

# 1

# History and Career Opportunities

## Chapter Outline

- Why Study the History of Beauty and Nail Technology and Career Opportunities for Nail Technicians?
- A Brief History of Cosmetology and Nail Technology
- Career Paths for Nail Technicians



## Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

- ✓ **L01** Explain the origins of personal beautification.
- ✓ **L02** Discuss the advancements made in nail technology during the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.
- ✓ **L03** List several career opportunities available to a licensed nail technician.

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## Key Terms

Page number indicates where in the chapter the term is used.


**cosmetology** / 4

**nail technology** / 4

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**Cosmetology** is a term used to encompass a broad range of beauty specialties, including hairstyling, nail technology, and esthetics. It is the art and science of beautifying and improving the nails, hair, and skin and the study of cosmetics and their applications. In this text, we will primarily focus on **nail technology**, which is defined as “the art and science of beautifying and improving the nails and skin of the hands and feet.”

## WHY STUDY THE HISTORY OF BEAUTY AND NAIL TECHNOLOGY AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES FOR NAIL TECHNICIANS?

Nail technicians should have a thorough understanding of the history of beauty and nail technology as well as career opportunities available, because:

- ▶ Knowing the history of your profession can help you predict and understand upcoming trends.
- ▶ Learning about the many different nail care services will help broaden your offerings or assist you in developing one or more specialties within your practice.
- ▶ Learning about the many possible career paths will help you see the wide range of opportunities open to nail technicians.

## ■ A BRIEF HISTORY OF COSMETOLOGY AND NAIL TECHNOLOGY

Personal beautification dates back to the dawn of history, with each subsequent period contributing new approaches to beautifying the hair, skin, and nails. While scientists and beauty visionaries in the twenty-first century have made many breakthroughs in beauty products, even they have been heavily influenced by past uses and achievements.

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## The Egyptians

The Egyptians were the first to cultivate beauty in an extravagant fashion and to use cosmetics as part of their personal beautification habits, religious ceremonies, and burial preparations. In fact, as early as 3000 B.C., Egyptians used minerals, insects, and berries to create makeup for their eyes, lips, and skin and henna to stain their hair and nails a rich, warm red. In Ancient Egypt and during the Roman Empire, military commanders stained their nails and lips in matching colors before important battles.

Queen Nefertiti (circa 1400 B.C.) used a henna paste to stain her nails a deep red, wore lavish makeup designs, and used custom-blended essential oils as signature scents. Queen Cleopatra (circa 50 B.C.), who preferred a rust-red nail hue, took this dedication to beauty to an entirely new level by erecting a personal cosmetics factory next to the Dead Sea.



## The Chinese

History shows that during the Shang Dynasty (1600 B.C.), Chinese aristocrats rubbed a tinted mixture of gum arabic, gelatin, beeswax, and egg whites onto their nails to turn them crimson or ebony. Throughout the Chou Dynasty (1100 B.C.), gold and silver nails were strictly reserved for royal family members. In fact, during this early period in history, nail tinting was so closely tied to social status that commoners who were caught wearing the royal nail colors faced a punishment of death. Extraordinarily long nails were also a status symbol of the ancient Chinese elite. Some even wore gold, jewel-adorned nail guards to protect against damaging their lengthy symbols of wealth and leisure.

