Chapter 1: How to Build a Better Haircut

By: Lisa Snyder

Learning objectives

At the conclusion of the course the learner should be able to:

- Identify methods of altering cut components for density, texture, natural hairlines and curl patterns that may interfere with finished designs.
- Construct haircuts that will provide confidence in clients by complimenting the head shape and facial contours, based on bone structure and underlying tissues.
- Confidently apply the appropriate hair cutting technique while using the most effective implement for successful results.

Introduction

An estimated $42 billion is spent annually in the beauty industry in the United States. The most commonly requested salon service is a haircut. The basic format of a haircut consists of partings, projection angles, and the use of implements. However, the weight lines (if any) and perimeter lengths are what determine shape and give the design its character. These characteristics are ever changing as new trends appear. As professionals, we are often asked to create a hair style from a photo or digital image. More often than not, the client’s hair structure and physical features have very little in common with the model that is pictured. This can lead to disappointing results. The outcome of the finished haircut is often based on variable qualities such as texture, density and curl patterns, as well as physical traits such as head and face shape and hairline curvature. There are modification techniques that a stylist can incorporate that will impact the completed design. And by evaluating the underlying form of the client’s physical features and the hair’s structural qualities, the weight lines and perimeter lengths may be adjusted to adapt a design into a workable style that is tailored specifically for the needs of an individual client. This educational course will assist stylists in making proper technique and tool choices - beyond the basic format of projection angles and parting patterns.

Building blocks and structural development

Producing a surface texture in a hair design- smooth like a blunt cut, or rough like a layered design- depends on the following basic elements: Parting direction, projection angles and distribution of the strand. These tools of the trade (or building blocks) combine to produce an internal structure responsible for the surface texture of the finished design. Their infinite variety of combinations creates variation and character to hair cutting.

Think of it like building a house where floorplans or blueprints are used. Several factors of the internal structure - like room size, shape and arrangement - will affect the exterior appearance and the curb appeal. Likewise, the size and contours of the land its being built on, as well as the exterior’s materials, will also add to the overall character of the home. During building, the foundation and floor come first, and then the walls are constructed before the roof can be completed.

Hair shaping is very similar: Size and contours of the head, face and hairline, as well as the hair’s density, texture and curl pattern influence the outcome of the chosen design. The success of the design depends on your visualization of the lengths, the variation of those lengths and where they change - as well as any adaptations you must make for the individual. In effect, you are using a virtual set of blueprints to construct your haircut.

First, let’s review the basic elements of construction, and then we will focus on specific techniques as we go:

- The shape of the foundation dictates the finished design. If you’re building a rectangular house, you can’t place it on a square foundation. Are you placing your guidelines at the optimal length and direction for the best support possible? Are you fighting an uneven or unruly hairline that disrupts your foundational guideline? Adjusting the length to make it shorter, longer or clipping it off at the surface will impact the completed design. Also, incorporating maximum weight or a rapid taper could be a simple fix. Specific application methods of implements will also remedy uncontrolled borders.

- Using the walls of the house as an example, if you want rooms with ceiling clearance of 10 feet, you can’t build the walls to a height of 8 feet. This affects the roofline which will undermine the finished design. For example, if you want to create a hair design that will just sweep the client’s shoulders, you need to pre-determine that surface length in order to cut the first guide strand at the hairline. This - in turn - will have a direct bearing on the interior lengths.

- In home construction, if you wish to have one room with a vaulted ceiling, you will need to change the height of that room without interfering with the rooms next to it. Likewise, if you desire to build fullness in a hair design, you will need to determine where on the head it is created, and how quickly it develops. This involves gaining length as you move up or away from the foundational guide. Sudden changes of hair length in the interior of the haircut are caused by changing projection angles or distribution during the cut process.

- Think of the roofline of a house to visualize the surface texture of a haircut. Some houses - such as a simple, older style ranch - resemble a blunt cut as they have an unremarkable roof surface.
without changes. Newer trends in rooflines have several pitch changes that provide interest and character - similar to graduated, layered and blended cut designs. They have variation in both depth and height that draw the eye in for a more inspired design. In order to build depth in hair shaping, a stacking up will need to occur. The rate of that stack will depend on desired depth, hair texture, density, and physical contours of the head.

