

Chapter 3: The Secret of Combing Using Conditioner/Detangler

If you are going to be working with long wigs, extensions, or with more than one wig, then you should have a bottle of wig conditioner at the ready. It will save your wig *and* your sanity. Besides using it to aid in detangling, conditioner also helps prevent long wigs from getting tangled in the first place by making the fibers less likely to stick to each other.

There are many wig conditioners on the market, not all of which are created equal. Avoid those that claim to have “mystical powers”, like repelling UV rays or embedding your wig with ionic energy. Just look for something that contains a small amount of lightweight oils and is *alcohol free*. (Petting Zoo Wig Conditioner uses peppermint oil as its primary detangler.)

“What about silicone detanglers?”

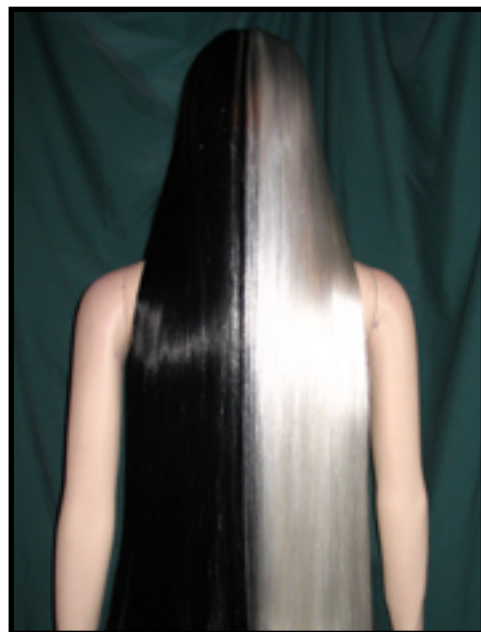
Silicone based detanglers are actually microscopic “soft glass” beads. (This same material, dimethicone, is used in high-end personal lubricants.)

It feels very slippery when rubbed between your fingers because you’ve got a micro-thin layer of soft ball-bearings rolling between them. It is not water soluble, so removing it from your wig, your hands, your work area, and your tools will require scrubbing with soap.

It also very badly (and in many cases *permanently*...) stains fabrics. Therefore, I don’t recommend using this type of detangler if you are a costumer. Most costumes aren’t designed to be tossed into the washing machine, or contain “dry clean only” fabrics.

“Can I use the same conditioner I use for my own hair?”

Most human hair conditioners contain moisturizers or proteins, which are great for human hair, but kind of useless for wigs. The plastic fiber can’t absorb these ingredients, so they just end up settling on the surface. This can give a dull appearance to the fiber, or even make it more difficult to comb. Also, unless you’re using a spray-on formula, like Johnson’s® No More Tangles®, (which contains alcohol, and should not be applied after dyeing a wig...) the conditioner is meant to be applied to wet hair and then rinsed out. So the only time we use human hair conditioner in Wigcraft is when we are using a hot water based technique. (Where most of the conditioner will end up being rinsed out anyway.)



Conditioned wigs are easier to comb, and less likely to tangle when worn.

When you know that you'll be working with a long or curly design, or one that you'll be curling or straightening, it's a good idea to pre-condition the wig before you begin work.

NOTE: If you will be dyeing the fiber, you should complete all dyeing work **BEFORE** pre-conditioning. The oils in the conditioner will make it more difficult for the dye to embed if done ahead of time.

Step 1:

Pin the wig to a foam head and put it on a stand. Do not comb or brush it.

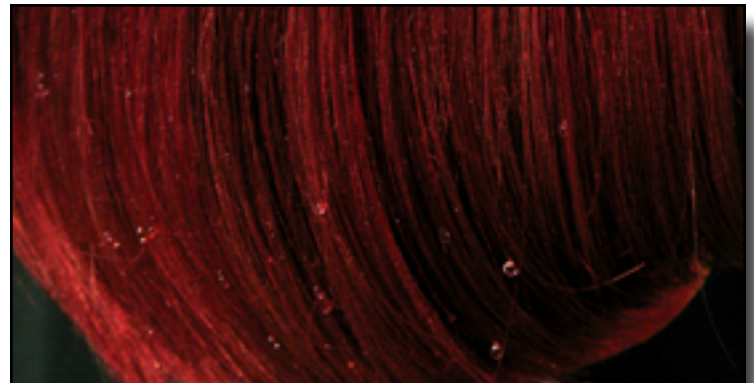
If you are removing the wig from its bag for the first time, take care not to flip it around a lot before pinning it to the head. This will help prevent tangles from forming before you work.



Step 2:

Apply the conditioner to the wig. If you are using a spray-on formula, spritz it on until it beads up on the fiber.

If you are using a rub-on formula, squirt the conditioner into the palm of your hand, rub your hands together, and gently stroke the fiber from the scalp to the tips.



Step 3:

Lightly work the conditioner into the fiber by smoothing it in with your hands.

Allow the wig to air dry *completely* before combing or brushing. Never comb a wig when it's wet.