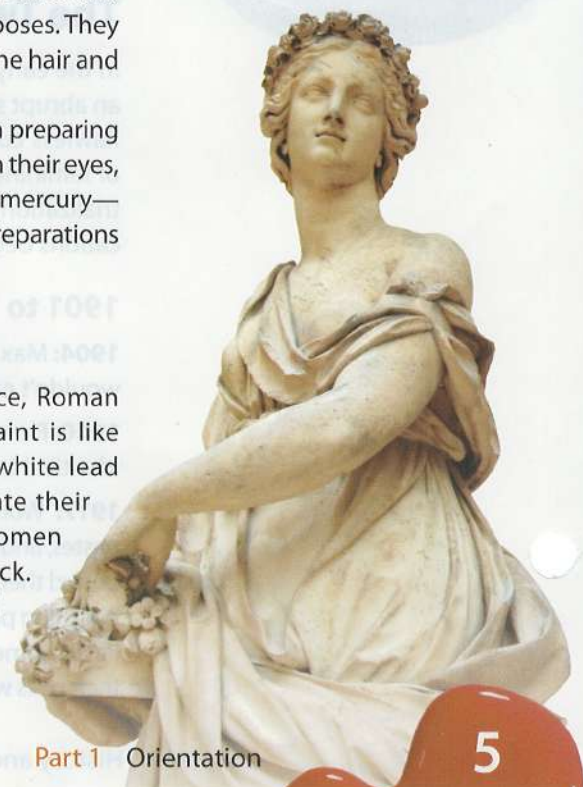
## The Greeks

During the Golden Age of Greece (beginning in 500 B.C.), hairstyling became a highly developed art. The ancient Greeks also made lavish use of perfumes and cosmetics in their religious rites, in grooming, and for medicinal purposes. They built elaborate baths and developed excellent methods of dressing the hair and caring for the skin and nails.

Greek soldiers often applied red color their lips and nails red when preparing for battle. Greek women used white lead powder on their faces, kohl on their eyes, and ground cinnabar—a brilliant red mineral that is a chief source of mercury—on their cheeks and lips. Interestingly, these powder and ointment preparations represent the basis of many cosmetic formulations still in use today.

## The Romans

Celebrating the power of cosmetics to beautify one's appearance, Roman philosopher Plautus (254–184 B.C.) wrote, "A woman without paint is like food without salt." Roman women used a mixture of chalk and white lead to powder their complexions. They also used hair color to indicate their class status: noblewomen colored their hair red, middle-class women colored their hair blond, and poor women colored their hair black. Both men and women used sheep blood mixed with fat to add color to their nails.







## The Middle Ages

The Middle Ages is the period in European history that falls between classical antiquity and the Renaissance, beginning with the downfall of Rome in A.D. 476 and lasting until about 1450. Many tapestries, sculptures, and other artifacts from this period show towering headdresses, intricate hairstyles, and the use of cosmetics on the skin and hair. Women wore colored makeup on their cheeks and lips, but not on their eyes or nails.

## The Renaissance

During the Renaissance period (A.D. 1450–1600), Western civilization made the transition from medieval to modern history. Paintings and written records tell us a great deal about the grooming practices throughout this period. Both men and women wore elaborate clothing and used fragrances and cosmetics, although highly colored preparations for the lips, cheeks, eyes, and nails were discouraged. They may have avoided colored nail cosmetics, but wealthy people manicured their nails. Archeological digs have uncovered cosmetic tools from the Renaissance period, including nail cleaners—some doubling as ear scoops—made of bone or metal in a wide variety of designs.

## The Victorian Age

The reign of Queen Victoria of England (A.D. 1837–1901) was known as the Victorian Age. Fashions in dress and personal grooming were drastically influenced by the social customs of this austere period in history. To preserve the health and beauty of the skin, women used beauty masks and packs made from honey, eggs, milk, oatmeal, fruits, vegetables, and other natural ingredients. Rather than use cosmetics such as rouges or lip stains, Victorian women pinched their cheeks and bit their lips to induce natural color. Nails were sometimes tinted with red oil and then buffed with a chamois cloth. **LO1**

## The Twentieth Century

In the early twentieth century, the invention of motion pictures coincided with an abrupt shift in American attitudes. As viewers saw pictures of celebrities with flawless complexions, beautiful hairstyles, and manicured nails, the standards of feminine beauty began to change. This era also signaled the onset of industrialization, which brought a new prosperity to the United States. Beauty applications began to follow the trends set by celebrities and society figures.

### 1901 to 1919

**1904:** Max Factor began manufacturing and selling makeup to movie stars that wouldn't cake or crack, even under hot studio lights.

**1910:** Flowery Manicure Products introduced the first emery board that is nearly identical to the emery boards used today.