Parts, partings and part direction

**Hair parts** are simply a division of hair at the scalp level. Clients may or may not use a part in their hair style. Some clients continue to use the same part position without change, while others may change styles and partings often. These are important factors to find out in your client consultation. When creating a design on a client that continually uses the same part position, the **best practice** is to section the head off in panels that keep the part in place. Using it as your divisional boundary will produce a balanced haircut.

Let’s discuss a few examples to discover what happens if a desired part is NOT used. We’ll use both zero projection and elevation with a desired side part:

- A client wears a basic shoulder length horizontal blunt cut with a desired side part. Let’s use the simplest method of sectioning or parting off: Four sections divided from center forehead to center nape, and ear to ear across the top of the head.

  The issue this presents is that once the client’s side part is re-established and the hair is redirected, it will be too short on the right to reach to the bottom to create a blunt surface.

  **Client wears a side part over the left eye.**

  **Hair in the zone shown will not fall to a blunt line.**

**Hair partings** are an “instrument” that provides organization during a haircut. They also act as a template to help map out a shape. Partings should never be dismissed as a non-essential element or given little importance. When establishing a design, it is possible to “comb” a bad haircut.

Controlling the hair strand during haircuts can only be accomplished by placing the comb in the part at the scalp for equal distribution. The teeth of the comb equally separate the hair, while the back of the comb presses the hair out for proper ribboning of the strand. Adjusting tension on the strand is accomplished by the amount of pressure placed on the back of the comb. Verify that you are properly combing your haircuts from the parts; be sure that you are placing the comb at the scalp - parallel to the part with each section - when parallel cutting. Failure to do so will encourage uneven lengths and improper balance within the design.

**Part direction** refers to the placement or position of the part created on the scalp. Part direction is as basic as “horizontal,” “vertical,” and “diagonal.” Direction of parting panels can also take a more detailed description such as “diagonal forward” – meaning starting high in the back and traveling to low in the front, or “diagonal back” – meaning starting high in the front and traveling to low in the back. Parting direction has a specific influence on the results of a haircut.

**CUTTING METHODS**

Being able to distinguish the various types of cutting methods (and why they are used) will help to make executing a haircut more efficient. Choose the best method to ensure balance in a design, provide ease in which lengths are either kept steady or increased, and produce desired variation in the texture that is created.

**Parallel cutting** is the most typical of the cutting procedures. The following elements all remain consistently **parallel** to not only one another, but to the intended design line: Partings, comb, fingers gripping the section, and implement placement.

For example, let’s discuss using parallel cutting to establish a blunt cut with a horizontal guide with zero degrees projection:

- Use horizontal partings beginning at the nape and working up the head.
- The cutting direction of the perimeter guide is established horizontally by placing the comb at the horizontal part. Next, draw the comb downward to distribute the hair with the natural fall of gravity without projection. Then your gripping fingers are placed horizontally across the strand, preferably on top of the comb. Your implement (shears/razor) is then applied to the strand using the horizontal finger placement as a cutting template.
- When these four elements (comb, part, fingers, implement) are applied parallel to the desired horizontal perimeter guide, the results of your cut are assured to be accurate. The only other variable is projection angle. This is a foolproof method of executing a precision cut. If one of these elements slips out of line, the cut will have unwanted variances in length. Are you being diligent about combing parallel from the part and placing fingers and implements true to the parallel line?
Non-parallel cutting lines

Non-parallel cutting methods are used for specialized results, such as dramatic increases in length. Non-parallel indicates that the finger placement, combing direction, and placement of the implement are used in an irregular fashion that does not parallel the partings used.

