

LET'S NAIL IT

Building Your Nail Career : Where to Put your Money First

Invest in quality products, education, and equipment. This manual explains how to make the right choices.



LET'S NAIL IT

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Hey you,

My name is Maya and I am a nail technician originally from Czechia, Prague. It is such a beautiful place to live, as well as having great beer, we also do great nails! My nail journey began in Ireland, Dublin, where I decided to follow my heart and become a nail technician.



I qualified my first acrylic nail course in 2009, whilst I was employed full time. I then went onto furthering my knowledge and enrolling onto additional beauty courses. This is when I realised nails are my passion. There were not as many YouTube tutorials or books available at the time, so a lot of the techniques are self-taught through trial and error.

I rented rooms at small beauty salons; I was a mobile technician and I also worked from home too. Then I had an amazing opportunity to rent a premises in central Dublin, where my little business boomed!

It was not easy creating a returning clientele, but I persevered and succeeded. I decided to do an education course in nails as I felt that is where my passion was taking me.

In 2014, I competed in a nail competition in Dublin, where I placed 2nd in Salon Nails and 3rd in L&P Sculpted nails.

In 2024, I competed in a nail competition in London, where I placed 2nd in Gel Polish and 3rd in L&P Sculpted nails.

After that, in 2014 I decided to move to England with my sister and her new-born baby, I closed my business and took a break from the nail industry.

In 2016, I rented a room in a sunbed salon and built up my business once again from scratch. The great thing with this industry is that it is forever changing- new techniques and products are always coming out. Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube are great outlets to learn from and share your experiences.

This brings me to why I am doing this. I really want to share my knowledge and provide you with strong basics, as well as real life tips to ensure you are successful. Experience is something we must go through, and I have collected a sufficient amount to be able to share it with you!

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Maya".

Building your Nail Career, Where to Put Your Money First?

Starting a career as a nail technician can be an exciting but costly journey. With so many products, tools, and trends constantly emerging, it's easy to feel overwhelmed and unsure of where to invest your hard-earned money.

I've been there myself—spending hundreds on colours I thought would attract clients, only to realize they sat unused on my shelf because I didn't yet have the clientele to match.

Like many new nail techs, I believed having an extensive colour range or the latest trending products would bring in business. What truly attracts and retains clients is skill, not 400 different shades of polish.

The truth is, this profession is already expensive to set up, and there's no room to spend more than necessary.

Many nail technicians fall into the trap of buying cheap, low-quality products that end up needing to be replaced, or splurging on things they don't really need at the start of their career.

Through my own journey, I've learned the importance of investing wisely, focusing on quality over quantity and choosing the right products and tools that will truly support your growth.

In this manual, I'll guide you through where to put your money first when building your nail career. We'll discuss essential equipment and tools, how to avoid common spending mistakes, and how to choose products that will last. While I still love testing and trying new products, I've learned

to stick with trusted brands that consistently deliver good quality—saving me time, money, and frustration in the long run.

Whether you're just starting out or looking to optimize your existing setup, this manual will help you make informed financial decisions, ensuring that every investment you make contributes to your success as a nail technician.

I am based in the UK, so the products I use might differ from what's available in your country, and you may not be able to get the exact same ones.

Yes, I'll admit it – I've been there too, searching and buying cheaper products in attempt to save a few pennies.

I have tried so many brands: Gellifique, Glossify, Nail Order, OPI, NSI, Astonishing Nails, Young Nails, Crystal Nails, BrillBird, CND, Lechat, Hazel Dixon, Akzentz, Naio, CJP Nail systems, The Gel Bottle, Orly, Indigo, Semilac, Kostka Bojana, Bio Sculpture, Nail Perfect and I am sure that I tried few more
...

I have also tried to bring some products from my home country. My trainer swore by this brand. For some reason it didn't last on my Irish and English clients. It just somehow didn't work.

Now I can recommend products to you.
There are so many expenses when you want to start this career.

In this guide I will be talking about

- Manicure Tools
- Cuticle Scissors
- Gel Polish
- Hard Gels
- Soft Strengthening Gels (BIAB,BOB,Structure gels)
- UV/LED Lamps
- E-File
- E-File attachments
- Files/Buffers
- Tips
- Forms
- Extraction Fan
- Autoclave
- Desk Lamps
- Arm Rest
- Color Charts
- Nail Art
- Uniform
- Phone/Advertising

These are just basics when you want to start doing nails.
Doing nails can come with other expenses that include

- Table
- Chair for you & client
- Protective products
- Diary or booking system

- Cleaning solutions
- Insurance
- Extension lead
- Beauty case (if you are mobile)
- Towels, table protection
- Cabinets, shelves, decoration (if you are renting room)
- Etc.

The list can be really long. But you do not need to buy all of it in one go. And that's why we have this manual, to help you make good decisions.

Most new nail techs think getting in as many products and colors or nail art is the most important. I can't blame them. It is new, it is exciting to start a new career.

But to be honest, we need to spend money here:

- Education
- Branded products
- Good quality equipment

Education

Education is the foundation of a successful nail career, and there's so much more to learn beyond the basics. Many beginner courses only cover simple step-by-step techniques without offering the deeper knowledge needed to truly excel. Unfortunately, that's often not enough to confidently start your career.

