

A Simple Approach to Nail Shaping

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Shape always seen as “personal”

Dependent on natural nail curvature and technique

Most common shape: The Ramp

Disadvantages to a ramped shape

- Drag (more surface area)

- Late release

- Less flexible tone color changes

- Less flexible *apoyando* (rest stroke) to *tirando* (free stroke) changes

Finger contour shape

- Nail as natural extension of the finger

- This prevents gaps, staggered flesh-nail sound

- Less surface area on string: less potential problems

- Faster release

- Flexibility in tone

How long?

- Relatively short

 - Prevents breakage

 - Prevents “hiccup” in sound

 - Richer sound with more even flesh to nail ratio

 - Long enough to still play nail alone if you wish

How to shape?

Materials:

- Diamond dust file (“Revlon” brand is my standby)

- Don’t use grooved files

- 500-grade sand paper, other smaller grades also useful

 - Wet-dry sand paper can leave residue, but many swear by it!

Technique:

- Move file, not hand for maximum control

- Do not change angle in relation to nail thickness (c. 45-degree angle)

- Trust your eyes, but remove excess nail regularly to see true shape

- Highest point of angle should be near center of nail

 - Depending on proportions, this might be slightly different on “a”

- Check frequently, looking from palm (back view can be deceiving)

- Press very lightly as you get closer to your ideal shape

- After shape is achieved, buffer time!

- Use small pieces of sand paper

 - File under the nail and over the top to avoid flaking

- Check nail for proper contour and smoothness (like glass!)

 - Drag thumb along each nail feeling for roughness

Nail care:

- Brittle nails/curving? Try moisturizing daily

- Good diet with B-complex rich vitamins (or biotin supplement)

- Avoid harsh chemicals, use gloves, and take care with peeling acidic fruits