For instance, to create a front hairline taper from short near the temple area to extremely long at the jawline:

- Part a guide diagonally from the top of the facial hairline downward to in front of the ear. For best results, if there is no disconnect to the back, continue to take a hairline segment from behind the ear to the lower corner of the nape. Best practice for head position would be to slant the head away from the shoulder.
- Use pre-cut guide posts—a snip of hair to indicate desired length along a guideline, usually used in multiples when determining where to start, end, and (perhaps) the middle of the intended guideline. This is the same as the “dot-to-dot” technique of creating a picture by connecting lines to each other. Snip your guide posts at desired lengths along the parting panel. Use no projection when doing so.
- Standing toward the front of the client, connect the guide posts using a dragging technique (or shifted distribution), so that the longer lengths are drawn forward and up to meet with the temple area guide. Keep the hair as close to the face as possible for zero degrees projection. Your fingers will be in a diagonal slant positioned closest to the eye region and farthest from the jaw. Be sure to ribbon the hair smoothly from the part for optimum control before you drag the hair forward and up. Guide posts should be visible before cutting.

Resulting surface texture

Resulting surface texture when using parallel and non-parallel cutting methods: The outcome is a result of the laws of physics that is akin to gravity. If you hold an apple above the surface of the floor it will remain there, until you let it go. The distance it falls depends on how high you held it before release. Likewise, if you drag or lift a section of hair out of the natural fall of gravity to cut it, the surface texture will be influenced by the distance it travels as it returns to its natural location. If you shift only the first guide section then change back to natural fall to complete the cut, the surface will have little if any surface texture. If you continue a shifted distribution throughout the cut, it will produce a great amount of layered texture.

Let’s review surface textures before discussing best practices in their construction

- **Blunt** – smooth surface. No ends are visible except at the bottom/ perimeter guide.
- **Graduation** – partially layered, partially smooth. Exterior or perimeter has visible layering; interior has lengths that stack or build depth.
- **Uniform** – highly layered surface. Lengths remain the same over the entire head; there is little stacking or weight provided in uniform layering.
- **Long layers or increasing length layers** – layered surface texture with ends visible throughout the design. Layers are shorter at the top of the head and increase to longer toward the bottom.

**DIRECTIONS OF PART LINES AND THE INFLUENCE OF DISTRIBUTION AND GRAVITY**

*If you tend to be a visual learner, in the following section it may be advantageous to have paper and a pencil available to draw out these partings on a head shape. Try using a question mark shape for a side view - for the back view, close in the question mark on its open side to create a spoon shape.*
Horizontal partings and distributions

Horizontal partings build weight and solidity in a design.

1. Parallel cutting with zero degrees projection and natural fall distribution.

- **Best practice**: Results in a balanced blunt cut on a horizontal plane.
- Add up to 45° projection to create low level graduation with maximum stacking in a horizontal line.
- Use between 45° and 89° projection to create higher levels of graduation with less stacking in a horizontal line.

2. Parallel cutting with zero degrees projection and shifted distribution.

- Results in a *slightly graduated cut with a diagonal influence*. Since the hair traveled to the left (as it returned to its natural fall) it will be longer on the surface at the right.

3. Parallel cutting with 180° projection.

- **Best practice**: Shoulder length or shorter designs with layers increasing toward a horizontal perimeter.

4. Parallel cutting with 180° projection AND shifted distribution.

- **Best practice**: For designs with layers increasing toward a diagonal perimeter. Use at the side front panels and mirror image directions.

Diagonal partings and distributions

Diagonal partings are wonderful tools for causing length gains and for blending.

1. Parallel cutting with zero degrees projection.

- Although the distribution is not at a right angle, it is directed to natural fall. This results in a *blunt* structure with a diagonal direction.
- **Best practice**: Produces a diagonal guideline with the most solid foundation for hair with very little density and fine texture.

2. Parallel cutting with zero degrees projection.

- The distribution is at a right angle, the hair is *directed out of natural fall*. This results in a low level *graduated* structure with a diagonal direction.

3. Non-parallel cutting with zero degrees projection AND shifted distribution.

- The distribution is shifted (not at a right angle), and it is *directed AWAY from natural fall*. This, as previously shown, will create an increase in lengths on the left.

4. Parallel cutting with 180° projection.

- **Best practice**: Use in front of the ear in combination with a mirror image on the opposite side for jawline-hugging designs. Also for moderate asymmetrical designs with low level graduation across the nape or bang/fringe region.

5. Non-parallel cutting with 180° projection.

- **Best practice**: Use to create increasing layers with a diagonal perimeter guideline on hair below shoulder length.


