragile and can tear pretty easily. Instead, always support any wig by holding it from the inside of the strongest part of the foundation. Do not grab, tug, pull on, or twist a wig.

## Blocking a Wig

No matter what you are doing to a wig, make sure it is securely pinned to the block. This process is called *blocking* a wig. Improper blocking will cause irreparable damage to your wig, so always be careful and vigilant about this!

## Blocking Hard-Front Wigs

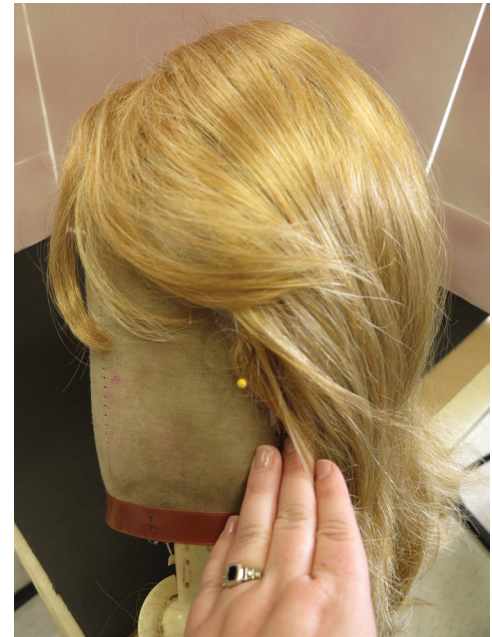
A *hard-front wig* is a wig that is in the condition that it came from a manufacturer. It is called a “hard front” because the front hairline of the wig is a thick, solid material that is bound. Its appearance is very dense. Because hard-front wigs are less delicate than lace-front wigs, they do not have to be blocked as carefully as lace-front wigs. Here’s how to do it:



**Figure 1.42** A blocking pin has been placed in the center front area of the wig.



**Figure 1.43** Insert a blocking pin into the sideburn tab of the wig on either side of the face.



**Figure 1.44** Place a pin in the bottom of the wig, on either side of the nape of the neck.

1. Position the wig on the block. Make sure that it is far back enough to look like it is sitting on the block the way it would sit on the wearer's head. Also, check the position of the sideburn pieces and make sure they are even.
2. Place one blocking pin in the center front of the wig (Figure 1.42).
3. Place one blocking pin at the bottom of each sideburn piece (Figure 1.43).
4. Place one blocking pin at the bottom corner of each side of the nape of the neck (Figure 1.44).

## Blocking Lace-Front Wigs

A *lace-front wig* is a wig that has either had the commercial front cut off and replaced with wig-making lace or a wig that has been made from scratch with wig-making lace in front. This lace is delicate, so it must be handled carefully in order to prevent the wig lace from stretching out of shape or ripping at the holes:

1. Position the wig on the block. Make sure that it is far back enough to look like it is sitting on the block the way it would sit on the wearer's head. Also, check the position of the sideburn pieces and make sure they are even.
2. Place one blocking pin about an inch behind the front hairline of the wig.
3. Place one blocking pin just in front of each ear on the wig.
4. Place one blocking pin at the bottom corner of each side of the nape of the neck (Figure 1.45).
5. Get a piece of blocking tape and a blocking pin. Begin at the center front of the wig. Place the tape about a half-inch above the edge of the lace. Slide it down until the edge of the lace is covered. Pin it squarely in the center of the blocking tape. Make sure you have actually pinned through not only the blocking tape, but also through the wig lace itself (Figure 1.46).
6. Move a half-inch to the right of the center pin and repeat the process.



**Figure 1.45** Pin the wig at the corner of the nape of the neck on both sides.

7. Move a half-inch to the left of the center pin and repeat the process.
8. Continue working your way around the front lace, alternating from right to left. This will keep the tension evenly balanced on your lace. Continue pinning every half-inch, all the way around the sideburn area and back up toward the ears (**Figure 1.47**). If there is excess blocking tape, pin it down so that you don't catch it with a brush, comb, or ventilating needle.



**Figure 1.46** The blocking tape should just cover the edge of the wig lace. The pins should be placed about half an inch apart from each other.



**Figure 1.47** The wig lace has been pinned so that it curves around the sideburn area and in front of the ear.



Figure 1.48 A properly blocked lace front wig.

