

THREE TYPES OF NATURALS

A Professional's Guide to Caring for Textured Hair

By Monica Carruthers
with Camille Wright

About the Author

Monica Carruthers, also known as “Queen”, is a textured hair professional and licensed Cosmetologist with more than 20 years of experience in the hair care industry. She is the lead stylist for the Ampro® Pro Styl® brand and has served on the company’s Professional Stylist Board for more than fifteen years. Carruthers is also one of the minds behind the U R Curly® brand and serves as the primary tester and ambassador for all U R Curly products.

Along with being a licensed cosmetologist, Ms. Carruthers’ is also a licensed Cosmetology Instructor with years of experience teaching, training and mentoring those who seek to become titans in the hair care industry. Having owned and advised many salons in the Memphis, TN, metro area, Monica enjoys teaching emerging stylists throughout the US, and serving as a guest speaker at cosmetology schools and empowerment initiatives throughout the Southeast.

Monica’s knowledge of hair and hair care covers a wide range of types and textures. It is for this reason, that Ampro Industries, Inc., turns to her when building a brand that needs to exceed the expectations of its consumers. It is also for this reason that thousands of readers monthly visit AskQueen.com, Monica’s online question and answer forum that was designed to help consumers understand their hair and how to properly care for it.

Preface

While working as a platform artist at various hair care trade shows in both the mainstream and ethnic, now multicultural, hair care industries, I was introduced to a hair typing system that was developed by a notable hair care professional.

That system involves categorizing hair by using a letter/number combination and has grown in recent years to being universally accepted by certain consumers as a means of identifying the type of hair that grows from their scalp. Many hair care professionals, though, have not been as keen to adopt this typing system because we have been trained to know that there is much more to the structure of hair than just how tightly or loosely it may curl, if it curls at all.

Many individuals and influencers within the “natural” hair community embraced this hair typing system because it finally gave them easy terminology they could use to have conversations with others about their hair. The system provides an easy visual that can be used to understand the degree to which a person’s hair may curl, or not and, because of that, other competing hair care brands also began to adopt the typing system in an effort to communicate to their own consumers.

In my opinion, the system came around at a great time. The “natural” hair community was beginning to grab some mainstream attention and this system was a great way to help advance that conversation in the broader world. However, now that the conversation has grown and more and more people and brands are beginning to “speak” to this community, as a professional cosmetologist, I think it’s time to move beyond the letter/number hair typing system and begin to acknowledge that there is more to this stuff we call hair.

By producing this guide, it is my hope that the natural hair community and the professional hair care community can come together and begin to speak the same language in an effort to provide better products and services for all.

Preface

In this guide, I will try and explain, from my perspective, why there are truly only two types of natural hair and only three types of “naturals.” I have used my own experience as a licensed hair care professional and certified cosmetology instructor to explain why the number/letter typing system is a great communication piece, but will not help consumers identify what products can actually help them achieve their hair goals.

In my opinion, this simple hair typing system is one of the reasons so many “naturals” continue to have trouble finding products that will actually work for them and help them achieve the styles they desire. Although it’s a good way to be able to communicate about hair, it isn’t the best guide to help them with their hair care journey. This is my attempt to get a step closer.

~ Queen

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Part 1

What Type of Hair Do You Have?

The answer to the question, “What type of hair do you have?” isn’t as simple as a number/letter combination. For one, as many have discovered, a single human head can have varying degrees of texture. The type of hair around the hairline most likely differs from the type of hair at the crown of the head, which may also differ from the type of hair at the nape.

Simply put, identifying hair with the number/letter hair typing system, will actually result in responses that have a series of different number/letter combinations. Some people have upwards of five or six different types of hair on one head and that is typical of all individuals whether their hair curls or not. Also, as one ages and experience changes in life, expect the number/letter combination to change even more.

The number/letter combination hair typing system was created to help a certain brand connect its products to the consumers it desired. A consumer is supposed to use that system to identify his or her curl type and then, identify which products within that specific hair care line should be used to cleanse, treat and style his or her hair. The system is a wonderful tool for that brand, but as a professional cosmetologist, I know that finding products that will help a consumer achieve his or her hair care goals is not that simple.

