KNQF LEVEL 3 · TVET CDACC CYCLE 3

Cosmetology Level 3

A Practical Study Guide for Kenyan Trainees

Plaiting and braiding · Barbering · Manicure and pedicure







Realistic illustrated edition

Alphonce Kimutai Kirui

Aligned to the TVET CDACC Competency-Based Modular Curriculum, Cosmetology KNQF Level 3

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A Practical Study Guide for Kenyan Trainees

Plaiting and Braiding · Barbering · Manicure and Pedicure
Kenya National Qualifications Framework (KNQF) Level 3

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Cosmetology Level 3: A Practical Study Guide for Kenyan Trainees
First edition, October 2026

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Published by the author. Website: alphoncekirui.com

About the curriculum

This book is an independent study guide. It follows the topics and units of the TVET CDACC Competency-Based Modular Curriculum and Occupational Standard for Cosmetology, KNQF Level 3 (Cycle 3, programme code 1012 254A, unit codes HBS/CU/COS/CR/01–03/3/MA). Unit titles and codes are used for reference only. The book is not published, endorsed or approved by TVET CDACC, TVETA or the Ministry of Education. Always follow the current official curriculum and your trainer's guidance.

Safety and accuracy notice

Salons, kinyozi and nail bars have real hazards: blood-borne infections such as HIV and hepatitis B, skin, scalp and nail infections, sharp razors and implements, electrical equipment, hot water and wax, and chemicals. The methods in this book are for training under the supervision of a qualified trainer. Figures given as "typical" (dilutions, contact times, guard sizes, temperatures, times and prices) are general guidance only. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions, your trainer, county public health requirements and the Occupational Safety and Health Act 2007. This book does not give medical advice: when in doubt about a client's skin, scalp or nails, do not serve, and refer the client to a health worker. Prices are approximate (2026) and vary by town.

Names of people, companies and places used in examples are made up for teaching.

Illustrations

All illustrations in this book were drawn for it. They are realistic teaching illustrations, not photographs, and are not to scale. People shown are illustrations, not real clients.

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How to use this book

This book follows the Cosmetology Level 3 course from start to finish. It covers the three core units and the industrial training, in the same order as your training. You can read it cover to cover, or study one unit at a time if you are taking a part qualification.

The course at a glance

Part	What it covers	Training time
1. Getting started	The trade, the course and assessment, client care and consultation, hygiene and safety, hair and scalp analysis (the shared basics of every unit)	Used throughout
2. Plaiting and braiding	Unit 1: Plaiting and Braiding Service (HBS/CU/COS/CR/01/3/MA)	140 hours
3. Barbering	Unit 2: Barbering Service (HBS/CU/COS/CR/02/3/MA)	80 hours
4. Manicure and pedicure	Unit 3: Manicure and Pedicure Service (HBS/CU/COS/CR/03/3/MA)	80 hours
5. Industrial training and assessment	Industrial training, starting a salon, and getting ready to be assessed	240 hours

What is in each chapter

- **What you will learn:** the chapter's goals, with the unit, learning outcome and training hours it belongs to.
- **Key words:** the trade words you need, explained simply. More are in the Glossary at the back.
- **Explanations and drawings:** each topic explained step by step, with realistic labelled illustrations and step-by-step pictures.
- **Worked examples:** product quantities, disinfectant dilutions, service times and prices worked through with real numbers.
- **Practical tasks:** salon jobs with the tools, materials, steps and safety points. Do them with your trainer.
- **Check your competence:** a checklist of what an assessor will expect you to show. Tick each item when you can do it without help.
- **Practice questions:** answers are at the back of the book.

Look out for these boxes

SAFETY FIRST

Hazards and how to stay safe. Never skip these.

GREEN TIP

Ways to save water, energy and products, reuse what can be reused, and handle salon waste correctly.

TRAINER'S TIP

Advice from experienced trainers, stylists and barbers to help you work faster and better.

COMMON MISTAKES

Errors trainees often make, and how to avoid them.

IN THE KENYAN SALON

How the topic looks in real Kenyan salons, kinyozi and nail bars.

About the illustrations

This book uses realistic, shaded illustrations of real techniques, tools and clients. Labels and thin leader lines point to the parts that matter. Blue arrows show the direction of movement (combing, clipper strokes, polish strokes, massage). Red marks a danger or a mistake. A green ring means "safe to serve"; a red ring means "do not serve — refer".

PART 1

Getting Started

What a Level 3 cosmetologist does, how you will be trained and assessed, and the shared basics of every unit: client care and consultation, hygiene and safety, and hair and scalp analysis.

Chapter 1: Becoming a Cosmetologist in Kenya
Chapter 2: Client Care, Consultation and Draping
Chapter 3: Hygiene, Infection Control and Salon Safety
Chapter 4: Hair and Scalp: Structure and Analysis

CHAPTER 1

Becoming a Cosmetologist in Kenya

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

- Describe the work of a Level 3 cosmetologist in braiding, barbering and nail care.
- Name the places where cosmetologists work in Kenya and the steps above Level 3.
- Explain how competency-based training works: units, elements, performance criteria, awards and RPL.
- Explain how you will be assessed, and find where most of the marks are.
- Present yourself as a professional from your first day in the training salon.

Course introduction · All three core units HBS/CU/COS/CR/01–03/3/MA and industrial training · Cosmetology Level 3 (Cycle 3)

Walk through any Kenyan town on a Saturday. You will see girls with fresh cornrows, young men leaving the kinyozi with sharp fades, and a bride-to-be having her nails painted. Each of these clients paid a skilled worker who kept them safe and sent them home happy. This chapter shows you what that work involves, how your course is built and how you will be marked, so that you can plan to succeed from the very first week.

Key words

Cosmetology
The trade of caring for and beautifying the hair, skin and nails of clients.

Kinyozi
Kiswahili for a barber shop; the word is also used for the barber.

CBET
Competency-Based Education and Training: you are trained and tested on what you can actually do at work.

Unit of competency
One complete job area, such as barbering, that is taught, assessed and certified on its own.

Element
A main stage of the job inside a unit, for example preparing for the service.

Performance criterion (PC)
A checkpoint that shows an element was done well. The assessor marks each one. Plural: criteria.

Learning outcome (LO)
What you should be able to do at the end of one block of training hours.

Formative assessment
An assessment during training that checks your progress. Together they count for 60% of the unit score.

Summative assessment
The final assessment at the end of a unit. It counts for 40% of the unit score.

RPL
Recognition of Prior Learning: assessing and certifying skills you already gained at work or at home.

Portfolio of evidence
Your file of proof: record cards, photos, signed checklists and mentor reports.

Mentor
An experienced worker in the salon who guides and rates you during industrial training.

1.1 What a Level 3 Cosmetologist Does

A cosmetologist gives hair, skin and nail services to paying clients. At Level 3 you learn three core trades. Many small Kenyan salons offer all three under one roof, as in Figure 1.1. A worker who can braid in the morning, line up a fade at lunch time and do a pedicure in the evening is never idle, and is easy to employ.