I remember taking a course with ten other students, and our instructor simply didn't have the capacity to give each of us the attention we needed. As a result, we were left to figure things out on our own, leading to bad habits and techniques that didn't work in the long run.

That's why it's so important to choose your training wisely. I highly recommend investing in 1-to-1 sessions with an experienced educator who has been in your shoes and can guide you through the details with a deeper understanding.

Take your education one step at a time. There's no need to rush into multiple courses all at once. Start with the fundamentals—such as gel polish, BIAB, and hard gel or acrylics—and build your skills gradually. Think of it as learning to walk before you run. You don't need to jump into intricate nail art on your second set of nails; instead, focus on mastering each step before moving forward.

Don't let the cost of training discourage you. Investing in knowledge is the best decision you can make for your future in the nail industry. It's an investment that will pay off in skill, confidence, and long-term success.

Branded Products

Using high-quality branded products is the key to long-lasting nails. They are easier to work with, free from cheap and harmful chemicals, and gentle on natural nails. Your clients will appreciate the difference, and healthy nails will keep them coming back.

If their nails aren't in good condition, they are more likely to experience liftin and breakage- leading them to take a break from nail services and ultimately, you risk losing them as a client. Investing in quality products not only benefits your work but also builds long-term client trust and loyalty.

CHOOSE QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

Good Quality Equipment

Investing in quality tools and equipment makes your work easier and more efficient. Essentials like an e-file, manicure tools, good lighting, extraction fan, quality files can significantly improve your results and speed, helping you work smarter, not harder.

I am an independent nail technician, and I am not associated with any brands, I do not gain any money compensation for doing this.

These are the brands I work with currently and I recommend them to my students as they are the products I am happy with. Let's find out where to invest and when.

Manicure Tools

Cuticle pushers, professional tools

There are so many brands lately who offer fancy black, gold & rose gold professional pushers and other tools.

I see so many nail technicians buying these. Which is great, people want to invest in good quality products, and I agree with that. But thinking of a new nail tech, this is not what you need to buy when you are starting out. Orange wood stick will do the exact same job.

When to invest?

This investment can wait for a while.

If you have the need to buy any of these tools, buy one at a time. Tools also differ in job descriptions. ***All you need is simple cuticle pusher when you are starting out.*** Although the tools may look fancy it doesn't mean you need all of them.

Why not to use cheap tools?

Some cheaper tools have sharp edges that can damage natural nails. Buy from trusted beauty sellers.

What tools do I recommend?



**The Nail
Lab**



lucypastoreli tools

⋮



Lucy Pastoreli Tools



Navy Pro Tools

** I have never liked cuticle scissors in these sets. They are too thick to my liking; cuticle scissors need thin long leg so you can easily slide it under lifted cuticle. It doesn't mean you won't like them. I will be talking more about cuticle scissors in next chapter.*

Cuticle scissors

This is an important investment. This will help you remove excess skin around cuticles and improve the overall nail service you offer. Make sure you are getting **slim cuticle** scissors made for cuticles which are super sharp and **NOT nail scissors**. They are two completely different types of scissors.

Cuticle scissors are the most common tool to cut off cuticles. **Cuticle nippers** would be second most used tool. I recommend nippers for lateral folds and not for cuticles. But the choice is yours.

Flexi arm scissors I found these too little for my medium size hand.

Hybrid scissors/nippers need a little bit more practise as their holding area is quite big. you need to work out how to use them safely on your client.



Scissors come in different thickness and lengths. These are difficult to buy online without any prior experience. Ask sellers to send you details about the product you are thinking to buy.

When to invest?

Invest immediately in good cuticle scissors.

Scissors – if you prefer scissors

Nippers – if you prefer nippers

Flexi arm scissors – wait, invest in future

Hybrid scissors – wait, invest in future when you have good cutting skills

If you are not sure what to use, start with cuticle scissors.

Why not to use cheap scissors?

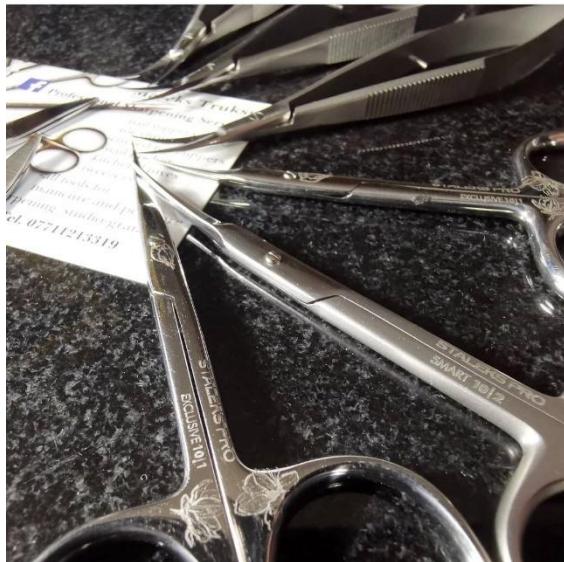
Cheaper tools are hard to work with, in most cases they are thick and blunt. Proper tools are made for the job & make your life easier. It can be made from low quality steel which will blunt quickly and are hard to sterilize. Cheaper product can rust when you sanitise, disinfect or sterilise your tools.

What cuticle scissors do I recommend?



staleks_sharpening_uk

⋮



Staleks Scissors

Any cuticle scissors need to be sent off for sharpening when they get blunt.