In this guide, you and I are going to have a conversation that will be less about what type of hair you have and more about what type of hair you want to have once you reach your hair goals.

Part 1



I'm using the term "hair goals" because hair goals are as different as the types of hair on one human head. Some people desire to have extremely long tresses and will spend whatever he or she can afford on whatever type of product that is available to help achieve that look. For others, the goal may simply be to have a healthy scalp and healthy looking hair; every goal is personal. The journey one takes in order to achieve his or her hair goal is why you call on a professional like myself.

TERMINOLOGY

Another term that has been popularized lately is “natural hair.” Up to this point in this guide, I have been using the term “natural hair” as popular hair care industry influencers such as bloggers, vloggers, and hair care brands have been using it – to mean hair that is being worn in its “naturally curly/kinky/coily/wavy” state, but I’m about to throw my first curve ball. That definition is not what I will mean going forward when I use the term “natural hair.”

NATURAL HAIR VS UN-NATURAL HAIR

Moving forward, I would like for you to stop thinking of “natural hair” as being curly/kinky/coily/wavy or as the opposite of wearing a relaxer. Instead, what I want you to entertain is the idea of “natural hair” as being the opposite of “un-natural hair.” Un-natural hair is hair that is man-made – wigs, weaves, extensions of all kinds (even if the packaging makes the claim that the hair within is comprised of human hair).

I feel that it is important to make this distinction because, as students, cosmetologists are taught, in essence, that, if the hair grows from the scalp, it is that client’s natural hair. He or she may choose whether or not to alter that hair once it emerges from the scalp, but as long as it is grown from the scalp, it is natural hair and that hair has certain needs. What determines the needs of the hair and what products should be used, will be what the client desires to do with his or her hair in order to achieve his or her individual hair goals.

Part 2

There Are Only Two Types of Natural Hair

At this point, you should begin to understand why I am proposing that there are only two types of natural hair. Please note, that I'm prepared for the backlash my second curve ball might receive because I am intentionally attempting to disrupt a conversation that has been going on for a little more than a decade (on the Internet, much longer elsewhere). Before ripping me to shreds, allow me the opportunity to explain why I believe that there are really only two types of natural hair, as I have defined it.

NATURAL HAIR IS EITHER NATURALLY STRAIGHT OR NATURALLY TEXTURED

Natural hair is either naturally straight or naturally textured. That's it. Your hair either bends or it doesn't. The type of hair that emerges from your scalp cannot be altered by anyone. You get what you are given. It was determined by powers far greater than you and was settled upon once you were formed in your mother's womb. Embrace it the same way you embrace everything else with which you were born.

What you do with your natural hair, whether straight or textured, after it has emerged from your scalp is a separate conversation that we are going to cover later in this guide, but let's spend a moment here first.

Part 2

HAIR THAT IS NATURALLY STRAIGHT

If the hair that emerges from your scalp is naturally straight, it has specific hair care needs. Naturally straight hair, on its own, though, can't even be lumped into just one category. In order to truly know how to care for your naturally straight hair and what products or ingredients you would need to help you achieve your hair goal, my advice would be to consult with a hair care professional.

That professional would be able to further identify whether your naturally straight hair is fine, medium or coarse. He or she would also be able to determine whether your scalp is oily, dry or flaky and the varying dispositions of your hair and scalp can also be taken into consideration when explaining what will be needed. As with naturally textured hair, hair that is naturally straight can vary on one head. You may have some places that are finer than others, you may have a patch of coarse hair, you may even have a section that is textured – which is why having a professional consultation can save you time, money and a lot of aggravation.