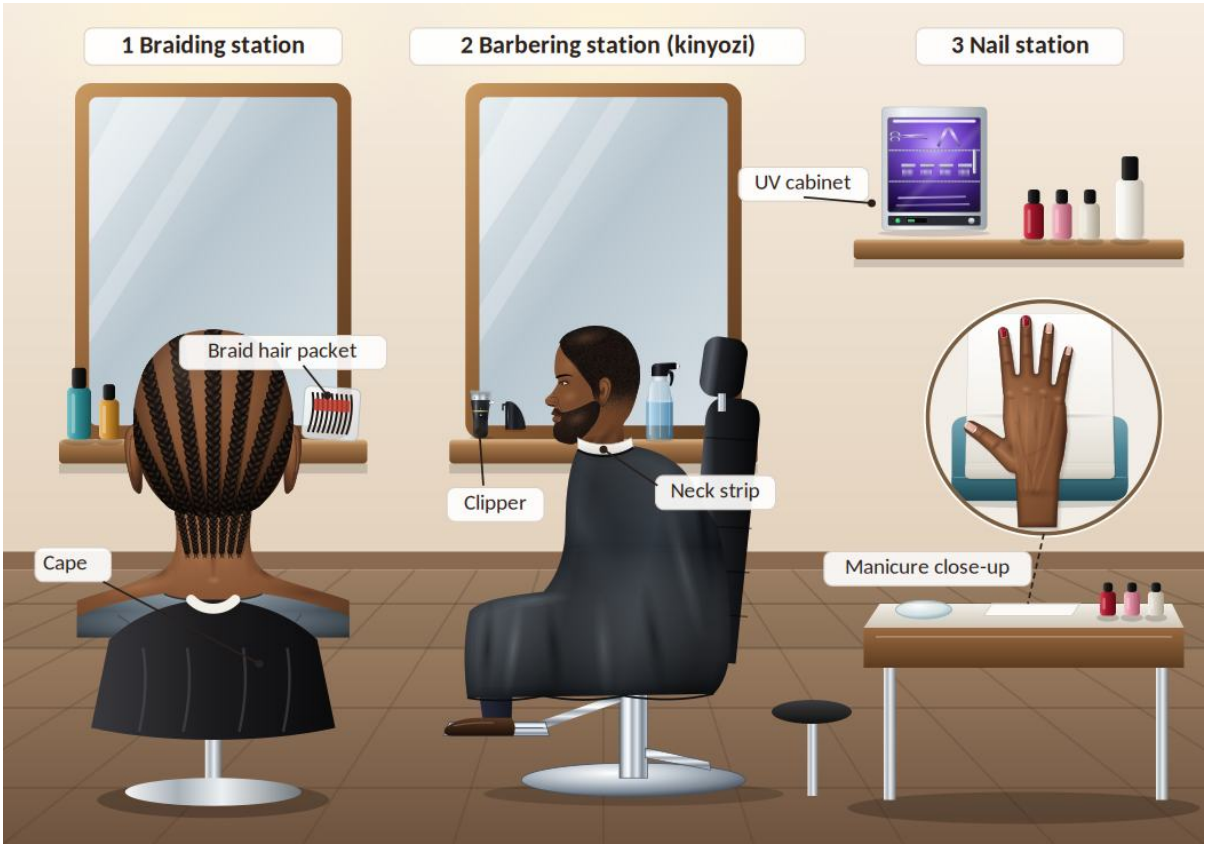


Figure 1.1 A small Kenyan salon with three stations: (1) braiding, (2) barbering, with the client draped in a cape and neck strip, and (3) manicure and pedicure, shown in the close-up. The UV cabinet stores tools that are already cleaned and disinfected.

1.1.1 Plaiting and braiding

This is the biggest unit. You will learn three-strand plaits, two-strand twists, cornrows (often called "lines"), feed-in braids, box braids, piece lines, Bantu (Zulu) knots and crochet styles. Most of your clients will have natural, tightly coiled hair. You will add synthetic braid extensions, which are bought in packets. Good braiding is neat, even and comfortable. It must never be so tight that it pulls out the client's hairline.

1.1.2 Barbering

Barbering covers the bald cut ("chiban"), the level cut, fades, line-ups and creative designs, plus beard shaping and shaving. It also includes the services that go with a cut: shampooing, conditioning and a head and shoulder massage. A barber handles clippers, trimmers and razors all day. Safe handling and correct disinfection are part of every single haircut.

1.1.3 Manicure and pedicure

A **manicure** is care of the hands and fingernails. A **pedicure** is care of the feet and toenails. You will learn the basic manicure and pedicure, the warm oil manicure, paraffin wax treatment, ordinary polish (enamel), gel polish and simple nail art.

Table 1.1 The Level 3 course at a glance

Part of the course	Code	Hours	Credits	Main services
Unit 1 Plaiting and braiding service	HBS/CU/COS/CR/01/3/MA	140	14	Plaits, twists, cornrows, box braids, piece lines, Bantu knots, crochet
Unit 2 Barbering service	HBS/CU/COS/CR/02/3/MA	80	8	Bald, level, fade and creative cuts; beard shave; shampoo, conditioning, massage
Unit 3 Manicure and pedicure service	HBS/CU/COS/CR/03/3/MA	80	8	Basic and warm oil manicure, pedicure, paraffin wax, enamel and gel polish, nail art
Industrial training	–	240	24	All three trades in a working salon, under a mentor
Total		**540**	**54**	

1.2 Where Cosmetologists Work

Your skills can earn money in many places. Some workers are employed, many are self-employed, and some do both.

- **Neighbourhood salons and kinyozi.** These range from one chair in a market stall to a modern shop in a mall.
- **Nail bars.** Small shops that offer only manicure, pedicure, gel polish and nail art.
- **Spas, hotels and resorts.** They expect very high hygiene and polished customer care, and pay well for it.
- **Mobile and home services.** You carry your kit to homes, offices, hospitals and wedding venues.
- **County VTC salons.** Many training centres run a salon open to the public, where trainees practise on real clients.
- **Your own business.** You may rent a chair in someone else's salon, or open your own small salon, kinyozi or nail bar (see Chapter 15).

> **IN THE KENYAN SALON**
>
> In many estates one shop is a salon on one side and a kinyozi on the other. The owner hires a braider, a barber and a nail technician, often paid by commission or a daily rate. Clients pay at the counter in cash or by M-Pesa. Typical town prices (approximate, 2026) are KSh 150–300 for a kinyozi haircut, KSh 500–1,000 for cornrows and KSh 400 for a basic manicure. Good workers keep a list of regular clients and send them photos of new styles, with permission.

1.3 The Kenyan Beauty Industry

Hair and beauty work is one of the most common kinds of self-employment in Kenya, in big towns and small trading centres alike. Demand is steady because hair and nails keep growing. People want to look good for school, church, work, graduations and weddings.

Many women now keep their hair natural and protect it with braids, twists and crochet styles that last several weeks. Many men and boys visit the kinyozi every week or two for a fade, line-up or beard trim. Nail bars are growing too, with gel polish and nail art popular for special occasions.

The trade is also regulated. A salon needs a county business permit and must pass county public health inspection. Waste must be handled according to county and NEMA rules. Employers must protect workers under the Occupational Safety and Health Act, 2007. You will meet the practical side of these rules in Chapter 3.

> **GREEN TIP**
>
> Being green saves money as well as the environment. Turn off the tap while you lather. Refill small bottles from large containers instead of buying many small ones. Wash reusable towels in a full, hot load. Switch off dryers and steamers when nobody is using them. Never pour chemicals down the drain. Clients notice and respect a salon that wastes less.

1.4 Your Career Ladder

The Kenya National Qualifications Framework (KNQF) arranges training in levels. Level 3 is your starting point. Each level above it adds more services, more skill and more responsibility, as Figure 1.2 shows. Course names and entry rules change from time to time, so check with your VTC or with TVETA before you plan your next step.

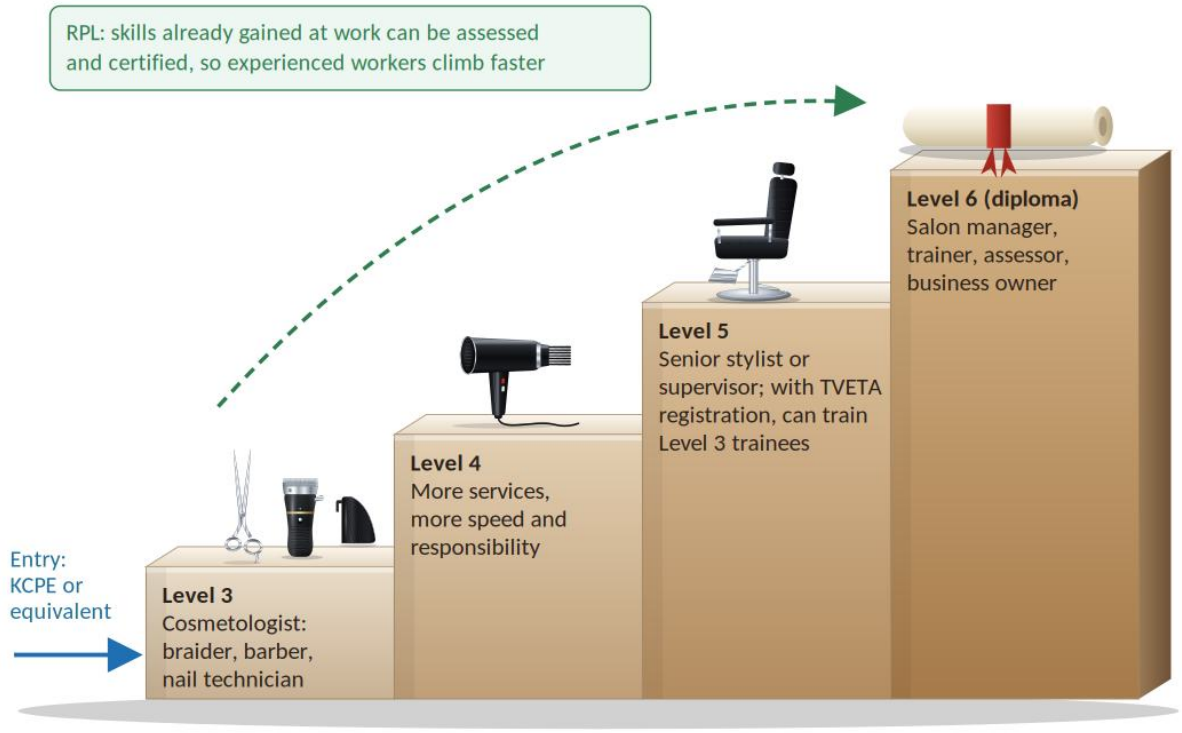


Figure 1.2 The career ladder from Level 3 to Level 6. Each step adds services and responsibility. RPL can shorten the climb for experienced workers. Check current course names and entry rules with your VTC or TVETA.