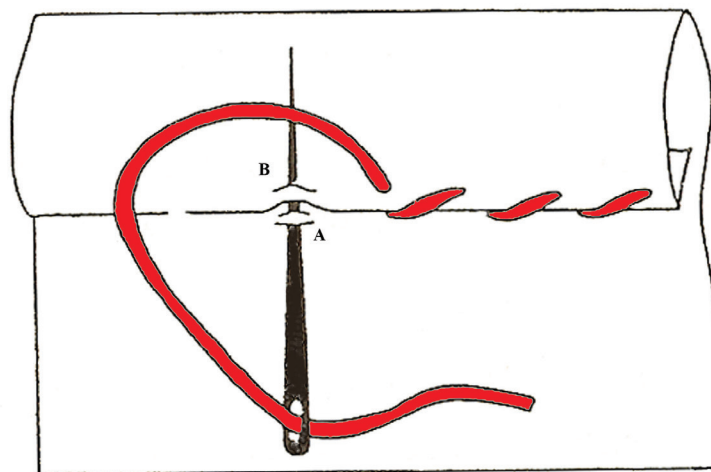


Figure 1.49 Diagram of a whipstitch.

## Basic Hand Sewing Stitches

When you are working with wigs, it is good to be familiar with a couple of basic sewing stitches. The two most useful are the whipstitch and the cross-stitch hem stitch.

The whipstitch is used to join two pieces of fabric together. It is a diagonal stitch that can be done with either a single thread or a doubled thread.

Follow these steps:

1. Thread your needle and knot it at the end. The thread should be doubled for extra security.
2. Insert the needle diagonally through both layers of the fabrics you are joining together (Points A and B on [Figure 1.49](#)). Pull it through until it is tight.
3. Again, insert the needle diagonally through both layers of fabric. Pull it through tightly. Repeat until you reach the end of what you are sewing.
4. Securely knot off your thread and trim away the excess.



Figure 1.50 Weft being sewn to a wig foundation using a whipstitch.

The whipstitch can be used to join pieces of a wig foundation together, to attach a piece of lace to a wig for fronting, or for sewing weft to a wig or hairpiece.

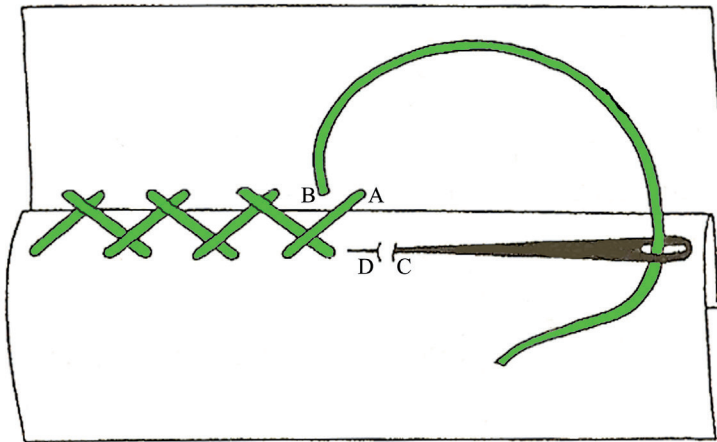


Figure 1.51 Diagram of a cross-stitch.

The cross-stitch is traditionally used as a hemming stitch. In wig making, it is used to form a sort of casing to hold elastic in place and still allow the wig to stretch as it needs to.

The steps are:

1. Thread your needle and knot the end of your thread. The thread should be doubled for extra strength.
2. The cross-stitch is unusual in that although the stitches will move from left to right, your needle will actually be going into the fabric from right to left. Insert your needle in the fabric from right to left (point A to point B on [Figure 1.51](#)). Make a stitch  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch in length. Pull your thread through.
3. Bring your needle over the top of whatever you are sewing and move left about an inch. Again, insert the needle into the fabric from right



Figure 1.52 An example of elastic held in place at the nape area of a wig using a cross-stitch.

- to left (point C to point D on [Figure 1.51](#)) and make a stitch that is  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch long. Pull your thread through.
4. Return to the bottom of whatever you are stitching over and move about an inch to the left. Make another right to left stitch and pull it through.
5. Continue to alternate top and bottom stitches while moving left along what you are sewing. When you reach the end, securely knot off your thread and trim away the excess.