- **Best practice**: Use to create the longest possible layers with a diagonal perimeter guideline on hair length well below shoulder level.
Vertical partings and distributions

Vertical partings and gripping are very commonly used to provide layers in the hair. Vertical panels can be used to create weight, or weightlessness.

There are two separate elements employed in using vertical partings: Projection angle of the vertical panel, and finger angle in relation to the head shape.

1. Projection from vertical panel. The most common approach with vertical partings is the use of 90° projection. This is best defined as extending straight out from the head at the point from which the hair grows. The 90° projection angle is the most unstable of any elevation used. It is the most difficult to maintain due to the rounded nature of the head.

The most common error in cutting with vertical partings is the unintentional shifting of the panel. For left-handed stylists, it is leaning the panel to the right; for right-handed stylists it is leaning toward the left. This will cause an unwanted change in the length of the hair. The result will be the loss of length on the side it was shifted toward. Best practice—in order to sustain a perfect 90° projection, you must incorporate the use of partings or subsections that are two fingers wide or less, and no longer than your fingers can easily grip. This also requires the use of a traveling guide with your body position constantly changing.

2. Finger angle relationship to the head shape. When considering the most common use of vertical panels and 90° projection, a uniformly layered cut often comes to mind. Finger angles must echo (or follow) the contour of the head for their creation. Think of this as a neutral position that neither gains nor loses weight. This is considered a “true ninety”. However, by simply altering the finger angle within the panel, there will be a weight line that is created – even if the 90° projection remains steady. Since the fingers create more distance away from the head at one end of the panel, length will be gained. The alteration of that finger angle changes the cutting method from parallel cutting to non-parallel cutting. Best practice—use variations in finger angles to easily create weight lines within a 90° vertical gripping for graduated or long layered designs. Modify the angle in specific areas of the head to construct more or less weight as needed.

1. Parallel cutting using true 90° projection.

Haircutting scissors or shears

Haircutting scissors or shears are the most commonly used implements for hair shaping in salons. They can be used while the hair is wet or dry. As a review, remember that shears consist of two blades: The cutting blade and the still blade. The cutting blade, attached to the thumb grip is dependent upon the thumb to cause it to move through the hair strand. Shears produce a cut through the strand that leaves the new end in a blunt cylinder. The shape of the cylinder is dependent on two factors: The shape of the hair strand itself and the position of the shears as they travel through the hair.

Hair shape is dictated by follicle shape and its position beneath the scalp. That shape and direction lends to the degree of curl in the hair, if any.

- Straight hair is round in shape.
- Wavy hair is more oval in nature.
- Curly hair is a much flatter oval shape.

The shape of the hair strand and curl amount cannot be altered by a haircut. But you can manipulate the response of the curl (or lack thereof) by creating various angles and weights to the end of the individual hair strand. Although the contour of the hair ends is only slightly altered by the shears, it is enough of a change that it creates a design memory. By simply altering shear position, you are – in effect – fashioning the building materials into a less problematic form. Think of it as changing the end of a board from being cut straight across to an angle, such as making a miter cut. Some designs require bend or movement, while others have no curve. By applying the shears in

IMPLEmENTS and THEIR EffECt on the HAIR stRAND

- Finger angle allows the increase of length and a gradual buildup of weight.
- Best practice: Closely tapered nape area in a steady graduated effect. Smoothly building length above the ear region to a longer crown. Building bulk for layered designs for fine, thin hair. In reverse: Coming down the head to build longer layers from the shorter crown for shoulder length or shorter designs.

2. Non-parallel cutting at 90° projection. Incorporate a 45° finger angle within the 90° position of the panel.

The diversity of vertical parting lies with the combination of the projection angle and the finger angle within the panel. It is almost impossible to project downward at zero degrees vertically; however, it is possible to drag the hair section flat across the head toward the face or toward the back of the head. This method will cause lengths to gain. What is important to remember is this: When cutting, the farther the distance the hair travels, the longer it becomes. Be cognizant, however, of what is happening to the hair within the section and what finger angles you employ. Be guided by what will occur when the strand returns to its natural fall.
various positions, you can alter outcomes to ensure that styling the hair is as easy as possible.

