

TECHNIQUE

# What's The Difference? Clarifying Commonly Confused Nail Terms

by Holly Schippen | July 26, 2019 | [ ]



You probably know the essential differences between the products and nails terms you use in the salon every day — like soft gel versus hard or LED light versus UV. But could you provide a clear explanation to a curious client? And what about those fuzzy terms that can mean different things to different people? Here's a terminology "cheat sheet" we hope will help keep us all on the same page.



## Acetone Vs. Non-Acetone Removers

As you would expect, acetone-based removers contain the solvent acetone. According to industry scientist Doug Schoon, the most common non-acetone polish and product removers contain ethyl acetate or methyl ethyl ketone. All three of these solvents can temporarily dry the nail plate with overuse and all are equally safe, he says.

Acetone-based removers will work more quickly and efficiently, which is ideal in the salon setting. Non-acetone polish removers will increase removal time.



## Gel Vs. Acrylic

Gel and acrylic are actually both chemically a part of the acrylic family. This is why you will hear some educators and other industry professionals refer to acrylic as liquid-and-powder or monomer and polymer. By using the terms "gel" or "liquid-and-powder," you designate the product you are using within the acrylic family. Soft gel is similar to liquid-and-powder in that both can be removed by soaking. Hard gel gives the additional benefits described on the next page, but is viewed as a more permanent option.

**What to tell clients:** "Let's take a look at the condition of your natural nails along with your lifestyle and activities to choose the ideal coating for your nails. Liquid-and-powder is a great option if you're very hard on your nails and gel is ideal if you're frequently exposed to solvents through excessive hand washing, using hand sanitizer, cleaning, and so on."



## Hard Gel Vs. Soft Gel

A hard gel is meant to be a permanent enhancement that is solvent resistant. This means that removal consists of filing it down to a very thin layer and allowing the remnant to grow off. A soft gel is meant to give you the crystal clarity of a hard gel with the option of a soak-off removal. Both may be used with tips, over forms, or as a natural nail overlay.

**What to tell clients:** "If you are looking for an enhancement and you are willing to make a commitment to upkeep, hard gel is a great solvent-resistant option. Should you have something more temporary in mind, or plan to wear gloves diligently for housework, gardening, and other activities, a soft gel will work well."



## Traditional Polish Vs. Longer-Wear Polish

No-cure longer-wear polishes are hybrids, combining traditional polish ingredients with a small amount of gel ingredients. The polish portion dries normally, hardening as the solvent evaporates; the gel portion is slowly cured over time as the nails are exposed to sunlight. The key difference here is usually wearability and in some cases dry time. A traditional polish is exactly that, the standard two-to-four-day wear we were used to in the past. The longer-wear polishes are more a five- to seven-day option and tend to chip less on toes, giving pedicures four-to-six weeks of wear. Many of the longwear polishes also have improved dry times, making them more salon and DIY friendly.



## LED Vs. UV Lamps

The lamps commonly referred to as UV lamps use compact fluorescent bulbs. UV stands for "ultraviolet," which is a wavelength beyond which human eyes can see. LED stands for "light emitting diode," which refers to the type of bulb an LED lamp uses. Both bulbs will emit some amount of UV depending on the components of the lamp as well as the bulb used. The wavelength on LED lights is much narrower than that of the UV/compact fluorescent lights, which is why LED-curable gels cure faster in LED lights than in UV lights.

**What to tell clients:** "Both styles of professional nail lamp are safe. The LED-style bulb puts out a little more UV to offer a faster cure so you have time to add on those designs you've been admiring!"



## Cuticle Vs. Eponychium

Cuticle is the transparent tissue that is adhered to the surface of the nail plate. It is a waxy film that can block adhesion of nail coatings. Commonly mistaken for the cuticle, the eponychium is the underside of the proximal nail fold, which is the fold of skin at the base of the nail.

**What to tell clients:** "Just so you are aware, right now I am removing your cuticle — dead tissue on the surface of the nail plate that can safely be removed. This ridge of skin here at the base of your nail is called the proximal nail fold and the underside is called the eponychium — neither of which should be cut or removed as they are living tissue. We have a wonderful cream you can use at home to reduce the excess skin and achieve a healthy look."

## Navigating Nail Shape Names

Stiletto nails by Tan Dang, Colorado Springs, Colo.

Stiletto nails by Tan Dang, Colorado Springs, Colo.

Almond nails by Adreanna Corrales - @chicaartistanails

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Ballerina/ coffin nails by Amy Hwang. - @symehsnails

Ballerina/ coffin nails by Amy Hwang. @symehsnails

**With so many different names for various nail shapes, communication back and forth with clients can get tricky. Let's simplify a few of the most commonly seen:**

- Ballerina and coffin nails are the same thing; they look like the shape of a coffin or ballerina's toe shoe. Which term you choose to use in your salon could be based on the type of image you want to project — edgy or soft and elegant.
- The shapes almond and stiletto are understandably often confused — they are similar yet different. The stiletto is a sharp narrow point, while the almond shape has a more gradual, softened, slightly rounded point.
- Squoval, oval, and round differ just slightly, yet enough to be worth distinguishing between them. The squoval nail is the happy medium between a sharp square nail and an oval. Oval is just as it sounds, an elongated oval shape, even when on shorter nails. A round nail is more truly rounded, like half of a circle.

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En Vogue

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This year marks the 13th anniversary of MelodySusie, a trusted source for nail manicure products. To celebrate, they are launching an Anniversary Celebration which includes 50%-off specials across their website.

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## En Vogue Launches Tortoiseshell Design Kit

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The new tortoiseshell design kit by gel company en Vogue comes with three new shades including a bold neon to send off the summer in bright, beautiful style.

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Denise Dente & Jessica Guick, Buzz Beauté

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Debuted at the MTV Music Awards, check out two new looks by celebrity nail artist Zola Ganzorigt on Vanessa Hudgens and Euphoria's Sydney Sweeney.

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## En Vogue's Education Empowers Nail Technicians

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Ashley Edwards is en Vogue's International Lead Educator. She loves teaching others the art of sculpting the nails of their dreams. We hear from her about all the different types of education en Vogue offers and how it can be tailored to each artist's specific needs.

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## Video: Blooming Gel Nails & One-Bead Acrylic Application

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Nail artist David Hoang shows how to use Blooming Gel, a clear nail gel that is applied before your color gel design, helping your color gels spread, or "bloom." He starts by sculpting the nail with a one-bead acrylic method.

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## Integrate Reflexology Into Your Pedi Services

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Reflexology can provide health and relaxation benefits for your pedicure clients, and it can increase your profits, too. Nail tech Melissa Finch explains how she adds this technique to pedicure services.

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