This seller is offering sharpening service.

Gel Polish

For start you really only need 10-15 colours. All the basics such as white, black, reds, pinks, nudes and few seasonal colours, spring – pastel colours, summer – neon colours, autumn – browns, greens, orange shades, winter – dark and glitters, of course reds for Christmas. This way you can slowly add colours by season. In a year you can have about 50 shades. Do not rush this. Make sure your nails are perfect. You can make your career solely on plain natural nails. Too many colours can also confuse clients.



When to invest

Invest slowly with your training. Mix colours if needed.

(I have reduced my selection from 400 to 150 colours few years ago, every year I am reducing by colours I don't use. Last year I bought 2 colours only).

Yes, I am small business, bigger salon has got different budget to spend. That still doesn't mean they need to stock hundreds and hundreds of colours.

Why not to use cheap products

- Poor pigmentation of colours
- Chips easy
- Issues with curing
- Natural nails getting damaged by cheap chemicals in the product

What Gel Polish Brands do I recommend?

Gellifique, The Gel Bottle, C Jel P (CJP Nail Systems), Perfect Match (LeChat), Madam Glam, Brillbird, Crystal Nails, Akzentz Luxio, Glitterbells, Jade UK – I have tried many more, I would be happy to have these in my salon. They are great quality polishes.



If you would like to know more about gel polish, I have made Gel Polish Upskilling Manual for anyone who want to up their game! Visit our website to buy one.

<http://www.letsnailit.co.uk>

Acrylic Products

All you need is a good brush, one pot of core powder, monomer, and primer!

You need to perfect your skills before you move on to do all fancy stuff. Coloured acrylics need a bit more skill.

Once you perfect your skill you can start adding more to your collection!



** If your first training was acrylic nails, invest in some gel polishes, so you can paint colour over your enhancements.*

When to invest

With your training, avoid purchasing KITS that comes with training. In most cases these kits are coloured pots that are not selling well, you will have no use for these. Kit is extra expense that you do not need.

Once you improve your skill, add more core powders and few coloured ones if you will be wanting doing designs (most designs you can do with gel polish over the acrylics).

Why not using cheap products

- Poor adhesion
- Quickly evaporating monomer, that means you are losing product, plus lots of fumes in your room.
- Can include harsh and cheap chemicals (MMA).
- Cheaper products can break wrong way, this could cause damage to natural nail.
- Please avoid buying cheaper acrylics to practise your skill with! This will slow down your process, every acrylic has different monomer x powder ratio! And it is easier to work with branded product.

What Acrylic brands do I recommend?

CJP Nail systems, Brillbird, Crystal Nails, Glitterbells, Glam and Glitz - I have tried many more, I would be happy to have these in my salon. They are great quality acrylics.

Try not to change brands often. Every brand has got different ratio of monomer to powder! This will you're your practise difficult. It takes some time to mix ratio well.



Real life skills for any nail tech picking up on topics that are not explained well during basic courses or reasons why you need to do it certain way to make nails last. For nail techs who works with hard gels, soft gels, acrylics or gel polish., everyday life hacks you need to know to be successful!

<http://www.letsnailit.co.uk>

Hard Gel Products

All you need is a good brush, base coat (and rubber for different natural nail needs), pot of chosen core gel pot. (Primer for different natural nail needs).

You need to perfect your skills before you move on to do all fancy stuff. Coloured acrylics need little bit more skills.

Once you perfect your skill you can start adding more to your collection!



** If your first training are gel nails, invest in some gel polishes, so you can paint colour over your enhancements.*

When to invest

With your training, avoid KITS that comes with training. In most cases in these kits are coloured gels that are not selling well, you will have no use for these. Kit is extra expense that you do not need.

Once you improve your skill, add more core gels and few coloured ones if you will be wanting doing designs (most designs you can do with gel polish over the gel extensions).

Why not using cheap products

- Poor adhesion
- Does include harsh and cheap chemicals.
- Cheaper products can break wrong way, this could cause damage to natural nail.

What Hard Gels do I can recommend?

Gellifique, The Gel Bottle, BrillBird, Crystal Nails - I have tried many more, I would be happy to have these in my salon. They are great quality acrylics.

Soft Gel – AKA BIAB Nails (Builder in a Bottle – Trade Mark for The Gel Bottle)

One bottle is sufficient. This bottle will last you for ever. No need for more till you master your skill. This is to create strengthening layer over natural nail.

Biab works best over natural nail or for short extensions. Soft gel does not offer great strength to long nails.



When to invest

With your training.

Make sure you have professional training. Let someone else explain to you how the gel works, how to structure the enhancement, what apex is, etc.

I used to have full range from The Gel Bottle. When I used this brand, I have stocked up on multiple shades and at the end I used only three base colours.

Why not using cheap products

- Poor adhesion
- Does include harsh and cheap chemicals.
- Cheaper products can break wrong way, this could cause damage to natural nail.

What BIABs do I recommend?

Gellifique, The Gel Bottle, BOB (CJP Nail Systems)

Kostka Bojana – this one is little bit on thinner consistency, which is harder to work with in summer!



If you are looking to sharpen up your soft gel overlays, I have something in stock for you.

<http://www.letsnailit.co.uk>

UV/LED Lamp

There was a time when I was happy with the cheaper options from Amazon. Nowadays I do recommend sticking to branded lamps as they help to cure product better and help with heat spike created by gel products.