HAIR THAT IS NATURALLY TEXTURED

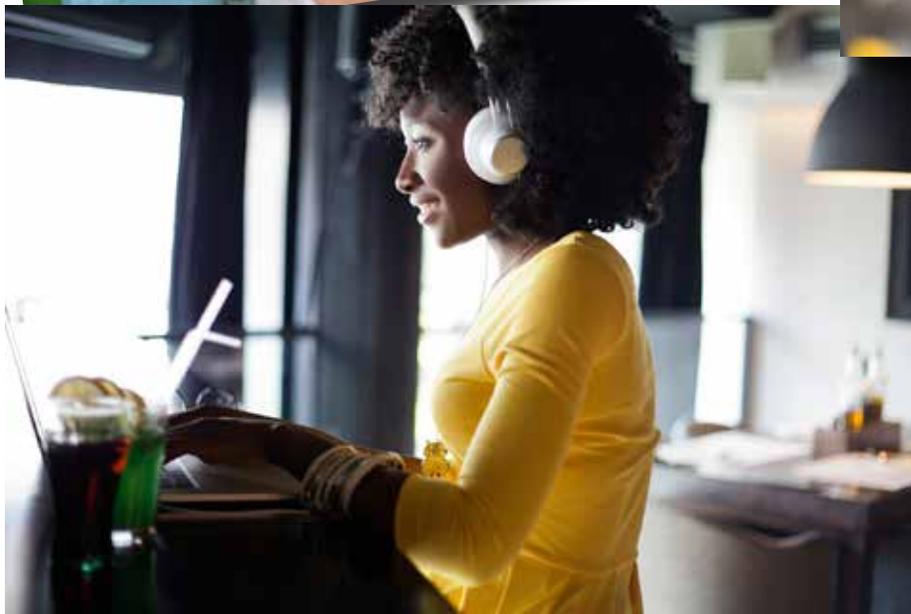
If the hair that emerges from your scalp has even the slightest bend to it, you, my dear, have textured hair and caring for your naturally textured hair properly requires a different set of products and techniques than those produced for hair that is naturally straight.

We can visually see the difference between hair that is naturally straight and hair that is naturally textured. The details that exist within the cortex of your hair are also going to be what cause you to either spend a whole lot of money buying products you think might work for your hair or investing in a relationship with a professional to help you know what works for your hair.

There are Only Two Types Of Natural Hair

Now, that I have explained my definition of natural hair and the two types of hair that I believe exist within this natural realm, let's move on because I have a few questions for you.





Part 3

Guiding Questions About Your Natural Hair

As a licensed cosmetologist, before I place my hands in your hair and begin working, I ask a few questions. Because it is my job, my calling, to help you care for your hair, and help you achieve realistic hair goals, I need to know where you are in your hair journey and where you want to go.

HAIR IS A JOURNEY

In order to help you get on the right path, you first need to know where you want to end up. By providing answers to the following questions, everyone interested in serving your hair care needs will have a better understanding of the expectations you have of your stylist and your hair care products. Knowing the answer to these questions before entering a store or salon will also help you know which products will help you achieve your goal.

All too often we, in the hair care industry, hear, “Well, such-n-such product worked for this person, but it didn’t work for me” or “So-n-so was able to use this product to achieve a certain look, but it wasn’t the case for me.” There are many reasons this can occur the first being, even if the type of curl you have looks similarly to that of another person – even your own sibling, it doesn’t mean that your hair needs are the same. Also, the person with whom you are comparing your own hair to may be on a journey to achieve a goal that is different than that of yourself.

CONSULT A PROFESSIONAL BEFORE MAKING YOUR NEXT PURCHASE

A professional cosmetologist will be able to help you understand and consider that what you put into your body also effects what you get out. Hair, skin & nail vitamins aren't the only things that people are putting into their bodies. Before applying any products to your hair or scalp, professional cosmetologists will often ask what medications you are taking, what products you're currently using on your hair, whether you're drink enough water, and whether or not you're getting enough exercise, etc. All of those things, and more, play a role in the state of your hair.

The products that you are going to need to help you meet your goals will have to do more than work great for a friend of yours. A professional will be able to use on you and recommend products for you that are going to help you maintain while you're on this journey.

So, here are the top three questions you need to have an answer for when you begin your hair journey. Ask yourself these questions and, be honest with yourself when you answer.