**1917:** Women massaged commercial powders, pastes, and creams onto their nails and then buffed them to a gleaming finish. One such polishing paste was Graf's Hyglo Nail Polish Paste. Some women applied a clear varnish to their nails with a very small camel hair brush.





## 1920s

The cosmetics industry grew exponentially. Cosmetics advertising in magazines swelled from \$2.5 million in 1915 to \$25 million in 1925. The total sales of cosmetics and toiletries mushroomed from \$8.6 million in 1909, to \$33.5 million in 1920.

## 1930s

In 1932, inspired by a new, opaque paint that was being produced for the automobile industry, Charles Revson marketed the first successful nail lacquer brand in a variety of colors. This beauty milestone marked a dramatic shift in nail cosmetics, as every woman literally had an array of nail polish colors at her fingertips. Early screen sirens Jean Harlow and Gloria Swanson glamorized this hip new nail lacquer trend by appearing in films wearing matching polish on their fingers and toes.

## 1940s

The aerosol can was invented, eventually leading to the marketing of the first hair sprays in 1948. Shiny lips also came into vogue for the first time when women began applying petroleum jelly over their lipstick. Nail polish applications omitted the moon at the base of the nail and sometimes did not include the tip of the nail.

## 1950s

The 1950s saw the introduction of tube mascara, improved hair care and nail products, and the boom and then death of the weekly manicure appointment. In the early 1950s, red nail lacquer was extremely popular, with nail technicians leaving the moon—the whitish, half-moon shape at the base of the nail plate—unpolished. As the decade progressed, full-coverage, frosted pastel colors—especially light coral, silver-white, pink, and apricot-gold—were all the rage. Hot oil manicures were the ultimate luxury in nail and hand care.

## 1960s

Juliette (paper) nail wraps—the precursor to silk and fiberglass wraps—were commonly used to protect natural nail tips. (Juliettes are credited with establishing the now familiar biweekly nail maintenance appointment.) Detached nail tips were reattached with model airplane glue and reinforced with thin strands of cotton. Human nail clippings were also used to add nail length. Clients brought their separated nail tips to their appointments for reattachment. Nail technicians also created “nail banks,” which consisted of nails donated by all of their clients! Frosted nail shades continued to be extremely popular. Hot oil manicures continued to be the luxury service of choice.

## 1970s

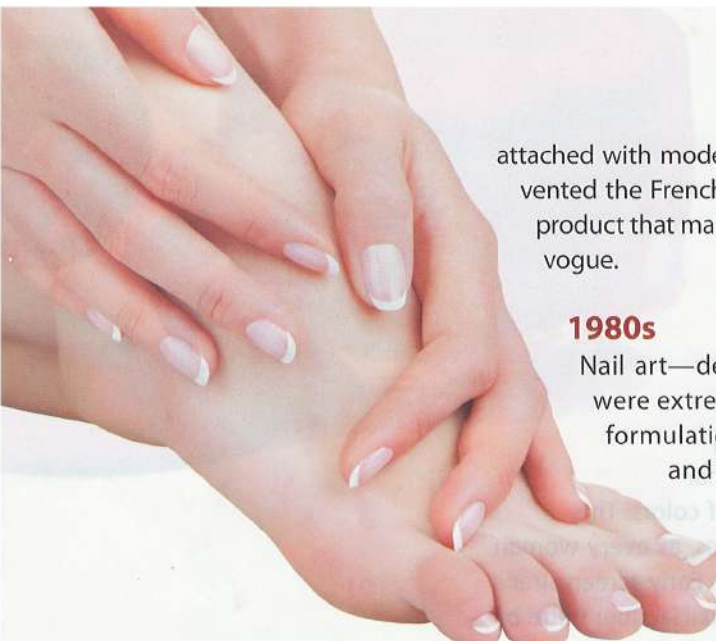
Nail technicians offered the first monomer liquid and polymer powder nail services. Plastic nail tips affixed with cyanoacrylate adhesive replaced nail clippings



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attached with model airplane glue to instantly extend nail length. Jeff Pink invented the French manicure (clear nail bed with white tip) and Ridgefiller (a product that makes ridged nails appear smooth). Squared nail tips came into vogue.