Sun UV lamps are popular low-cost option on Amazon or eBay. But they need to be replaced quiet often. These cheaper products are made with lower quality. Promise big and long use, but in real life they do not guarantee the quality of curing product properly. If your lamp is not curing product properly, this can lead to under curing of the product and this can lead to nail allergies.

If you have one of those cheaper lamps, make sure it cures properly and replace it more often!



Electric File

This machine is lifesaver and will save you so much time prepping nails and during doing nails. It will also help you with your health (no pain in your wrist and back from filing the nails).

It has got bad reputation, but if well trained it is completely safe to use.

Make sure you are buying e-file with servicing centre based in country you live. This will be easier when it needs sending off for fixing or servicing.

Don't waste your money on buying cheaper E-File, you will end up in few weeks buying proper one.



When to invest

Invest when you can see that your little business is taking off. You don't need electric file for 5 clients. First you should build your hand file skill to the highest level anyway.

Why not using cheap E-File

Cheaper e-files are not as delicate. Hand piece can overheat, it does not have strong enough Torque or RPM. Attachments can be bouncy in your hand piece, when filing client nails, this can make your work more difficult and damage the client nails. Some handpieces are either too light or too heavy.

This is great investment for the future if you decide to get a E-File. Keep an eye on few sellers, they do promotions, this will help you with cost of equipment.

What E-File do I recommend?

Saeyang, Promed, Kupa, Makartt, these brands are bit pricier, but definitely worth it.

I own **Saeyang** and I am very happy with this one. I have tried so many, and this one is the longest lasting E-File I had. I can buy spare parts if needed, so I don't have to replace the whole cube. Also, I can see actual RPM on little display.





I had **Promed** for several years, till my hand piece broke and I couldn't get replacement as my Promed was an old type. The way this cable is stored can make connections inside to warp or deteriorate, Saeyang has got more support for cables then Promed did, maybe they fixed this issue. I found Promed e-file very good, but issues with handpiece cables put me off to buy another one.

I have little KUKU E-File. This one is really good for new technicians. It is powerful enough for occasional acrylic set, but best for gels only. Great for mobile technicians as it is cordless.





If you are not sure how to use E-File or what attachments to use, I have manual that can be very useful for you. Visit our website to buy one.

<http://www.letsnailit.co.uk>

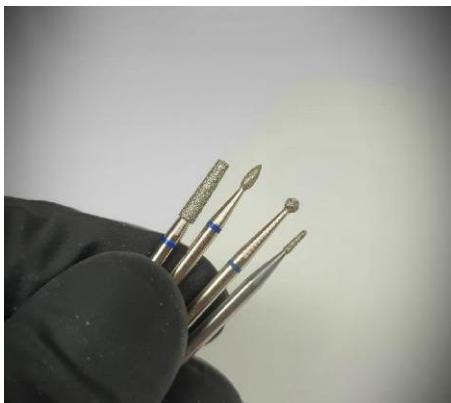
E-File Attachments

We can find a few styles of different attachments and it can be very confusing to know which one to buy. For the start you need diamond bits & carbide bits. Good quality products are needed to make sure you don't damage nail and surrounding areas.

Build up your collection slowly. You need to get few diamond bits, different shapes and strengths to try. Diamond bits last well for about 12-15 manicures only. Do not use blunt attachment on clients (*you can read more about attachments in my E-File Upskilling Manual*).

*At the moment I have set of 6 different shapes, 5 of those are diamond bits for natural nail and cuticle, with **only 1!** for product removal and shaping.*

Make sure you know differences in strengths (yellow, blue, red, green stripes).



All you need to treat natural nail and skin around the nail.

When to invest

Start slowly investing once you have your E-File. You can get 2-3 diamond bits and one carbide bit.

Why not to use cheap attachments



- Cheap E-File bits are not made for beauty industry.
- they rust
- they wear off much faster
- they can seriously damage nails.

What sellers do I recommend?

The Nail Lab

Lucy Pastorelli

Willow Academy

Staleks Professional Sharpening

Baltic Beauty – Delivery from Latvia

There are many more sellers, I haven't bought from them as I am happy with my suppliers.

Nail Files

Branded products last longer and do not leave any unwanted residue from file on your client nails.

Try few brands before you commit buying in bulk.

Grits are very similar to all brands, or same.

When to invest

You will need some files when you are starting out, depending on the service you will be offering, order your files. If it is just for gel polish and natural nails, order 5 of 180/180 grit, if it is for soft or hard gels you will need 150/150 for filing product, 180/180 for natural nails, you can order 5 each, etc.

Why not to use cheap files

Cheaper brands file off much faster, you would literally need one file per set. They are usually rougher surface even though it is same grit, It doesn't feel like it. This could seriously damage your client nails. Make sure you use correct file grits to specific nail service.

Cheaper files doesn't have an even surface. Some of the grits can be placed higher than others. This means when you use your file, this piece of sanding bit will make deeper scratches into natural nail. This will damage natural nail in long run.

What files do I recommend?



My very favourite is Astonishing Nails files, they are super long lasting.

Others I am recommending to my students are Crystal Nails, Brillbird, Akzentz, The Gel Bottle, NSI, OPI, any branded files.