Notice one useful fact. A person who trains Level 3 cosmetology trainees must hold at least a Level 5 qualification in cosmetology or a related trade and be registered with TVETA. So the ladder can lead you to the front of a classroom one day. With further training you can also move into related areas such as beauty therapy, hair colouring and chemical services, wig making or salon management.

1.5 How Competency-Based Training Works

Your course follows CBET. The idea is simple. Industry decides what a worker must be able to do. The curriculum teaches it. You are certified only when you can show it. You are not compared with your classmates; you are compared with the standard.

1.5.1 Units, elements and performance criteria

Think of the standard as boxes inside boxes:

- The **qualification** (Cosmetology Level 3) holds three **units of competency**.
- Each unit holds three **elements**: preparing for the service, performing it, and the post-service work after the client leaves.
- Each element holds several **performance criteria**. These are the checkpoints the assessor watches and scores.

Take barbering as an example. Under "prepare", the assessor checks that you consulted the client, examined the hair and scalp, wore your protective clothing and draped the client with a cape and neck strip. Under "perform", they check that the cut matches the client's request and is well blended. Under "post-service", they check that you cleaned and disinfected your tools and left the station clean.

1.5.2 Learning outcomes and the course map

The curriculum groups the training hours of each unit into three **learning outcomes**. LO1 is preparation (10 hours). LO2 is performing the service (120 hours for braiding, 60 hours each for barbering and for nails). LO3 is the post-service procedure (10 hours). Figure 1.3 shows the whole course drawn to scale. Ten hours of training earn one credit.

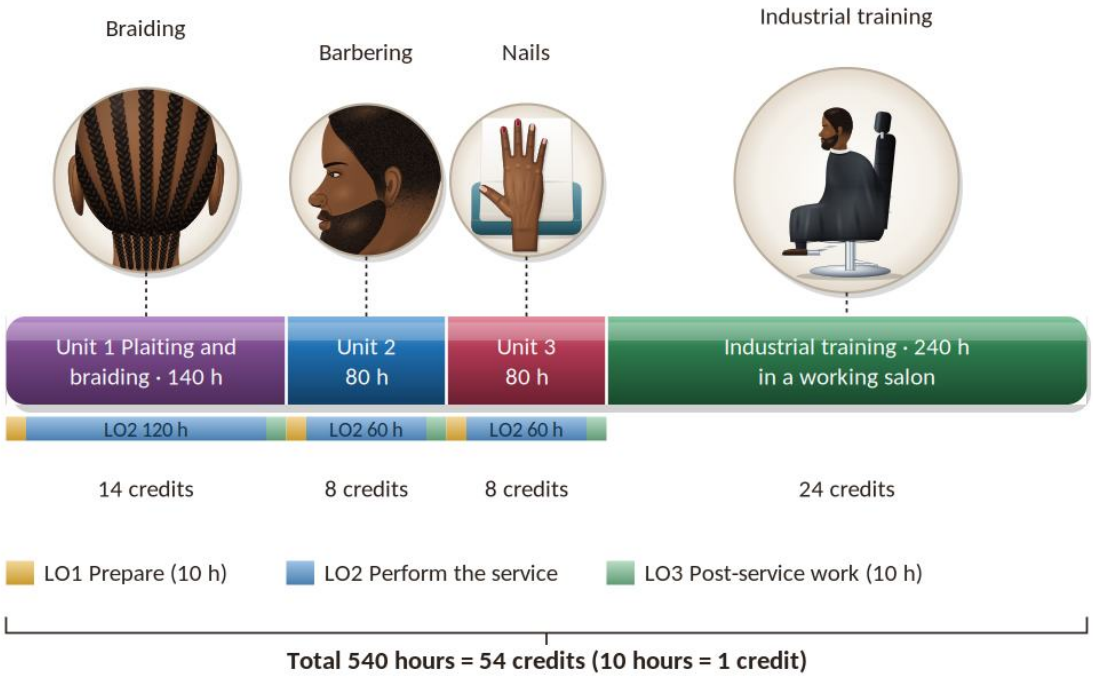


Figure 1.3 Course map drawn to scale (every hour has the same length of bar). The coloured strip under each unit shows its learning outcomes. Industrial training is almost half of the course.

Industrial training takes 240 hours, almost half of the whole course. Trainees taking the full qualification may do it after finishing all the units. Trainees taking only part of the qualification may share it equally between the units they take.

1.5.3 Awards you can earn

Because each unit stands on its own, you can leave with something useful before you finish everything. There are three kinds of award:

- **Statement of Attainment**: for showing competence in an element that can be certified on its own.
- **Certificate of Competency**: for each core unit you pass, for example barbering only.
- **Kenya National TVET Certificate in Cosmetology Level 3**: when you are competent in all the units.

So a trainee who wants to start a kinyozi quickly can complete Unit 2, begin earning, and come back later for the other units. These smaller awards are called **part qualifications**.

1.5.4 Entry and Recognition of Prior Learning

To join the course you need the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) or an equivalent qualification accepted by TVETA. Many people in Kenya already braid or cut hair well but have no certificate. Through **RPL** such a person can be assessed against the same standard and earn part or all of the qualification. RPL is not a free pass. The candidate still performs the services in front of an assessor, answers questions and shows evidence.

1.6 How You Will Be Assessed

1.6.1 The rules

- **Mostly practical.** In every unit theory and practical are weighted 10:90. There are no long written papers. The assessor asks theory questions **orally** while you work, for example, "Why do you detangle from the ends towards the roots?"
- **Formative and summative.** Formative assessments during training count for 60% of the unit score. The summative assessment at the end counts for 40%.
- **Enough formatives.** You will have at least as many formative assessments as there are elements in the unit. With three elements, expect at least three per unit.
- **Every checkpoint counts.** Each performance criterion carries a fixed number of marks, so nothing you do is "just a small thing".

Table 1.2 Competence ratings for each unit

Unit score (%)	Rating	What it means for you
80–100	Attained Mastery	Excellent work, ready for a busy salon
65–79	Proficient	Good, reliable work
50–64	Competent	Meets the standard
49 and below	Not Yet Competent	More practice, then reassessment
Y	Malpractice	Cheating or another irregularity was found

1.6.2 Where the marks are

Each unit is marked out of **200**: 20 for theory (your oral answers) and 180 for practical work. The three elements share the 200 marks in the same way in every unit: **Prepare 67, Perform 100, Post-service 33** (Figure 1.4).