Shear position dictates the action of the cutting because of the direction that the cutting blade travels through the strands. Cutting action is caused by the palm position, which places the thumb in various positions in relation to the hair strand.

Let’s explore the results on a horizontal design line at a zero degree projection, as an example:

- **Shear blades used in a perpendicular fashion:** Most common application of shear use. During parallel cutting, the shears are placed parallel to the intended guide, part, and finger position. This positions them at a right angle – or perpendicular – to the hair strands themselves. This has a direct bearing on the shape of the hair ends.
  - With the hair strands combed vertically, position the shear blades horizontally with your palm facing the floor. The cutting blade comes from behind the strand horizontally to the front. This will produce a cut through the hair that leaves a flat bottomed cylinder. Think of this as the bottom of a coffee mug. This leaves the individual strand of the hair blunt and creates maximum bulk within the design.

**Best practice:**
1. Finely-textured hair with thin density, to ensure fullness and definition of weight lines in a low elevation style.
2. Use on curly hair to weigh down the curl for maximum control.

- **Shear blades that address the strand in a non-perpendicular fashion (A):** Alternate method of using the shears to create an end that interacts with specific projections to enhance desired results.
  - With the hair strands combed vertically, position the shears into the strand so they are horizontal, but turn your palm toward you. This places the blades on a vertical to a diagonal plane. The cutting blade is placed behind the strand, with the cutting direction coming upward. You will cut through the hair leaving a slightly angled cylinder, and the edge of the ends tend to be a bit longer on the surface. This lends to directing the slightly longer front of those ends to roll under.

  ![Flat bottom cylinder.](image)
  ![Palm position toward the floor.](image)

**Best practice:**
1. Around nape and ear area hairlines that tend to annoyingly flip up.
2. On the surface layers of a bobbed cut, or when an under bevel is desired.
3. For low-level elevation cuts on coarsely textured hair that tends to bush upward when sleekness is desired.

- **Shear blades used in a non-perpendicular fashion (B):** Alternate method of using the shears to create an end that interacts with specific projections to enhance desired results.
  - With the hair strands combed vertically, hold the shears so they are horizontal, but turn your palm away from you before placing the blades into the strand. (This position is also known as “palm to palm” cutting.) This rotates the cutting blade to place it in front of the strand with the cutting action going downward. Since the cutting action is in the front of the strand, it will be slightly shorter than the back, allowing a bit of an upward and outward flair to the ends.

  ![B. Front of strand slightly longer.](image)
  ![Palm position away from you, cutting blade before strand.](image)

**Best practice:**
1. Blunt cuts with an outward flair and depth at the bottom.
2. Layered cuts that require lift and motion.
3. Wavy hair, to encourage curlier outcome.

Razors, straight razors or feather blades

Razors, straight razors or feather blades are less commonly used than shears, but are not without merit. The hair must be wet or prepared with a product specifically designed for razor cutting to prevent damage to the cuticle layer and to allow the razor to glide through the hair. Many professionals are uncomfortable using razors, primarily due to safety concerns and the awkward technique of cutting above your gripped fingers. Much of that discomfort, however, will resolve itself with practice and with the continued use of the implement.

The benefit of using the razor is in the tapered edge that is created as the blade slices through the strand. Whereas the use of the shears creates a cylinder that is either blunt or minimally angled, the razor produces a much more steeply angled edge to the hair ends. Think of it as the same shape of penne pasta with an exaggerated slant.

Razors are not only used for the creation of a haircut, but can be used for applying texture and thinning (or reducing) bulk in the hair design, as well as a perimeter guide line. They are also a fabulous tool for producing an under bevel, creating lift, and slide cutting a design line that rapidly moves from short lengths to long. Razors do not work well in hair that is excessively curly, as it lends to a frizzy appearance.

**Specialized razor techniques**

- **For chunking** out bulk to cause texture: The desired goal of chunking is creating visible variation in length to add dimension to a design.
  - Use the razor in a vertical position, parallel to the hair strand. Dip the tip of the razor in the hair strand and slice out random pieces. Works best with moderate elevation.

