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Greg Zorian
shares insight
on Clippers.



Tools Of The Trade - Clippers

Greg Zorian, Master Barber

Clipper cutting is the foundation for classic short men's haircuts. This haircutting system uses three types of clippers. In this lesson you will learn about the different types of clippers, what each one is used for, different grips for holding the clipper properly, how the blade is designed to work properly, and how to clean and disinfect them. Short haircuts are an art form and a science. There is no margin for error due the length of the hair. Any imperfection will show. Understanding all there is to know about the clippers will put you far ahead of the competition.

Learning Objectives

- Identify the three different types of clippers
- Explain the difference between detachable blades and clipper attachments
- Demonstrate the three different hand positions for holding the clippers
- Identify the most common blade sizes by measurement instead of by number
- Demonstrate how to disinfect and lubricate the clipper blades

Clipper Guide

1. The clipper is an excellent tool for removing large amounts of thick hair. It can be more precise because you are dealing with 18 cutting teeth instead of 1 scissor blade. Clippers are best used for shorter length haircuts and are necessary for skin length haircuts or fades.

2. There are 3 ways that you will hold the clipper:

a. Hold the clipper with your fingers wrapped around the back of the case and your thumb wrapped around the front pointing at the blade with clipper and hand in a vertical position.

b. You will use the second position when you are forced to hold the clipper higher and it is uncomfortable for your wrist, elbow, and shoulder. You will use this hand position when you are blending the sides and back area to the top area or any clipper work on the top area of the head. For this position you will hold the clipper in a horizontal position and your hand in a vertical position. Wrap your fingers around the back of the case and your thumb around the front. You will notice instantly more comfort in your wrist, elbow, and shoulder.

c. For the final position place your fingers and thumb on opposite sides of the clipper holding the clipper in a vertical position. This position can be used with the blade facing out for blade on skin or clipper over comb. This position can also be used for trimming the outline of the haircut, beard, and mustache with the blade facing in.



3. There are three different clippers that will be used.

a. The detachable blade clipper will be used for removing larger amounts of thick or wet hair. It is the most powerful clipper and the metal blades move through the hair with ease. This is because there will not be a plastic guard covering a portion of the cutting teeth. This clipper can be used for all areas of the haircut and used for the clipper over comb and blade on skin techniques.

There are numerous blades for this clipper and they have many uses:

- The 3 3/4 blade cuts the hair to 1/2 inch in length and is ideal for standard tapered haircuts, long buzz cuts, and children's haircuts.
- The 3 1/2 blade cuts the hair to 3/8 of an inch in length. This is ideal for buzz cuts, medium length tapered haircuts, and children's short tapered haircuts.
- The 2 blade cuts the hair to 1/4" and is ideal for short tapered haircuts, short buzz cuts, and tapering work in the semi-finish area of the haircut.
- The 1 1/2 blade cuts the hair to 1/8". This blade is ideal for ultra short buzz cuts, fades, and tapering in the semi-finish area. It also works very well with the clipper over comb technique. The blade is slightly larger and the teeth slightly longer than a 1 blade which is traditionally used for the clipper over comb technique. This leaves the hair with a softer, smoother finish. It cuts and blends the hair at the same time depending on the angle of the blade in relation to the comb.
- Next is the 1A blade which cuts the hair to 1/16". This is ideal for skin fades and short beard/goatee trimming.
- The 1 blade is the same length as an adjustable clipper in the open position. This will be ideal for the clipper over comb technique. It is also ideal for the blade on skin technique when doing a fade or starting the taper in the semi-finish area.
- The 0A blade is the next blade which is ideal for fades and the clipper over comb technique on the top area of the head when doing a medium length flat top or short spiked haircut.
- The 000 blade is the equivalent to the adjustable clipper in the closed position. Ideal for fades and the clipper over comb technique when doing a military style flat top for more of a blunt cut.
- The last two are the 0000 and 00000 blades. They are both ideal for the bald fade. Very close in length to avoid lines or steps. The 00000 blade is the same length as the trimmer but with more power for the other areas of the haircut.

b. The next clipper used will be the adjustable clipper. It has this name because the lever on the side adjusts the length of the blade. The hair is cut shorter and finer with the lever closed and longer and softer in the open position. You can use plastic attachments on this clipper to get longer lengths. The most common and only ones we recommend using are the 1/2", 3/8", 1/4", 1/8", and 1/16". You are much better off referring to the attachments by their lengths rather than numbers because depending on which brand you use the numbers will have different lengths associated with them. The metal blades are universal across the different brands. It is still more professional to refer to them by length rather than cutting by numbers. These attachments work better on dry and lighter hair density. The shorter plastic attachments also work well for very short fades. You can get up to 3 different lengths with each attachment by adjusting the lever of the clipper.

c. The final clipper is the t-trimmer. The t-blade is preferred because the corners of the blade protrude out from the sides of the clipper case allowing for the ease of trimming the outline around the ears, back of the neck, edge ups, beard and mustache trimming. This clipper will be used for the finish only and with the blade on skin technique only. This clipper is not powerful enough for clipper over comb because the blade gives too fine of a cut leaving clipper marks or lines in the haircut. When using the trimmer it is extremely important to understand the construction of the blade for proper use and avoiding razor burn. The blade has two parts: the stationary blade and the mobile blade. It is the job of the stationary blade to pick up the hair like a comb would and the mobile blade moves back and forth cutting the hair like the scissor would. It is for this reason it is imperative that the stationary blade is resting on the skin while the clipper is moving in an upward motion shaving the stubble on the neck and sideburn area. In the case of making a line to square off the sideburns, square back hairline, or line-up on forehead and temple area you will hold the clipper with the blade facing the skin and gently touch the skin with the blade and pull it directly back at the same angle you touched the skin. Then you will proceed with the clipper in an upward motion. Making a line and dragging in a downward motion will cause razor burn, pinching or biting of the skin, and/or an abrasion. This will be the result of the mobile blade coming in contact with the skin at the same time as the stationary blade. You also want to make sure you are cutting the hair at this skin length in the direction the hair grows. Cutting against the grain can cause ingrown hairs, razor burn, or general irritation. In the case of the hair growing in a strong pattern straight down you will turn the clipper upside down with the blade facing the floor making sure the stationary blade is in the proper position resting on the skin.

4. Lastly, you need to make sure your clippers are cleaned, disinfected, and lubricated after every use. First, you will use your clipper brush to brush the clippings off of your blade after every use. Next, you will use a clipper spray disinfectant before you put the blade back in the blade holder. Most disinfectants also have a lubricant in them. If not you will take a tube of clipper oil and place a drop on every point of the blade where you see metal rubbing metal. At the end of the day you will use your blade wash solution



to wash your blades. By taking care of your blades properly you will increase your efficiency by your blades always cutting properly.

Review Questions

1. What are the three different types of clippers?
2. What is the difference between detachable blades and clipper attachments?
3. What are the measurements of the most common blade sizes?
4. What are the names of the two parts that make up a clipper blade?
5. What is the correct direction to shave with the trimmer?
6. What are the risks of cutting against the grain?
7. Describe the process of cleaning, disinfecting, and lubricating the clipper blades.

Author's Commentary

As with the comb and scissors the clipper should also feel like an extension of your hand. You need to become so familiar with every aspect of this lesson so you don't have to think about it while you are working. All of the short haircuts that you will be learning require a lot of tedious steps with the numerous blades. It is this attention to detail that will perfect your fades and tapers

If and when you feel your blades are not cutting properly you will need to have them sharpened. You can either find someone local or send them back to the manufacturer. It is easier to just buy new replacement blades for your adjustable clipper and t-trimmer.