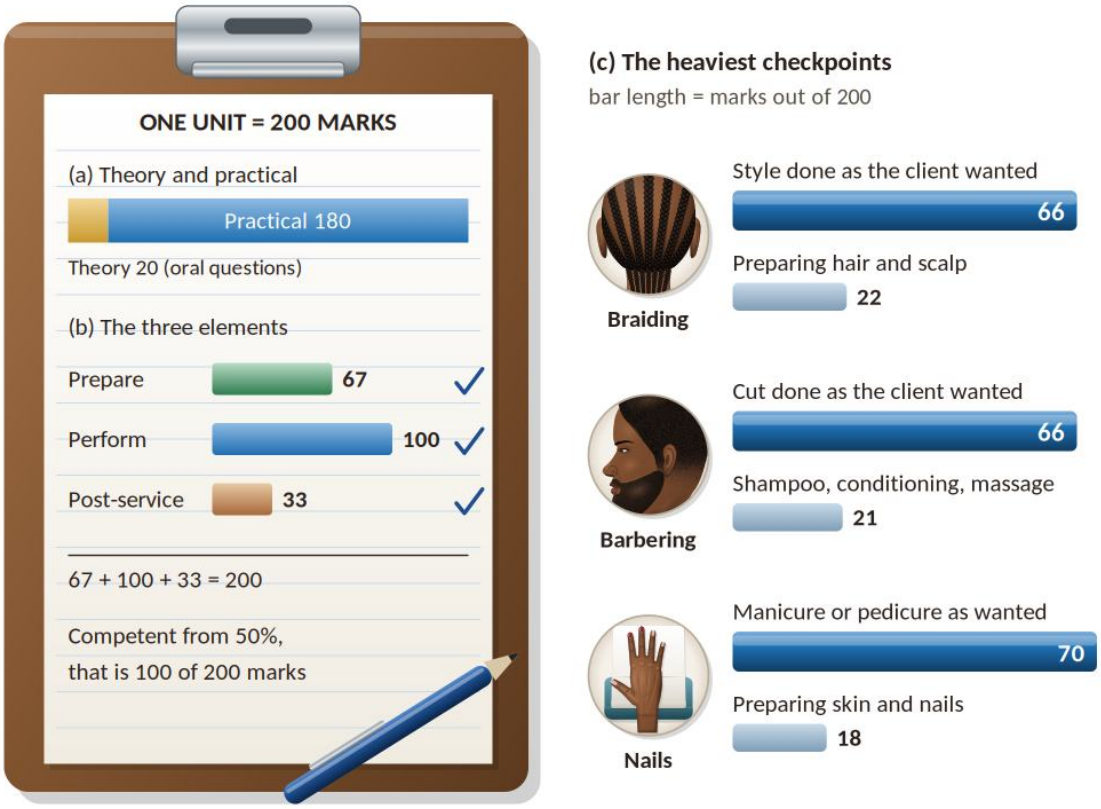


Figure 1.4 Where the marks are. (a) The theory and practical split used in every unit. (b) The three element totals. (c) The heaviest checkpoint in each unit is the finished service the client asked for, followed by a preparation or associated-service item.

Look closely at part (c) of the figure. One checkpoint, "the service is done the way the client asked", carries 66 marks in braiding and in barbering and 70 marks in manicure and pedicure. That is about one third of the whole unit. If the finished style or nails are not what the client wanted, you cannot score well, however tidy your station is.

The next heaviest checkpoints are preparing the client's hair and scalp (22 in braiding), the shampoo, conditioning and massage that go with a haircut (21 in barbering), preparing skin and nails (18), hair and scalp analysis (17 and 16) and consultation (13, 17 and 12). Draping, protective clothing, cleaning tools and cleaning the station each carry around 10 to 14 marks. These "small" items add up, and they are the easiest marks to win. Never skip them.

1.6.3 Worked example: working out a unit score

Achieng did three formative assessments in barbering. She scored 150, 160 and 170 out of 200. Her summative score was 140 out of 200.

1. Change each formative score to a percentage: 150 ÷ 200 × 100 = 75%; 160 ÷ 200 × 100 = 80%; 170 ÷ 200 × 100 = 85%.
2. Find the formative average: (75 + 80 + 85) ÷ 3 = 240 ÷ 3 = 80%.

3. Change the summative score to a percentage: 140 ÷ 200 × 100 = 70%.
4. Apply the weights: 60% of 80 = 0.6 × 80 = 48; 40% of 70 = 0.4 × 70 = 28.
5. Add: 48 + 28 = **76%**. From Table 1.2, Achieng is **Proficient**.

Notice that her steady formative work carried more weight than her final day. Treat every formative assessment as if it were the final.

1.6.4 Assessment during industrial training

During industrial training a **mentor** at the salon guides you and rates you with a mentoring tool. You also rate yourself in a self-assessment column. Each item is marked Met (M) or Needs to Improve (NI). An item that the salon does not offer is marked Not Applicable (NA). The tool also rates your worker behaviour, such as time keeping and teamwork.

The placement should last at least three months. At least two thirds of your time should be spent on braiding, barbering, and manicure and pedicure work. The mentor assesses you three times, once in each month. Only the third, final assessment counts. The tool has 10 items for each unit (four knowledge items and six skill items). Your mark for each unit is the number of items met divided by the number of items assessed. For example, if 8 of the 10 braiding items are met, the mark is 8 ÷ 10 × 100 = 80%. To be competent in a unit you need at least 5 of the 10 items, and the key practical items (preparing, performing the service and aftercare advice; for nails, draping, preparing skin and nails and performing the service) must all be met. Worker behaviour is rated separately, and you need 75% of those items. Your final industrial training mark is the average of your unit marks. Chapter 15 covers industrial training in detail.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Rushing to start the style and skipping consultation, analysis or draping. These checkpoints carry real marks.
- Doing a beautiful style that the client did not ask for. The heaviest mark is for meeting the client's request.
- Working in silence, then failing the oral questions. Practise explaining why you do each step.
- Leaving tools dirty and the station untidy after the client leaves. Post-service work is one sixth of the marks.
- Losing record cards, photos and checklists. Without evidence in your portfolio, your work cannot be proved.

1.7 Professional Image and Conduct

Clients judge your appearance and manners before they see your skill. You work very close to their face, hands and feet. A clean, neat professional wins their trust and their return visits. Figure 1.5 shows the main points to check every morning.



Figure 1.5 Ready for work: (a) short, clean nails and no jewellery on the hands; (b) closed, low-heeled shoes with non-slip soles; (c) neat hair and a clean collar.

1.7.1 Personal grooming and hygiene

- Bathe daily, use deodorant and keep your breath fresh.
- Wear a clean, ironed tunic or uniform and an apron. Change it when it gets wet or stained.
- Keep your hair short and neat, or tie it back or cover it.
- Keep your own nails short, clean and smooth. Long or rough nails scratch scalps and hide germs.
- Remove rings, bangles and watches at work. They scratch clients, catch in hair and trap germs.
- Wear closed, low-heeled shoes with non-slip soles. Wet floors and cut hair are slippery, and dropped scissors injure bare toes.
- Avoid strong perfume. Some clients have allergies or asthma.
- Wash your hands before and after every client.

1.7.2 Conduct with clients and colleagues

- **Be punctual.** Arrive before opening time and keep appointments. If you will be late, tell the client early.
- **Agree before you start.** Agree the style, the time it will take and the full price, including extras such as braid extensions. Give a receipt or an M-Pesa confirmation.
- **Be honest.** Charge the agreed price. Do not sell a client products or extra packets they do not need.
- **Keep secrets.** What a client tells you in the chair stays in the salon. Client record cards are private.
- **Ask before photos.** Never post a client's picture on social media without clear permission.
- **Respect everyone**, whatever their age, religion, ability or background, and work as a team with colleagues.

SAFETY FIRST

Your job is beauty care, not medicine. Some signs mean you must not continue: round scaly patches or sores on the scalp, head lice, weeping or crusted spots, swollen and painful nail folds, thick discoloured nails, open cuts, or any sore on the foot of a client with diabetes. Do not treat these and do not carry on with the service. Explain politely and privately, then advise the client to see a health worker. Stay away from work yourself if you have a fever or an infected cut on your hands. Chapters 3 and 4 teach these signs in detail.

1.8 Study Habits for Success

Ninety per cent of your marks come from your hands, so daily practice on a mannequin (practice head) and on supervised clients is your main way of studying. Explain each step aloud to a classmate as you work; this prepares you for oral questions. Use the key words and checklists in each chapter, because they follow what the assessor looks for. Build your portfolio from day one with record cards, dated photos (taken with permission) and signed checklists.

TRAINER'S TIP

Time yourself. A paying client will not wait all day. Write down how long each practice style takes, then try to cut the time a little each week without losing neatness. By industrial training you should know roughly how long you take for straight-back cornrows, a level cut and a basic manicure, so that you can quote honest times to clients.

1.8.1 Worked example: costing your practice consumables

Your VTC provides the main tools and equipment. Many trainees also buy a few consumables for extra practice at home. Using the standard prices in this book (approximate, 2026):

Table 1.3 A small practice pack of consumables

Item	Quantity	Price each (KSh)	Cost (KSh)
Synthetic braid extensions (packet)	4	150	600
Gloves (box of 100)	1	650	650
Neck strips (roll of 100)	1	300	300
Nail polish (enamel)	2	250	500
Polish remover (500 ml)	1	350	350
Cotton wool (400 g)	1	350	350
Total			**2,750**

1. Multiply quantity by price: 4 × 150 = 600; 2 × 250 = 500. The other items are bought once.
2. Add the costs: 600 + 650 + 300 + 500 + 350 + 350 = **KSh 2,750**.
3. To save for it over 10 weeks: 2,750 ÷ 10 = **KSh 275 per week**.

Store polish and remover away from heat and flames, because they catch fire easily. Keep the gloves and neck strips for single use only.

Practical task 1.1: Salon visit and job map

Tools and equipment

- Notebook and pen
- Clipboard
- Phone camera (only with the owner's permission)

Materials

- Observation sheet from your trainer
- Introduction letter from your VTC
- Your portfolio file

Steps

1. Choose a working salon, kinyozi or nail bar near your home or the VTC.
2. Greet the owner, show your letter and ask permission to observe for one to two hours.
3. Stand where you do not block clients or workers. Do not touch tools or products.
4. List every service you see. Match each one to Unit 1, 2 or 3, or to "other" (for example relaxing or make-up).
5. For one service of each type, note the three stages: what the worker did to prepare, how the service was done, and what the worker did after the client left.
6. Note the price list and how clients paid.
7. Thank the owner. In class, present your job map and compare it with Table 1.1. File your notes in your portfolio.