- **For thinning (reducing)** excess bulk: In order to prevent excessive thinning on the ends and uncontrolled spikes near the scalp, thin the hair in the center third of the hair’s length. (Example: If the hair is six inches long, thin two inches from the scalp to within two inches from the ends.)
○ For **mid length to long** hair designs: Slide down the dampened strand with the blade resting flat against the hair, and apply very little pressure to the blade as you move toward the ends. You will be skimming the top of the strand that you have selected, so be sure that it is from an area beneath the surface layers of head.

○ For **shorter** hair designs: Use the razor in conjunction with the comb in a **razor over comb** technique – where the comb slides through the ends and the razor rides flat on top of the comb to lightly skim off bulk. This is a fairly well-controlled method. OR use the **razor rotation** method where your dominant hand controls the razor and the comb is placed in the other hand. Use both implements in a rotational pattern similar to a bicycling motion. The teeth of the comb serve to lift the hair ends while the razor lightly travels through them. Incorporate a pattern that moves around the head shape.

- For **perimeter** guidelines: Use the razor to cut guidelines that require very little bulk or foundation – such as wispy bangs or fringe and soft feathery or shaggy border edges.

○ When creating softness in a perimeter, the best practice is to begin the cut with a standard guide and complete the cut. After the lengths are all established, dampen the hair as needed before returning to the guide. Incorporate a slight projection angle and slide down the perimeter strands with the razor tip in a vertical position. Slice through the lengths in a downward movement.

- For producing an **under bevel** effect: Using the razor, create a hassle-free bobbed look easily that will dry perfectly with very little fuss.

○ After completing the haircut, dampen the hair as needed. Comb and direct the hair into the desired style. You will be using the razor in a tight “C” – or a scalloping motion – underneath the hair. Begin an inch or two up from the ends and roll the razor toward you as you move down off the ends. Use small vertical panels and move around the head. All the cutting will take place underneath the hair and should not alter the guideline or completed lengths. Adjust your tension and pressure according to the density of the hair and the desired amount of hair to be removed: Light pressure and tension for thinner hair; moderate for medium; heavier for thicker hair.

- For creating **lift** in the hair. Lift is generally created in the interior of the head. In order to create lift in a hair design, there must be areas with shorter hair near the head form that will be able to stand up to support the longer hair of the design.

○ For **short** spiky designs: Use the razor much the same as in the chunking technique. Grasp a panel of hair and elevate it. Since the hair is fairly short, the shoulder should be tipped forward so you are able to work above the elevated panel. Place the razor in a vertical position, parallel to the hair strand. Dip the tip of the razor in the hair strand and slice out random pieces – staying at least a half inch from the head.

○ For **moderate to longer** lengths: Use the razor to remove weight of the underlying layers at the top of the head. Position the razor flat on the strand, work near the scalp (but no closer than an inch) and then glide the razor down the strand only an inch or so. Balance your technique throughout the top panel of the head. Be certain that you are not removing hair near a part or too close to the surface layers.

- For slide-cutting short to long lengths: The razor makes increase layering a quick and efficient process. **Best practice**: Shift and drag hair strand to desired position, use guide posts as necessary, apply razor to strand perpendicularly. By using the razor across the strand like the crossbar of a “T” instead of parallel to it, you can swiftly cut down the panel without re-combing or re-gripping.

---

**Head shape, hairlines and facial contours**

Although the physical structure of human anatomy is universally similar, there are variances among individuals, races, and ethnicities. The same 22 bones make up each person’s head and face, but those bones may have differences in length and width. Likewise, muscle tone has a bearing on their contour. There are also fat deposits about the head, face, and neck. These fat deposits will affect the outcome of very short designs and the compatibility of hair styles of any length. A large percentage of clients don’t have the oval face shape that is accepted as the most desirable; creating the illusion of the oval becomes a primary goal.

Consider a room with a small window and how closed-in it may appear. You can camouflage the real structure and open up the room by simply placing curtains with the rod higher above – and farther out – from the actual window frame. Hair designing is all about creating illusions. We’ve discussed cutting methods and parting direction techniques that build textural structure and provide underlying support or reduce bulk. We also understand changing the response of the hair strand by implementing application and selection.