Disposable files – Staleks

I have recently found great spongy files for one use that does not ruin your pocket – **Aba Group Files** www.tufishop.co.uk

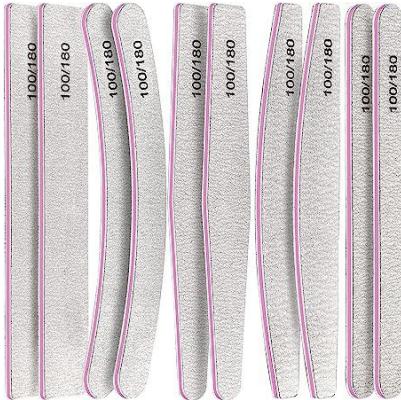
Make sure you break your files before using it on clients. Files comes with sharp edges.

Of course, I have tried the cheaper ones. And because I love black colour, I have decided to give these a go. As they were filing off, the file left black unwanted residue on nails I was shaping. It's a big no no.



Throw away your filed off files. It takes longer to file with worn files! More work for you! Or keep your old files to break your new files. This way you don't have to ruin a brand new file to break your new stock.





Do not get confused with all the different shapes, they all do the same job. You need to find which one suit you the best. I have gone through phase that I went from straight, to half-moon shaped one to a banana shape file, now I am back to straight files.

Nail Brushes

Nail Art, Acrylic or Gel brushes.

Not all brushes are made the same. Buying branded polishes will make your application much easier.



** I have one acrylic brush, one gel brush and three nail art brushes. I don't use more. There is no reason to buy in sets, unless you are really into nail art, and you use them on everyday basis.*

When to invest

Only invest if you need it, for example acrylic brush when you are starting out with acrylics. Gel brush when you are starting with hard gels. You do not need nail art brushes straight away. Perfect your nail skill before moving onto nail art. Nail art won't bring you clients, good, structured nails will.

Why not to use cheaper brushes?

Acrylic brush – would not hold monomer well. Hairs can go funny, used glue in the centre of the brush can melt by monomer, acrylic get stuck easier in hair.

Gel brush – lots of the cheaper brushes I tried, their hair went fuzzy.

Nail art brushes – would not hold paint or gel paint as well as branded brushes. After few uses hairs go fuzzy too.

In general hair split, they are made of cheap hairs, they are harder to clean.

What brushes do I recommend?

Crystal Nails & BrillBird brushes

* Look after your brushes and they will last for ever.

Acrylic brush – always clean up remaining acrylic from bristles. Wipe it into point shape. Make sure your brush has got some monomer left on it. This will help the bristles to stay well looked after. If you do not use your brush, dip it in monomer every few weeks to maintain the shape.

Gel brush – wipe your brush from gel after every use. I like to cover them in little bit of clear topcoat and shape them into required shape.

Nail art brush – wipe them from gel after every use. I look after these same way as gel brush. Dip them into little topcoat and re shape to point.

Never use acetone on your brushes, under any circumstances! This will ruin your brush hairs.

Lots of brushes in sets from Amazon or eBay are synthetic hair, these do not tend to be the best choice too. I recommend real animal hairbrushes.

Forms, Tips & Nail Glue

When it comes to forms, tips, or glue, I would say you need to find what you like, and only way to find out is order from different brands to try out their tips, forms or glue.

But as usual, I wouldn't recommend buying cheaper products.

Do your research on **tips**. Some come and need to be blended in with natural nail, some are ready to glue on. Some have extreme C-Curve, some has natural C-Curve. Some are transparent, some are natural colour, some are coloured. Some are pre-shaped.

If you are getting trained with a brand, try their tips or forms first. If you are trained with independent educator, ask them what they recommend.



When to invest

As soon as you start your training. Do not buy in bulk yet until you find perfect tips, forms that suit you and your clients.

Why not using cheaper forms, tips or glue

Forms – they don't adhere to a finger properly and come off, end doesn't stick well.

Tips – popping of nail, creating gap between nail and tip, they are too thick and feel too plastic.

Glue – only use a beauty graded glue. With branded glue you are guaranteed long lasting effect.

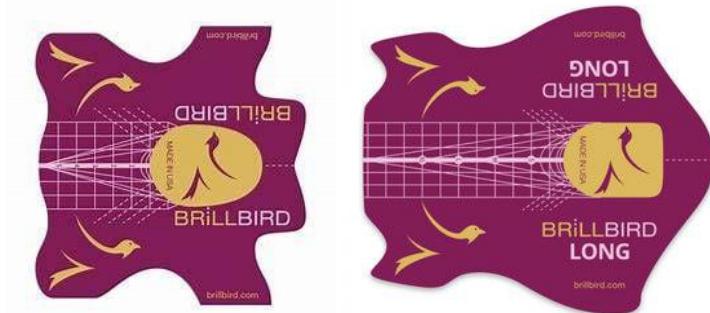
What brands do I recommend?

CJP Nail Systems, **BrillBird**, Crystal Nails, Glitterbel

Tips – you can choose less tips, C-Curve tips, already shaped almond or square tips. You need to find what you like and in here it might be little bit try and error situation.

Forms – you will be looking for firm but sticky forms. Best I found are BrillBird, they have option for new nail technician, more firmer forms but still not too firm. You would want to start with medium forms. Long or extra-long forms are harder to fit. I prefer to use medium forms, they still quite long if any of my clients are interested in longer nails.