Safety

- Never photograph clients. Photograph only an empty workstation, and only if the owner agrees.
- Keep clear of running clippers, hot dryers and wet floors.
- Keep any client details you overhear private.

Chapter summary

- A Level 3 cosmetologist works in three trades: plaiting and braiding, barbering, and manicure and pedicure.
- Cosmetologists work in salons, kinyozi, nail bars, spas, hotels, VTC salons and homes, or run their own business with the right county permits.
- The course is 540 hours and 54 credits: 140 + 80 + 80 hours of units and 240 hours of industrial training.
- In CBET you are measured against the standard. Units contain elements, and elements contain performance criteria.
- You can earn a Statement of Attainment, a Certificate of Competency for each unit, or the full national certificate. RPL can certify skills you already have.
- Assessment is 90% practical with oral theory. Formative work counts 60% and summative 40%. 50% and above is Competent.
- Each unit is marked out of 200: Prepare 67, Perform 100, Post-service 33. The finished service the client asked for carries 66–70 marks.
- Good grooming, punctuality, honest pricing, confidentiality and referring clients with signs of disease are part of being a professional.

Check your competence

- [ ] I can describe the services taught in each of the three Level 3 units.
- [ ] I can name at least five places where a cosmetologist can work in Kenya.
- [ ] I can explain the difference between a unit, an element and a performance criterion.
- [ ] I can name the three types of award and explain what RPL is.
- [ ] I can explain the 10:90 and 60/40 rules and the four competence ratings.
- [ ] I can say which checkpoint carries the most marks in each unit, and why.
- [ ] I can work out a unit score from formative and summative marks.
- [ ] I report to every practical session groomed and dressed as a professional.
- [ ] I keep my portfolio of evidence up to date from the start of the course.

Practice questions

1. Name the three core units of Cosmetology Level 3 and give two services taught in each.
2. List four places where a Level 3 cosmetologist can work, and give one advantage of each.
3. In your own words, explain what an element and a performance criterion are. Use barbering as your example.
4. What is the difference between a Certificate of Competency and the Kenya National TVET Certificate in Cosmetology Level 3?
5. Mwangi has cut hair in a kinyozi for six years but has no certificate. Explain how RPL could help him.
6. Oral question: "Why should you never start braiding before consultation and draping, even when the client is in a hurry?"

7. A trainee's formative average is 70% and her summative score is 55%. Work out her unit score and give her rating.
8. Each unit is marked out of 200. (a) How many marks are for theory? (b) What percentage of the unit is the Perform element? (c) What percentage is the single heaviest checkpoint in manicure and pedicure?
9. During industrial training, Wanjiru's mentor assessed all 10 barbering items on the mentoring tool and marked 7 of them as Met, including items 7, 8 and 9 (preparing the hair, performing the barbering procedure and aftercare advice). Work out her industrial training mark for barbering and say whether she is competent.
10. Practical: Prepare yourself for a practical session as a professional (uniform, hair, nails, jewellery, shoes). Ask a classmate to check you against Figure 1.5 and Section 1.7.1, then record the result, dated and signed, in your portfolio.

CHAPTER 6

Cornrows, Plaits and Twists

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

- Make a neat three-strand plait by the overhand and the underhand method.
- Make even two-strand twists that hold and do not unravel.
- Part and braid straight-back, curved and patterned cornrows close to the scalp.
- Add extension hair little by little to make feed-in braids.
- Control tension to protect the hairline, and spot the early signs of traction alopecia.
- Finish ends neatly, check quality, and work out the time and price of each style.

Unit: Plaiting and Braiding Service · HBS/CU/COS/CR/01/3/MA · Learning outcome 2 (part 1) · Part of about 120 hours

Cornrows, plaits and twists are the bread and butter of every braiding salon in Kenya. A school girl gets her "lines" done on a Sunday afternoon. A young woman books Ghana weaving before a wedding. A mother asks for soft twists for her toddler. All of these styles use the same few hand movements. When you master them, every other style in this unit becomes easier. This chapter teaches those movements one by one, then shows you how to keep the client's scalp and hairline safe.

Key words

Strand
One of the equal parts of hair that you cross or wrap to make a plait or twist.

Plait
Hair made by crossing three strands in turn. Also called a three-strand braid.

Overhand
A method where the outer strand crosses over the centre strand. The plait lies flat.

Underhand
A method where the outer strand crosses under the centre strand. The plait stands up from the surface.

Cornrow ("lines")
An underhand plait worked flat on the scalp, picking up hair along a parted row.

Stitch
One crossing of a strand in a cornrow. Each stitch shows as one raised bump on the row.

Two-strand twist
A style made by wrapping two strands around each other like a rope.

Feed-in braid
A cornrow that starts with the client's own hair and gets thicker as small pieces of extension are added. Often called Ghana weaving.

Extension
Extra hair (usually synthetic fibre) braided in to add length, thickness or colour.

Tension
How hard you pull the hair while you braid.

Traction alopecia
Hair loss caused by pulling on the hair for a long time, most often at the edges.

Edges
The fine hair along the front hairline, temples and nape.

6.1 Getting Ready to Braid

Before you make a single stitch, the client's hair must already be prepared. Chapter 5 showed you how to undo old styles, shampoo, condition, blow-dry, detangle and section the hair. Chapter 2 covered consultation and draping, Chapter 3 hygiene, and Chapter 4 hair and scalp analysis. Do not skip any of these steps. Hair that is tangled or damp will give uneven, fuzzy rows that do not last.

6.1.1 Your position and the client's comfort

Braiding jobs are long. A full head of feed-in lines can take three hours. Bad posture will hurt your back, neck and wrists, and a tired braider makes uneven rows.

- Adjust the chair so the part of the head you are working on is at the level of your chest. Lower the chair for the crown and raise it for the nape.
- Stand with your weight on both feet, or sit on a stool behind the client. Keep your shoulders relaxed and elbows close to your body.
- Seat the client upright with both feet on the footrest. For long jobs, a chair that reclines a little lets her rest her neck.
- Give the client short breaks to stretch, drink water or use the washroom. Ask her to tell you at once if anything hurts.
- Keep your tools within reach on a clean trolley: rat-tail comb, wide-tooth comb, clips, scissors, spray bottle and products.

6.1.2 How to hold the strands

Good braiding comes from the fingers, not the wrists. Hold each strand between the thumb and index finger near the root. Use the middle, ring and little fingers to keep the other strands apart, so they do not tangle. Work close to the scalp, about 2–3 cm from the root, so that every stitch is firm.

Keep the hair slightly moist. A light mist of water or braid spray, or a very small amount of hair food or cream on the fingertips, stops coily hair from snagging. Too much product makes the hair slippery and greasy, and it collects dust.

> **TRAINER'S TIP**
>
> Practise on a head dummy before you work on a client. Do the same row ten times and time yourself. When your rows are straight and the same size every time, speed will follow. In assessment you must show each technique at least four times, so build that habit now.

6.2 The Three-Strand Plait

The three-strand plait is the foundation of all braiding. A cornrow is simply a plait worked on the scalp, and a box braid is a plait with extension added. Learn it well with the client's own hair first.

6.2.1 The overhand plait

Figure 6.1 shows the steps.

1. Part a clean section and comb it smooth. Hold it with one hand.

2. Divide it into three equal strands: left, centre and right. Unequal strands give a crooked plait.
3. Cross the right strand over the centre strand. It now becomes the new centre.
4. Cross the left strand over the new centre strand.
5. Repeat right over, left over, keeping the same tension, until about 2 cm from the ends.
6. Secure the end. On natural hair, coil the tip round your finger with a little cream, or use a soft, covered band. Never use a plain rubber band; it cuts the hair.



Figure 6.1 Making a three-strand plait (overhand method). The strands are shown in three shades so you can follow each one. In the underhand method the outer strand goes under the centre strand instead.

6.2.2 The underhand plait

The movement is the same, but each outer strand passes **under** the centre strand instead of over it. The crossings now sit on top of the plait and stand out like a raised chain. This underhand plait is the stitch you use for cornrows (section 6.4) and for most box braids (Chapter 7). Practise both methods until you can switch from one to the other without thinking.

6.2.3 Where plaits are used

Single plaits are a quick, gentle style for children and a good way to stretch and protect natural hair overnight. They are also used to finish the tail of a cornrow, and as the base of many braided styles. Keep plaits for children loose and large, and never plait wet hair tightly, because wet hair stretches and then pulls hard on the scalp as it dries.