- 1) What are you doing to your hair after it grows from your scalp?
- 2) What are you ultimately trying to achieve with your hair?
- 3) Do you have a professional that you can trust to help you reach your hair goals?

In other words, instead of wondering about your hair type, consider your hair goals. Once you have this heart-to-heart with yourself or your hair care professional, your hair journey will be much easier.

Part 4

The Three Types Of Naturals

Three
NATURAL
HAIR TYPES
by Monica "Queen" Carnuthers

1

Virgin **NATURALS**

- Those who do not manipulate their hair with chemicals or other temporary straighteners (except on rare occasions).
- Most wearing styles of curl formation like bantu knots, twist outs, braid outs, etc.
- Those who love to wear a Wash N'Go.

2

Classic **NATURALS**
More Common

- Those who do not chemically straighten their hair
- May like to wear a blow out or silk press - straightening their virgin hair.
- May like to color their hair chemically.

3

Processed **NATURALS**

- Those who like to wear their hair chemically straightened.
- Those who wear their hair that has grown from their own head without weaves, wigs or extensions (bonded or sewn).

It's your
NATURAL!

ampro
PRO STYL

Part 4

Now that I have exhausted your mind and, hopefully, broken you out of the strict hair box the online natural hair community and industry has placed you within, I'm going to describe a different typing system that can help you find products that will work for you.

This typing system is less about what type of hair you have and more about what you are doing to your hair after it grows from your scalp.

1 – VIRGIN NATURALS

Whether your hair naturally emerges from your scalp straight or textured, if you do not take it through any chemical process be it relaxer or color, then you are a Virgin Natural. Virgin Naturals may wear color, if the color doesn't alter the hair shaft during application. Most know this as a color rinse. It will wash away in a short amount of time.

2 – CLASSIC NATURALS (MOST COMMON)

Whether your hair naturally emerges from your scalp straight or textured, if you routinely straighten your hair with heat (blow out/flat iron/silk press), smoothing treatment or apply any chemical color process, then you are a Classic Natural. The needs associated with your hair, generally speaking, are typical of your hair type.

3 – PROCESSED NATURALS

If you routinely straighten your naturally textured hair via a chemical process, i.e. a relaxer or use chemicals to permanently wave your naturally straight hair, you are a processed natural.

Part 5

The Needs Of The Three Types Of Naturals

All natural hair, whether textured or straight, requires routine cleansing and conditioning. Various types of shampoos and conditioners exist to accommodate the specific needs of the hair and scalp. Understanding your hair and scalp and identifying their needs will help determine which is best for you.

Once your need is identified, you can determine whether the shampoo and cleansing combination you need should be softening, strengthening, moisturizing, clarifying, volumizing or one that was designed to treat certain scalp conditions.

All natural hair, whether textured or straight, requires some type of treatment – dependent upon the condition of the hair, health of the scalp, and methods the clients uses to style his or her hair. The types of treatments vary according to hair type. Seek a professional cosmetologist for recommended treatment services and frequency.

Styling your natural hair can be easy or challenging. It is imperative that the products you choose to use were designed for use with your hair type. For example, a curl enhancer is recommended for use with textured hair, not straight hair, and neither would a consumer use a volumizing product for thick, textured hair.

Use products that are highly recommended by a professional that knows your hair type. This will save you time and money.

As with most things, know what to avoid. Inform yourself because it is imperative that you know if any ingredients will irritate your scalp. Use products whose ingredients will contribute to the health of your scalp and result in you achieving your hair goals with realistic styling techniques.

Afterword

Throughout my career and in this guide, my goal has always been to tear down the walls that segregate hair. Hair has been used as a representation of social status for thousands of years. Will you help me end that? The mere fact that you have the ability and right to freely color, straightened or curl your naturally grown hair, screams freedom.

I am dedicated to educating the world on the beauty that exist in loving your natural hair be it straight or textured. Hopefully, after reading this guide, you are now able to identify your hair type, classify your category of natural and enjoy all the possibilities that exist to help you reach your hair goals.