Glue – I can't give you many tips on Glue, I am sculpting for years. But I can say, if I must use glue during my classes, I am always using glue on brush. This way I can control amount of applied glue.



** Buy shorter forms. Longer forms are difficult to fit, and you don't really use them in salon for everyday look. These would be more for photoshoots and competitions.*

Extraction Fan/Dust Collectors

This can be massive investment into your salon. Yes, I said salon. Unless you are fully booked 5 days a week, you do not need to invest in extractor fans.



When to invest

Invest in extraction fans when you get busier. In meantime you can buy **dust collector** which nicely fit on your table desk.

Zephyros, Lilly Beau, SheMax dust collectors are nice piece of equipment.



Why not using cheap dust collectors

Cheaper collectors do not have strong enough suction power.

What extraction fan do I recommend?

Buitled in - Twister S, Vodex, SheMax

When to invest in dust collector?

- When you are getting busier with clients.
- If you have medical issues like asthma to help you remove dust particles while doing nails.
- This kind of dust collector can deal with soft dust from gels (gel polish, biab gels, hard gels). Acrylic dust is not as fine as gels and this collector might not be powerful enough to suck dust in.

When to invest in extraction fan?

- When you are busy and working few days a week doing nails

Autoclave

Autoclave is amazing for sterilising your metal tools and e-file attachments. However, it is an expensive investment.

You do not need autoclave immediately when you are starting out. your metal tools should be cleaned by following cleaning steps: sanitation, disinfection, sterilisation.

You can sterilise your tools with chemicals instead of autoclave. You can use dry heat steriliser too! (Strictly follow manual to achieve results you need).



When to invest

When you have busy salon.

Why not using cheap autoclave

There is no cheap autoclave out there, there are many UV cabinets, Ultrasonic cleaners, disinfection cabinets, and other so called sterilising equipment. They do not do the same job as autoclave. Please do your research before buying any of these.

What tools do I recommend?

Enbio Autoclave, or any other beauty grade autoclave

You can sanitise, disinfect and sterilise chemical way (liquids).



Another option would be Dry Heat Steriliser.

Desk Lamp

Good lighting will help you see better, and your eyes do not get as tired during long working hours.

When to invest

As soon as possible or when you are getting busier with clients.

What desk lamp do I recommend?



Task lamps are brilliant, it is great for seeing all little bits. With normal desk lamp you wouldn't be able to see all details. And your eyes won't get tired.



Ikea desk lamps are great for taking pictures, you can see the bulb reflection and how nails are even. Buy daylight bulb.



I usually use task lamp for when I am working, IKEA lamps are literally just for taking pictures.

Arm Rest

This is another handy equipment you should invest in from very start of your nail journey. I can see even in salons when I am passing by, they don't have this equipment. It looks like pointless investment. But you should get one!

you can find all sorts, find one which is high enough to put your UV/LED lamp underneath.

When to invest

Immediately or soon after you start doing nails. this will guarantee that your clients will have same hand position all the time, and you can freely move with her fingers to make your nail service easier for you!



Why not using soft arm rests?

These little foamy cushions won't help you with client hand position, they are quite low for what you need and do not offer sturdy support for arm moving around.

What arm rest do I recommend?

You don't necessarily need exact same one.
You need sturdy higher arm rest.



Colour charts and swatches

And this is the place where you can go on eBay and buy cheap stuff. You don't need fancy colour chart book when you are starting out. You need cheap colour charts to show your clients colours or designs you can do.



When to invest

When your colour collection grows, you can order this off eBay from China, it takes little bit longer to come. I would recommend buying natural tips as some of the colours are transparent and some colours don't look good as they can go a little bit transparent over the clear tip. Natural tips are closest to the colour of natural nail and the colour appear best on natural tips.



I stick my swatches on wall with Velcro, this way client can pick up her pallet and try colour on her finger. I used to have 400 colours! Over the years I have reduced to less than a 100. It's not the colours that will bring you clients, it's perfectly shaped and balanced nails. I don't do crazy nail art; I do natural looking nails. That is what my clientele wants, and they are getting it.

Nail Art

You will do yourself a massive favour not starting doing designs until you are ready. First make sure that you do long lasting perfect nails. While you're doing this, you are getting gel skill into your hand, and this skill will help you with doing gel designs.

Doing design also create a bit pressure on you. As you can see all them perfect nails on social media and you start being harsh on yourself.

Start doing designs on your sets, to see what last's and what doesn't. Nail art is a whole new skill to learn.

Do not compare yourself with other nail technicians. They started somewhere too! They might be in nail industry for a while now and their skill is on different level.

The only one who you should compare yourself is to YOU. Where you started, what you did a month ago, what you did last week and what are you doing now. You are already further then when you started. Do not rush your progress.

When to invest

After you perfect your skill, whatever it is Gel Polish, Acrylics, Gels, BIAB Nails, start slowly getting nail art collection. Get little bits here and there. Do not invest in whole kits. You don't know how the product work and if it stays on nails. If it is difficult to apply it might put you off doing it. Do not waste your money.

Start with simple designs like stickers, water decals, foils, stamping, etc. And add slowly as you feel confident doing it.

For example, I still have some nail art from when I started. Never got to use it!

Ask your clients on social media what they like and what they would be interested in before you buy.