Table 6.1 Plaits, twists and cornrows compared

Feature	Three-strand plait	Two-strand twist	Cornrow (lines)
Number of strands	Three	Two	Three, plus hair picked up from the row
Movement	Cross outer strands over (or under) the centre	Wrap one strand over the other	Underhand crossing, close to the scalp
Lies on the scalp?	No, it hangs free	No, it hangs free (except flat twists)	Yes, along the whole row
Tension needed	Light to medium	Light	Firm at the root, never tight
Main risk	Breakage if plaited wet and tight	Unravelling, frizz	Traction alopecia at the edges
Typical use	Children, tails of lines, stretching hair	Natural hair styles, "rasta" twists with extensions	School lines, all-back, Ghana weaving, patterns

6.3 Two-Strand Twists

Twists are softer and quicker than plaits. They suit natural hair well, are easy for the client to undo, and give a pretty twist-out when taken down. With extensions added they become the "rasta" or Senegalese-type twists that many Kenyan clients ask for (extensions are covered in Chapter 7).

6.3.1 Making a two-strand twist

1. Part a square or brick-shaped section. Spray lightly and apply a little cream or mousse along the length.
2. Split the section into two equal strands (Figure 6.2, step 1).
3. Twist each strand a little on itself in the same direction, then wrap the right strand over the left. Keep both strands smooth between your fingers.
4. Repeat all the way down, keeping the wraps close together and the tension even.
5. At the end, coil the tip round your finger so it holds. For very soft hair, a tiny amount of gel on the tip helps.

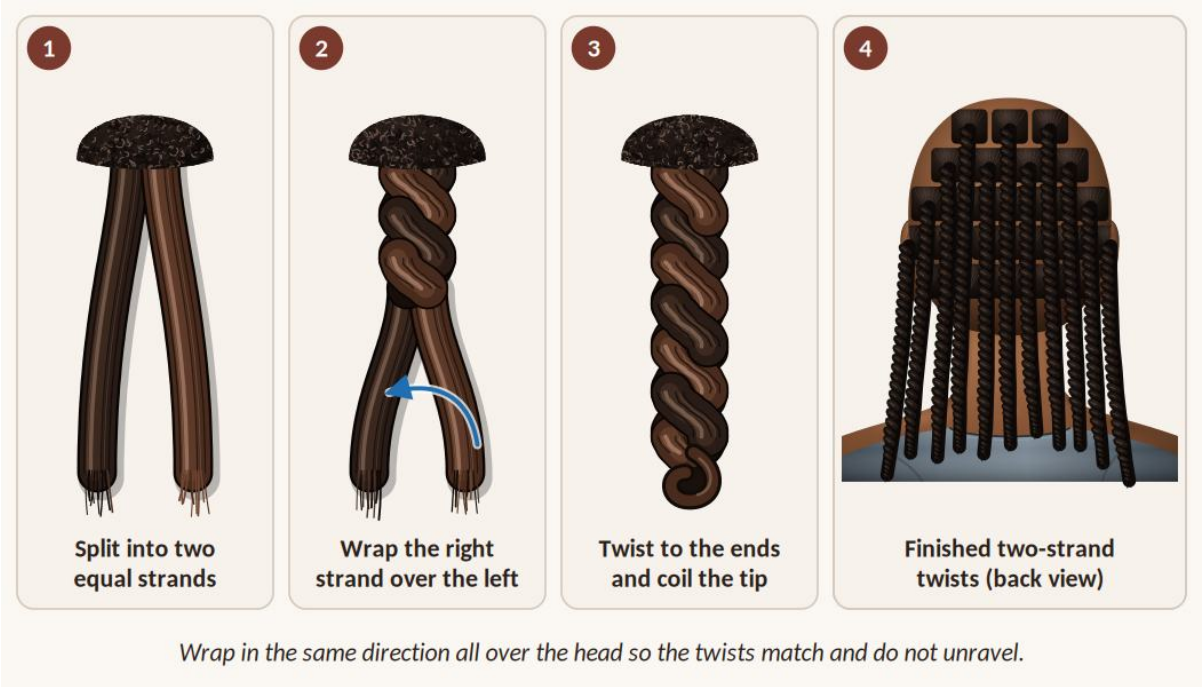


Figure 6.2 Two-strand twist step by step, and the finished style. Every twist on the head is wrapped in the same direction.

6.3.2 Flat twists

A flat twist lies on the scalp like a cornrow but uses two strands. Part a row, take a small piece at the front, split it into two, and as you wrap right over left, pick up a little hair from the row into the outer strand. Flat twists look softer than cornrows and put less tension on the scalp, so they are a good choice for clients with fragile edges.

6.3.3 Stopping twists from unravelling

- Wrap every twist in the same direction. If you change direction halfway round the head, the twists will not match and some will open.
- Twist each strand on itself before you wrap. This "locks" the rope.
- Use a light holding product such as mousse. Heavy oils make twists slip.
- Make strands equal. A thin strand wrapped round a thick one comes loose quickly.

6.4 Cornrows (Lines)

A cornrow is an underhand plait worked flat on the scalp. As you move along the row, you add a little loose hair to the outer strand at every stitch. This locks the plait to the scalp along its whole length. In Kenyan salons cornrows are usually called "lines", and a style where all the rows go from the front to the nape is called "all-back".

6.4.1 The underhand cornrow stitch

Figure 6.3 shows a close-up of one row. Work from the front hairline towards the nape unless the design says otherwise.

1. **Part the row.** Use the tail of the rat-tail comb to draw a clean parting on each side of the row. Clip the hair of the next rows out of the way.

2. **Start small.** At the hairline, take a small piece of hair from the front of the row. Split it into three equal strands.
3. **First stitch.** Pass the left strand under the centre strand. Then pass the right strand under the new centre. Keep your knuckles resting on the scalp so the stitch stays close.
4. **Pick up hair.** Before each crossing, use the index finger or the comb tail to take a little loose hair from the row just below the stitch. Join it to the outer strand, then cross that strand under the centre.
5. **Keep going.** Repeat: pick up, cross under, from left and right in turn. Take the same amount of hair each time so the row is the same size along its length.
6. **Leave the scalp.** When the row reaches the nape and there is no more loose hair to pick up, continue as an ordinary underhand plait to the ends.

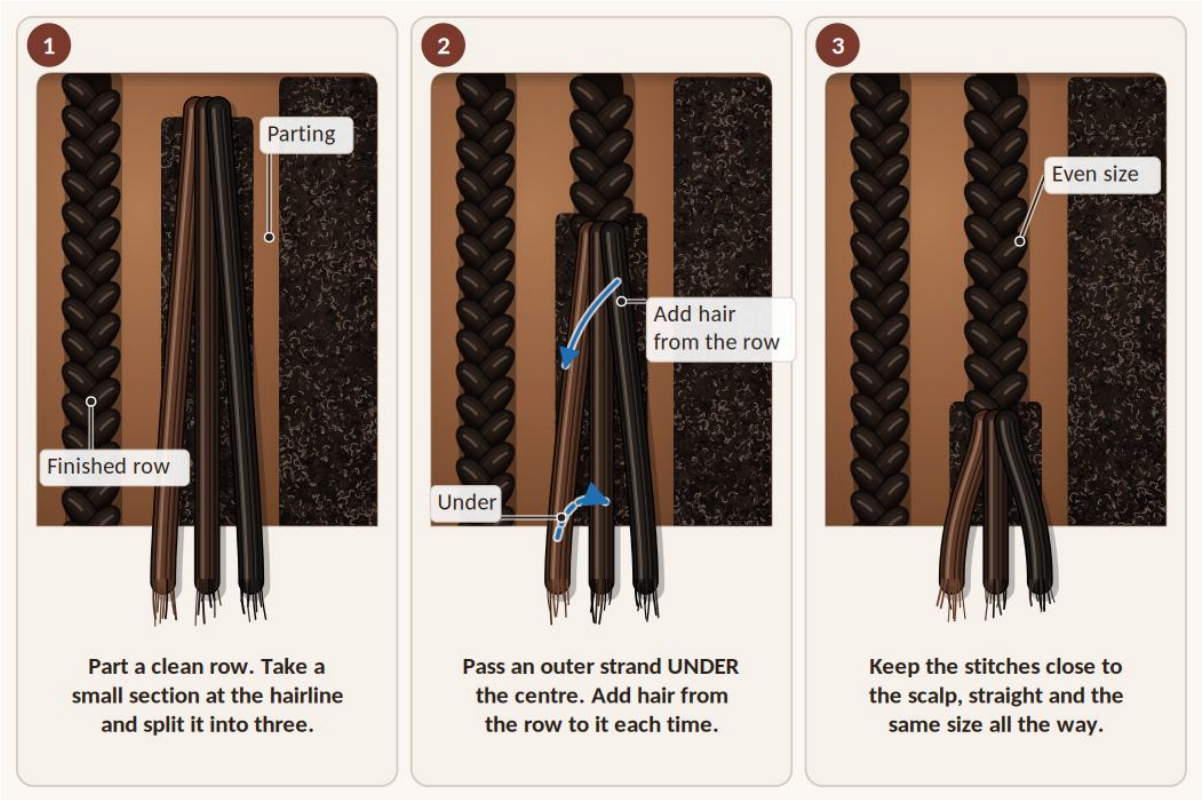


Figure 6.3 Close-up of the underhand cornrow stitch, seen from above with the front hairline at the top. The finished row on the left and the loose hair on the right show the partings either side of the working row.