Let’s discuss some common trouble zones:

- **Head shapes**: Irregularities such as flatness in the nape and crown, or a broad or narrow forehead.
  
  ○ Nape or crown flatness: Cause issues when stacking is desired. Weight lines must be created when there is no underlying support. **Best practice**: Horizontal partings with projections less than 45° up to the desired weight line. Or vertical partings with non-parallel cutting and shifted distribution.
  
  ○ Broad forehead: Can be emphasized in short designs. **Best practice**: Never use horizontal lines across the bang/fringe. Stop fringe designs just past the eyebrow arch; do not cut all the way across!

  - Narrow forehead: Contradictory of the normally wider area in an oval. **Best practice**: Create lift or volume at the temple region.

- **Hairlines**: The undesirable shape of the hairline itself in combination with the direction of the hair growth.
  
  ○ Short designs: Hairlines that grow upward or off to the side will affect the finished shape. Hairlines may also have opposing growth directions from side to side that will affect balance. **Best practice**: Leave the hair longer to fall below the natural hairline, using low elevation to create weight. Also, if it is unbalanced from side to side, cut the side that grows inappropriately just a bit longer for added weight. Blend into the rest of the design with a diagonal line. Don’t forget to place the shears in a non-perpendicular position with your palm facing toward you.

- **Facial contours**: As a review, the seven basic facial shapes are: Oval, round, square, oblong, diamond, heart (inverted triangle) and pear (triangle). The shape that is universally accepted as the most favorable is oval. Regardless of the physical appearance, the ultimate goal of constructing a haircut is to create the illusion of the oval, even if there isn’t one to work with.

  Designing rules advise that you play up the best features, reduce the impact of the less attractive areas, and draw the eye toward weight lines that counter-effect the facial shape if it is not oval.

Let’s evaluate the facial shapes that detract from the oval design:

1. **Round**: Too wide across cheek area, too short vertically.
2. **Square**: Too wide across jawline, too short vertically. Forehead is equal to the width in the jawline.

   **Best practice**: Similar to round shape, avoid horizontal lines, as they define width. Use diagonal or vertical lines that draw the eye upward. Create fullness at the temple and crown, closeness near the jaw and fringe.

3. **Oblong**: Too narrow across forehead, too long vertically.

   **Best practice**: Diminish narrowness by creating width across the forehead and eye region. Keep fullness near the temple, do not extend to the crown. Partially cover forehead to shorten overall length.

4. **Diamond**: Narrow forehead, broad across cheeks, narrow jawline.

   **Best practice**: Increase fullness across the forehead with slight volume. Create closeness at the temple and cheek region. Use palm to palm cutting to cause an outward flair near the jawline.

5. **Heart or inverted triangle**: Extreme width across the forehead and brow line, narrow jawline.

   **Best practice**: Create closeness across the forehead, increase fullness from the ear region moving downward with an outward movement using palm to palm cutting.

6. **Pear or triangle**: Forehead is narrow in contrast with wide jawline.

   **Best practice**: Create fullness from cheek bones upward. Diminish width at the jawline with close coverage using non-parallel shear position with your palm toward you.

This course is designed to provide reinforcement of haircutting techniques including projection angles, parting patterns, and the distribution of the hair from the parts. These techniques alter the distance and the direction that the hair travels before being cut. Understanding that the contour of the head will influence that distance, and adapting the parting direction and projection will solidify the building principles of hair cutting. Also, by putting to use the proper tools and application methods, the results of your cut designs should be an absolute delight when styling.

**References**

## Final Examination Questions

Choose the best answer for questions 1 through 5 and mark your answers online at Cosmetology.EliteCME.com.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>True</th>
<th>False</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Parting directions, projection angles and distribution of the strand are the basic elements in developing textural structure in a hair cut.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Since it is not necessary to control the hair strand during haircuts place the comb near the ends for distribution.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Non-parallel cutting methods are used for specialized results - such as dramatic increases in length.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Parallel cutting with 180° projection from a diagonal line causes maximum increase in layer lengths toward the bottom.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Use the razor for perimeter guidelines when designs require maximum bulk in the foundation and border edges.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>