Where to buy

In recent years quality of stickers, foils, water decals etc. has improved so much, that I am happy to buy it cheaper on Amazon or eBay. When my order comes, I am surprised in what quality it comes. There is still some hit and miss orders. Some I can't use due to bad quality! There are many nail art websites you can order from.

Lots of brands are selling nail art, you can start ordering with your chosen brand.

<http://www.glitterartynails.co.uk>

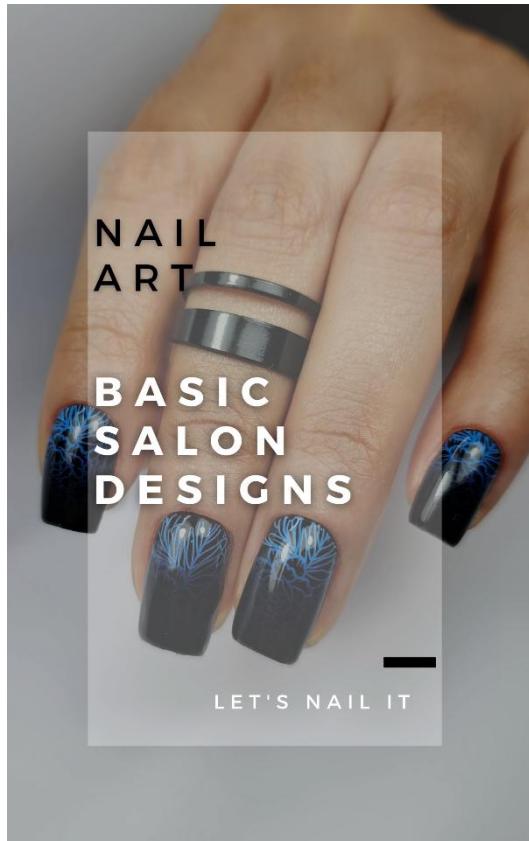
This is my go-to nail art website. They have everything in decent quality, UK based, comes quickly.

Jelly stamper stamping plates

<http://www.clearjellystamper.com>

stamping plates and stamping polishes – MoYou

<http://www.Moyou.co.uk>



You do not have to be arty person to do designs. I have put easy designs to do into Nail Art Upskilling Manual. These are basic, quick salon designs anyone can do. Buy your copy on our website.

<http://www.letsnailit.co.uk>

Uniform

You don't need to invest in beautician uniform. Especially nail techs who works from home do not need one. It is more common to have printed hoodies, T-Shirts or just apron with your logo.

Beautician uniforms are expensive investment you don't need when you are starting out.

Make sure you wear some sort of protective clothes, as doing nails is dusty work and in long run you can develop allergies from dust.

Clothes also get ruined by dust. It is handy to have work and personal clothes separated.

Present yourself in tidy clothes, at the end of the day, you are representing your business.

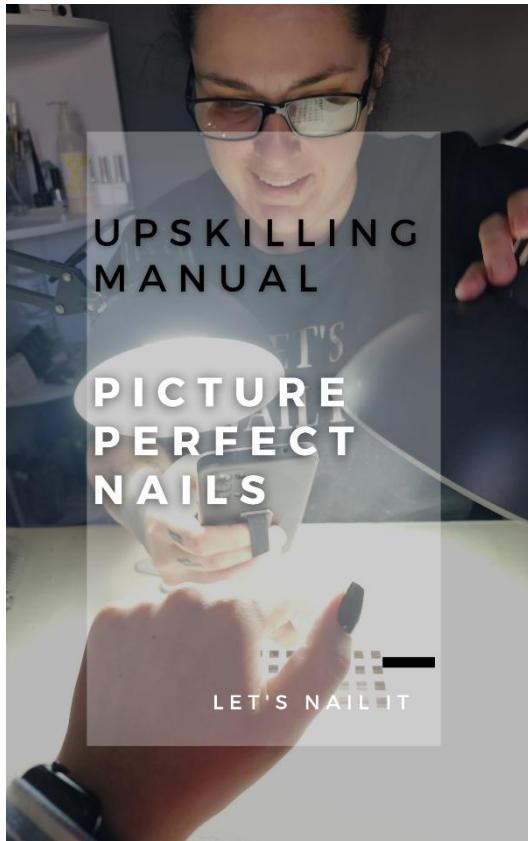


Phone

I always recommend having a separate phone for work to help establish clear boundaries from the very beginning. Responding to clients only during working hours sets professional limits and prevents burn out. In today's fast-paced world, people often expect immediate replies but having a dedicated work phone allows you to manage your time effectively.

You do not need the latest phone to take great pictures – what truly makes your work stand out are your photography skills and creative use of props, not expensive device.

Invest in simple accessories like artificial plants, magazines, newspapers, books, or even a denim jacket sleeve. These small touches can elevate your photos and help your work stand out from the crowd.



Another helpful upskilling manual is the basics of how to take pictures of nails you did and make them look professional to attract new clients.

<http://www.letsnailit.co.uk>

Advertising

Avoid spending money on paid ads, as they do not work unless you have something truly unique to offer. Instead focus on creating promotions that still allow you to make a profit – too cheap treatments often attract clients who complain and devalue your work.

Word of mouth is by far the most powerful form of advertising, especially when you are starting out. Happy clients are your best promoters – they will talk about your work to their friends, family, and colleagues, bringing in new business without you having to spend a dime.