6.4.2 Planning the partings

Clean partings make the style. Even a perfect stitch looks poor if the lines between the rows wander. Before you start:

- Agree the number and size of rows with the client. Show her pictures, and point out that small rows take longer and cost more.
- Find the centre of the head by lining up the comb with the nose and the middle of the nape. Part the centre row first for an even design, then work outwards to each side.
- Make each parting in one smooth stroke of the comb tail, from front to back. Comb the hair either side away from the parting and clip it.

- Check from the front and the back in the mirror. Re-part a crooked line now; it is impossible to fix once braided.
- Plan the rows over the ears so they curve neatly around them without pressing on the ear.

6.4.3 Cornrow designs

Once your straight rows are neat, you can make curved and patterned designs (Figure 6.4). The stitch does not change; only the path of the parting changes.

- **Straight back (all-back).** All rows run from the front hairline to the nape. Quick, neat and the best style for learners and school children.
- **Curved or side sweep.** The rows start along the front and curve to one side, behind the ear. Turn your body and the client's head as you go so you always braid towards yourself.
- **Patterned.** Wavy lines, zig-zags, circles round the crown, or "shuku" where all the rows meet at the top of the head. Draw the full design with the comb tail before braiding. For zig-zags, keep each turn gentle; sharp corners leave gaps.
- **Abuja lines.** A popular feed-in design where the front rows sweep up and the back rows go up from the nape, all ending in a high bun or ponytail.

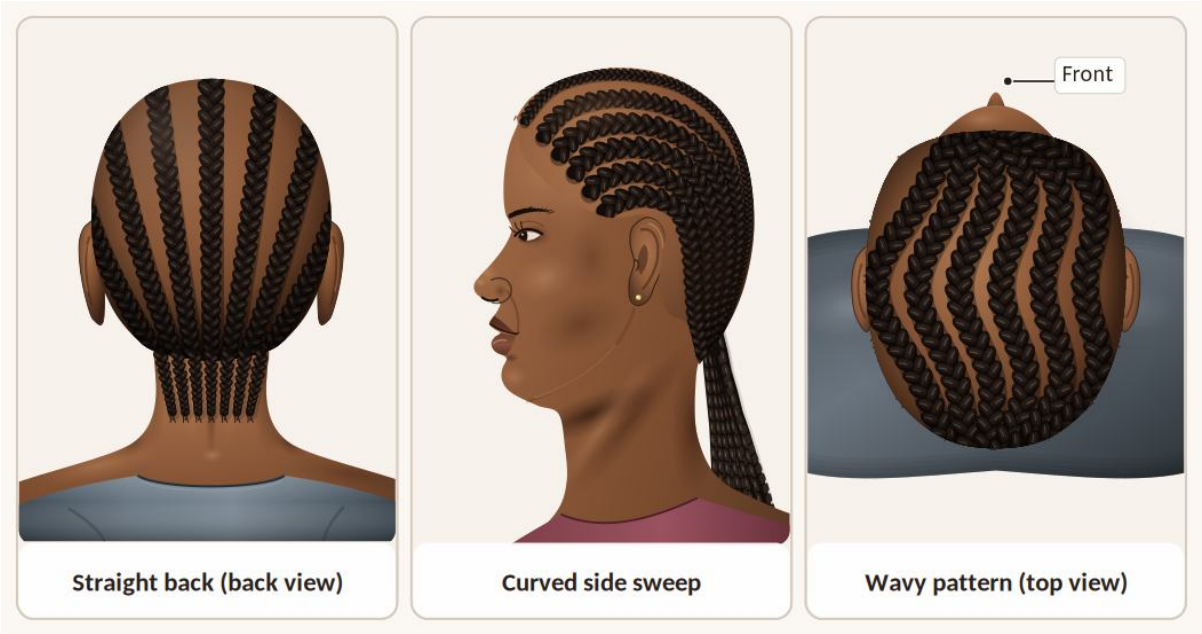


Figure 6.4 Three cornrow designs. All use the same underhand stitch; only the partings change.

6.4.4 Finishing the ends

Where the row leaves the scalp, continue with an underhand plait to the end of the hair. On natural hair, coil the tip with a little cream, or gather several tails into one soft covered band or a neat bun. Tails can also be tucked under the next row for a clean, short finish. Ends with extension hair are sealed differently; this is covered in Chapter 7, together with the burn risks of hot water sealing.

> **IN THE KENYAN SALON**
>
> On a Sunday afternoon many estate salons are full of school girls getting lines for the week. Most schools allow only simple straight-back lines with no extensions. Work quickly but gently: children's scalps are tender and their edges are easily damaged. Agree the price with the parent before you start, and accept payment by cash or M-Pesa when you finish.

6.5 Feed-In Braids

A feed-in braid is a cornrow that starts small with the client's own hair and gets thicker as you add small pieces of extension, one at a time. Kenyan clients often call these "Ghana weaving" or, in an up-style design, "Abuja lines". Because there is no knot of extension at the start, the row looks natural at the hairline and puts less weight on the delicate edges.

6.5.1 Preparing the extension pieces

Chapter 5 explained how to open, stretch and feather extension hair. For feed-ins, prepare a pile of small pieces before the client sits down. Pull pieces about the thickness of a matchstick for the first additions and slightly thicker pieces for the back. Lay them on a clean towel, sorted by size. Pre-stretched extensions save time because the ends are already tapered.

6.5.2 Adding the extension

1. Part the row and start the first two or three stitches with natural hair only (Figure 6.5, step 1).
2. Fold a small piece of extension in half. Lay the fold over the centre strand, or place one half with each outer strand, so that the extension now runs with your hair (step 2).
3. Make the next stitch firmly so the extension is gripped by the natural hair. Keep picking up hair from the row as normal.
4. Add another small piece every two or three stitches. The row grows gradually thicker towards the back (step 3).
5. Stop adding when the row has reached the thickness agreed with the client. Braid to the end and finish the tail (Chapter 7 shows sealing).



Figure 6.5 Feed-in braid steps. The extension is shown in a warmer brown so you can see it. In practice you match the colour to the client's hair or her chosen colour.

WORKED EXAMPLE: HAIR AND PRODUCTS FOR FEED-IN LINES

A client wants 10 medium feed-in lines to the nape. From experience, one packet of pre-stretched extension feeds about 3 lines of this length. Prices are approximate, 2026.

Packets: 10 lines ÷ 3 lines per packet = 3.3 packets. You cannot buy part of a packet, so buy 4 packets.
Hair cost: 4 × KSh 250 = KSh 1,000.

Products used on this client:
Braid spray 10 ml: KSh 550 ÷ 500 ml = KSh 1.10 per ml; 10 × 1.10 = KSh 11
Moulding (edge) gel 10 g: KSh 500 ÷ 500 g = KSh 1.00 per g; 10 × 1.00 = KSh 10
Hair food 10 g: KSh 450 ÷ 500 g = KSh 0.90 per g; 10 × 0.90 = KSh 9
One neck strip: KSh 300 ÷ 100 = KSh 3
Products total = 11 + 10 + 9 + 3 = KSh 33.

Total materials = 1,000 + 33 = **KSh 1,033**.

Quote: with a labour charge of KSh 1,000, the client pays KSh 1,000 + KSh 1,000 for hair = KSh 2,000. The salon's products (KSh 33) come out of the labour charge. Any leftover hair from the fourth packet belongs to the client, because she paid for it; offer it to her for a later touch-up.

6.6 Tension and Protecting the Hairline

Tension is the most important safety skill in this chapter. Many clients believe that tight braids look neater and last longer. This is wrong. Very tight braids damage the hair follicle, cause pain and bumps, and over time cause permanent bald patches at the edges. Your rows should be **firm at the root, but never tight**.

6.6.1 Signs that braiding is too tight

Look and ask all through the service, not only at the end. Figure 6.6 compares correct tension with braids that are too tight.