### 1980s

Nail art—decals, jewels, metallic strips, and hand-drawn images—were extremely popular. Monomer liquid and polymer powder nail formulations continued to improve in terms of ease of application and longevity for wearers.

### 1990s

The day spa business took hold, ushering in a huge resurgence in natural manicure and pedicure services. Airbrush (spray) guns were commonly used to apply nail designs, especially the white tip of a French manicure. In 1998, the first spa pedicure system was introduced to the professional beauty industry.

Other notable achievements of the twentieth century include:

- UV gel systems grew in popularity.
- Color UV gel and monomer liquid and polymer powder nail enhancements swept the industry.
- The popularity of natural nail care services reached a high point.
- Demand for pedicure services reached an all-time high.
- Nail technicians had unprecedented career choices.
- Nail enhancement performance vastly improved.
- Nail polish became safer and longer-lasting.

## Twenty-First Century

Nail grooming has reached an all-time zenith in terms of client demand and product and service choices. It is no longer considered a luxury; it is an expected part of every client's grooming ritual. An unprecedented demand for nail services of all types has created a critical shortage of nail technicians in the beauty industry.

Here are some examples of the exciting changes we've seen thus far:

- UV gel nail polish sweeps the nation. In addition to being called "gel nail polish," it is commonly referred to as a gel manicure, soft-gel manicure, and soak-off gel polish. Each coat of "polish" must be cured under a UV lamp for up to one minute, depending on the brand.
- Gel polish manicures have dramatically driven the growth of the professional nail industry since their introduction in 2010. This is largely because the manicure results last two weeks or longer—including no chipping or surface dulling—and nails are no thicker than they would be with a regular manicure polish. The one drawback: Unless a client has unusually strong and flexible nails, the nail plate must be kept relatively short.



- UV gel enhancements grow by leaps and bounds because of their adhesion and natural leveling capabilities, permanent shine properties, and no-odor formulations. Color and glitter UV gel and monomer liquid and polymer powder products also gain in popularity.
- Nail polish formulations evolve to embody chip-resistant, fade-resistant characteristics. Manufacturers continue to improve their nail polish formulas by eliminating many unsafe ingredients. Manicuring implements improve dramatically by incorporating new ergonomic designs and enhanced workmanship.
- A bevy of professional, natural nail care treatments and systems enter the professional beauty arena, allowing nail technicians to address specific nail concerns.
- Foot-and-hand skin treatment products continue to grow in numbers and popularity, including many scrubs, masks, and serums that specifically address dryness, dullness, and skin-aging issues. **LO2**

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Beyond defining your area of expertise, you must also decide whether you want to work in one or more of the following environments:

- Nail salon
- Full-service salon (hair, skin, and nail services)
- Day spa (skin, body, nail, and hair services that emphasize beauty and wellness) (**Figure 1-1**)
- Medical spa, medical office, or foot spa



**Figure 1-1** Pedicures are high-demand services that many nail clients faithfully book on a monthly basis.



## CAREER PATHS FOR NAIL TECHNICIANS

Once you have completed your schooling and are licensed, you will be amazed at how many career opportunities will open up to you. The possibilities can be endless for a dedicated nail technician who approaches his or her career with a strong sense of personal integrity. Because rules and regulations vary from state to state, it is important to know which services are allowed in your state of licensure and the steps you must take to get there.