The key to harnessing word of mouth is building strong relationships with your clients, providing excellent service. Make sure your skills are there. Make sure your skills are top-notch – if your work isn't flawless, clients won't be recommending you or they never comeback themselves.

When you are starting out, you don't need a website or an email. Just make sure your social media is set up properly, and that all you really need to get started.



What massively helps to bring you clients in is having a properly set up social media. This is another new world to explore if you are not master of it already. It is different to be on other side and actually create content, instead of just scrolling and randomly giving likes to pictures and reels you like.

<http://www.letsnailit.co.uk>

How to Choose Professional Brand

Many brands offer more than one system, for example they do gel polish, hard gel, polygel, other do just acrylic, files and nail art accessoriise. It does not mean, if they do good gel polish system, their hard gels will be good too!

Each of these brands mentioned above has their own advantages and disadvantages. If you are trying out a brand, practise on your own hands, if this goes well and nails last, try it out on client or two, if this goes well, start offering this brand to others.

Ideally you should do full set and infills one or two times to see how the product last to see results. For example, when we do full set, we tend to do thicker nails, as client come back, we tend to make nails little bit thinner. The second time is the real test, if that makes sense.

Do not compromise on quality.

Keep track of what product you applied on your clients if you are testing more than one product, for example regular base coat or rubber base coat, what primer did you use, if you used one. I recommend having client records for these purposes.

Each time my client comes I record what I have used or what colour she had. I had multiple clients who asked me this question: Do you remember last year when I went on holidays what colour I had? No darling, I don't remember what colour I did first set in the morning. If you keep records

for your clients, you can just check. (Do not confuse these with Client Consultation Form, each one of your clients should have one for insurance purposes + be aware of General Data Protection and how to store your client information).

Now back to business...

What you should be looking in for in new brand or system

Consider following:

- Is it professional brand used in salons?
- Is the product curable in UV or LED? (most brands are in LED, but you should check this).
- Does the brand offer more of the systems and other stuff? Gel, acrylic, polygel, full tips, forms, files, gel polish, etc.
- Is this brand vegan/cruelty free? To some clients these matters!
- Is it HEMA free? What percentage of HEMA is in the product (this is important topic, and you should search it up. Hema can affect developing allergies).
- How is this product removed?
- Do they offer training? Where is closest trainer to you?
- Do they offer **MSDS, SDS** (material safety data sheets – legally brand have to supply information

- about their products, this could be requested by email or can be stated on their webpage).
- Lots of brands have got Facebook groups where you can share your pictures and ask for help, join in to expand your knowledge about product or doing nails.

Here is How I saved Money when Switching Brands

I have recently changed brands. As I was looking more into chemical side of setup of the brand I was using, and I have decided to change brands for healthier option.

This is what I have done to make it easier on my pocket.

I bought in one soft gel, rubber base, regular base and I also invested in hard gel pot. I have tried it on couple of my clients with good retention. As the new brand had less of harsh chemicals, this means that can affect retention. Trialled it for couple of months with great results.

After that three months I have bought a set of colours to see the pigmentation and thickness of the polishes. Loved them with first application.

I have bought another set of colours (each set is 5-6 colours for bundle price – and I was bit worried about the use of colours as I thought they are selling colours that are not as popular in sets. These colours were used all of them! My clients liked each of them from the set).

First set was set of reds, these can be hard to create and keep great quality in bottle. Second set was dark burgundy colours for autumn coming. After about two months this brand has come with festive glitters, YES PLEASE. Another stunning set of colours. About 6 weeks later I stocked up on colours for January, these are blue shades and nudes – I had glitters already.

My collection is not complete yet, I will wait for spring to get pastely shades and for summer for neon colours.

This way I am building slowly my collection and not being out of pocket because I bought too many at the start.

I strongly recommend you do similar way when exploring new brand. This is sustainable way how to switch brands.

Keep your collections small and mix if you need to. You will confuse your client with the number of options if you have hundreds of colours.

I slowly added two more shades of biab colours, explored more of their hard gels and polygel. After months of using, I stick to same core colours for extensions.

Little recap of what shades you do need throughout the year

January/February - Blues/Glitters/Nudes

From March - Pastel colours coming in

Summer - neon colours

September - darker colours and nudes

From October - Greys, Black, Burgundy shades

December – reds + glitters

End

We have come to the end of this manual.

I hope you have enjoyed reading through as much as I have sharing my knowledge. Good luck with your journey.

Remember to keep practising and do not give up.

Keep striving to get better in your passion.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "MAYA".

Published by Let's Nail It Ltd

Below are links to my salon pages and contact information for any queries.

enquiries@letsnailit.co.uk

<http://www.instagram.com/letsnailit.uk>

<http://www.facebook.com/letsnailit.uk>

YouTube channel: Let's Nail It

Useful links

www.habia.org

code of practise for beauty and nail services

www.salongeek.com

online community for beauticians, professionals and non-professionals discussing all aspects of the beauty industry.

www.abtinsurance.co.uk

beauty insurance

www.barbicide.com

Barbicide certification, disinfection

www.mundoproducts.co.uk

disinfection products

Melanoma and Skin Cancer Early Detection

www.masced.co.uk

Search for support groups on Facebook, professionals helping to new nail technicians.