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# The Alternative/Indie Archetype: Haircuts and Dyes

David Bachofer, Volunteer Reporter

Hello hair enthusiasts! Today we will be inspecting the hairs on your head, ways to style them and a few methods for changing your hair color. A quite common method that is tried and true in the Alternative (Alt)/Indie circle, is the use of dyeing your hair, in an attempt to regain control of your life. With drastic hair adjustments on the chopping block today, I'm sure you're all dyeing to get started!

I would like to start by addressing the possibilities that radical changes, especially cutting or dyeing one's own hair, can go quite poorly. You cannot put hair back on your head very easily once you have cut it or un-dye your hair without adding more dye. Please think about the consequences of your actions before proceeding.

Dyeing hair was something I remember being popular in middle school. Back then, it was most common to see students with a strand of dyed hair, either blue or red, by using Kool-Aid. Considering this has not been done since the early 2010s, I would highly avoid this method. Please also consider the fact that this product which is added to liquid to create a delicious drink is able to stain your hair certain colors.

If you are planning on dyeing your hair, find someone you know with dyed hair first. The fact that they have dyed hair either shows that they know how to dye hair or at the bare minimum have experience taking care of dyed hair. Taking care of your hair once you have attempted to kill it and stain it certain colors is typically a good idea.

My good friend who first helped me dye my hair, has been dying their hair since the eighth grade. With nothing but blind trust in my friend, we set out to turn my dark brown hair to bleached blonde, the whole other end of the spectrum. The second time I dyed my hair I went for a bright orange (I was going as Luna from the Hex Girls). The first step in the process is to usually bleach your hair, as attempting to change one's hair color first requires transforming your hair into a blank canvas so that the new color can be applied.

The proper supplies for this process includes a mixing bowl you'll never use for food again, processing caps, gloves, a hair painting brush, bleach powder, developer (no higher than 30 volume), a hair dye color of your choosing, and a deep conditioner. (At my good friend's behest, I would add that box dyes, especially black box dye, are never to be used.)

Mix together the bleach powder and developer into a thick coat. Then, carefully apply the mix to the hair, making sure to coat and fully cover each strand. Once this is done, cover all the hair under a processing cap. The amount of time which the processing cap should be left on for depends on how long it took to apply all of the bleach, along with the strength of the developer. Using a 20 volume developer, somewhere between 15-20 minutes is ideal. Depending on how light the hair is after bleaching, you could go for another bleach run or add the color.



To add your desired color, mix the color into a bowl along with a deep conditioner. After applying to your hair, put on another processing cap and allow the color to sit. There is not a specified time for this, as the coloring does not damage your hair, it simply stains it. After this entire process, make sure to condition your hair frequently. The process of bleaching hair can cause great damage. Now that you are an angsty Alt/Indie kid with dyed hair, you can decide whether or not you like it. If it does not suit you, I have a wonderful suggestion.

Cutting your own hair can be difficult, however, shaving your head is notably easier. Attempting to cut one's own hair can be strenuous, but if you mess up, you can always cut your hair shorter. Additionally, experimentation creates a wonderful learning environment. Life is unforgiving and mistakes happen. Do not be possessed by the fear of messing up, hair grows back most of the time.

I have a friend of mine who buzzed her head at the beginning of quarantine. On social media she commented that after buzzing her head, she could write a book about how much it changed her life. Due to the unfamiliar change, she described the way in which she had to adjust her idea of self. With no hair to hide behind, she had to find confidence in the person she was, not simply the hair on her head. Noticing that we are not simply the things we wear or present ourselves as is a difficult lesson, but quite empowering.

The gospel of the shaven head has become louder given stay-at-home orders. The notion that others will not have to interact with me creates a freedom to look however I please. I would never have assumed that buzzing one's head would be such a momentous occasion, so I tried it myself.

I have never regretted my decisions more. While buzzing my head was quite freeing, I had failed to consider the fact that winter is actually a season in Washington. Originally hailing from California, I had failed to consider that early February would not herald the arrival of springtime. With no hair on my head to keep me warm, beanies have been my comfort.

In all seriousness, aside from the cold, buzzing my head was quite enjoyable. Having my roommate drag an electric beard trimmer on the longest hair setting through my hair in the middle of my bathroom will always be something I treasure as an essential "college" experience. If for nothing other than memories of "bad decisions", buzzing one's hair is a welcome option.

What was your favorite haircut or color you dyed your hair? What did I forget to mention that you think of? Next week we'll be getting under your skin and discussing your inklings on stick and poke tattoos!

Any questions, comments, concerns, or existential crises can be sent to [dbach.magiccows@gmail.com](mailto:dbach.magiccows@gmail.com). As an English (and maybe eventually Philosophy) major, I love to write and trade theories of the universe with others.