Within the professional nail industry, there are numerous specialties. They include the following:

- **Nail technician in a traditional salon or spa.** Today, clients are eagerly requesting a variety of nail services that require a combination of skills. Natural nail services—gel polish manicures and luxurious pedicures as well as nail-strengthening treatments—monomer liquid and polymer powder nail enhancements, and odorless UV gel nail enhancements, are all very popular salon and day spa services. You can now specialize in one specific area of your field (e.g., natural nails, pedicures, or nail enhancements) or be a full-service nail technician who offers many different types of nail services (**Figure 1-2**).
- **Medical nail technician/advanced nail technician.** Because many physicians now recognize the benefits of using medical nail technicians (MNTs) and advanced nail technicians (ANTs) to perform safe manicures and pedicures on at-risk patients, you have a golden opportunity to take your postlicensing career to a whole new level.  
To become an MNT, you are required to take specialty courses and complete an internship under the direction of a podiatrist or physician. Once your advanced training is complete and you have been certified as an MNT, you have the choice of working in a variety of medical settings, including a medical spa or podiatry office. Duties vary, but could include assisting physicians with patients as well as performing cosmetic pedicures in a dedicated salon room.  
You may also choose to become an ANT. An ANT must successfully complete an advanced training course that focuses on safely providing services for at-risk clients in a salon or spa setting. Becoming an ANT also gives you greater respect among salon clients and the opportunity to benefit from physician referrals.
- **Salon management.** If business is your calling, you will find diverse management opportunities in the salon and spa environment. They include inventory manager, retail sales manager, department head, special events manager (promotions), assistant manager, and general manager. With experience, you can also add salon owner to your list of career possibilities. To ensure your success, it is wise to enroll in business classes to learn more about managing products, departments, and, above all, people (**Figure 1-3**).



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▲ **Figure 1-2** Nail technicians have the choice of providing basic to luxurious pedicures as well as medical-based nail and foot services.



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Photography by Dino Petrocchi.

▲ **Figure 1-3** Moving into management and even salon ownership are possible career paths for nail technicians.



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- **Salon educator.** Many companies, such as manufacturers and salon chains, hire experienced salon professionals and train them to educate others. This kind of education can take many forms, ranging from technical to management and interpersonal relationship training. A salon educator can work with small salons, as well as large organizations and trade associations, to help develop the beauty industry's most valuable resource—salon personnel (**Figure 1-4**).
- **Distributor sales consultant.** The salon industry depends heavily on its relationships with product distributors in order to stay abreast of changes in the marketplace. In addition to selling products, distributor sales consultants (DSCs) provide information about new products, trends, and techniques. This specialty provides an excellent opportunity for highly skilled and trained cosmetology professionals. The DSC is the salon's link to the rest of the industry. It is also a relationship that represents the most effective method for professional beauty product companies to reach salon professionals and owners.
- **Manufacturer educator.** Most manufacturers hire their own educators to train salon professionals on how to use their products and even to provide advanced education. Mastery of the company's product lines is a must for manufacturer educators. An accomplished educator who is also a good public speaker can advance to field educator, regional educator, or even director of education for nail-centric companies.
- **Beauty school instructor.** Have you ever wondered how your instructor decided to start teaching? Many instructors had fantastic careers in salons before dedicating themselves to teaching new professionals the tricks of the trade. If this career path interests you, spend some time with your school's instructors and ask them why they went into education. While educating new nail technicians can be challenging, it can also be very rewarding.
- **Film/editorial nail technician.** Working behind the scenes at magazine and Internet photo shoots, or backstage on movies and TV sets, begins by volunteering. Even someone right out of school can volunteer by networking with photographers, editorial stylists, and nail technicians who already work behind the scenes. Once you are officially assisting a seasoned nail technician at photo shoots—even if it means you are volunteering your time—ask photographers for one or two images in lieu of payment. Make sure they show off your nail work! Eventually, as you gain the trust of those who have allowed you to assist, you will be invited to do shoots as a paid nail technician. The qualities required to get to this level include technical expertise, persistence, networking skills, reliability, team spirit, speed, and attention to detail. **LO3**



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▲ **Figure 1-4** Educators can work part-time and still service a clientele or work full-time as a teacher or trainer.





## Review Questions

1. What are the origins of personal beautification?
2. What are some of the advancements that were made in nail technology during the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries?
3. What are some of the career opportunities available to licensed nail technicians?