- The client says it hurts, winces, or holds her head.
- The skin at the root of the row is pulled up into small ridges or "tents".
- Small bumps, like pimples, appear at the roots, often with redness.
- The client cannot move her eyebrows or forehead freely, or gets a headache.
- At later visits: short broken hairs, thin edges, a hairline that has moved back at the temples.

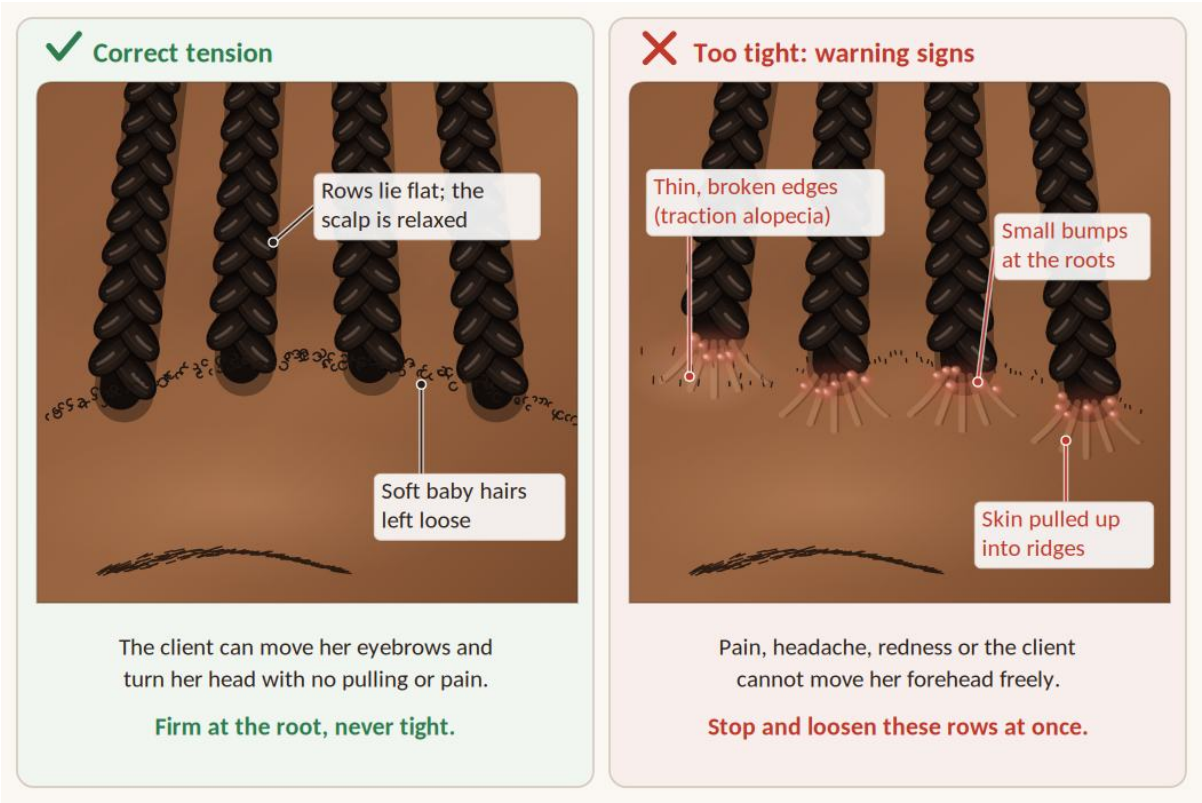


Figure 6.6 Correct tension compared with braids that are too tight. Bumps, ridges and thinning edges are warning signs of traction alopecia.

6.6.2 Traction alopecia

Traction alopecia is hair loss caused by steady pulling on the hair. You learned its signs in Chapter 4. In braiding, it is caused by three things together: **tension** (how hard you pull), **weight** (how much extension hangs on each root) and **duration** (how long the style stays in). It begins with thin, broken edges. If the pulling continues month after month, the follicles scar and the hair never grows back.

Protect every client with these rules:

- Leave the finest baby hairs at the edges loose, or braid them very gently into bigger rows.
- Make the rows at the hairline slightly larger, and add no extension there; start feed-ins small.
- Do not pull the hairline in a different direction from the way it grows.
- Keep extensions light. Long, heavy hair on small rows pulls hard on every root.

- Advise the client to keep the style no longer than 4–6 weeks and to rest her hair between styles (aftercare in Chapter 8).
- Never braid over a sore, inflamed or flaky scalp, open wounds, or signs of ringworm or impetigo. Do not serve. Refer the client to a health worker (Chapter 4).

SAFETY FIRST

If a client complains of pain, stop. Undo or loosen the tight row straight away; do not tell her that the pain "will go after two days". Clean your combs between clients (Chapter 3), because shared dirty combs spread lice and fungal infections. If you notice bald patches, scaly rings or weeping sores, stop the service politely and refer the client to a health worker. Take extra care with children: use light tension, large rows and short sessions.

Table 6.2 Tension problems and what to do

What you see or hear	What it means	What to do
Client winces or says "it is pulling"	Row too tight	Stop; loosen or redo the row with less pull
Skin ridges at the root	Scalp is being lifted	Redo the row; take larger sections at the hairline
Small red bumps after braiding	Follicles irritated by tension	Loosen the affected rows; advise cool rinse and no tight styles; refer if bumps are painful or full of pus
Thin, broken edges at consultation	Early traction alopecia	Leave the edges out; suggest loose, low-tension styles; explain the cause
Smooth bald patch at the temples	Advanced traction alopecia	Do not braid that area; refer to a health worker

COMMON MISTAKES

- Pulling the hairline very tight "so the lines last longer".
- Taking different amounts of hair at each stitch, so the row is fat in some places and thin in others.
- Lifting the hands away from the scalp, so the row stands up and looks loose.
- Parting in several short strokes, which gives wavy, broken partings.
- Adding a big piece of extension at the start of a feed-in, which leaves a lump at the hairline.
- Changing the twist direction halfway round the head.
- Using too much hair food, so the style looks greasy and collects dust.

6.7 Time, Price and Quality

A good braider knows how long a style will take and what it should cost. This lets you book clients without keeping anyone waiting, and quote an honest price before you start. Table 6.3 gives typical figures for a town salon. Your speed will improve with practice.

Table 6.3 Typical times and prices (approximate, 2026)

Style	Typical time (skilled braider)	Typical price, town salon
Straight-back lines, own hair, 6–10 rows	1–2 hours	KSh 500–800
Curved or patterned lines, own hair	1.5–2.5 hours	KSh 700–1,000
Feed-in lines (Ghana weaving), 8–12 rows	2–3 hours	KSh 800–1,000 plus hair
Two-strand twists, own hair or with extensions	2–4 hours	KSh 1,500–3,000
Box braids (Chapter 7), for comparison	4–7 hours	KSh 2,000–3,500 plus hair

WORKED EXAMPLE: TIME AND EARNINGS FOR STRAIGHT-BACK LINES

A client wants 8 straight-back lines in her own hair. You take about 10 minutes per row. The salon charges KSh 700 and products cost about KSh 20.

Braiding: 8 rows × 10 min = 80 min
Parting and planning: 15 min
Finishing (ends, spray, mirror check): 10 min
Total time = 80 + 15 + 10 = 105 min = 1 h 45 min = 1.75 h

Earnings per hour = (700 − 20) ÷ 1.75 = 680 ÷ 1.75 = about **KSh 389 per hour**.

If you speed up to 8 minutes per row with the same quality, the job takes 64 + 25 = 89 min, and you earn 680 × 60 ÷ 89 = about KSh 458 per hour.

6.7.1 Quality check before the client leaves

Hand the client a mirror and check together, front, sides and back:

- Partings are straight (or follow the design) and the same width.
- Every row is the same size from start to end, and close to the scalp.
- No loose hairs stick out of the stitches; feed-in additions are hidden.
- The edges are smooth and not pulled; baby hairs are soft.
- Ends are neat and secure.
- The client is comfortable, with no pain, ridges or bumps.

Finishing products, aftercare advice and cleaning up after the service are covered in Chapter 8.

GREEN TIP

Fill your spray bottle with clean water and mist lightly instead of wetting the hair under a running tap. Use braid spray and hair food sparingly: a little on the fingertips is enough, and less product means less waste and less build-up on the scalp. Buy products in large refillable containers and decant into small bottles at the station. Keep clean leftover extension pieces in a labelled bag for the same client's touch-up. Sweep up hair offcuts separately; natural hair can be composted (Chapter 3).

Practical task 6.1: Straight-back cornrows on a head dummy

Tools and equipment

- Head dummy (mannequin) on a clamp
- Rat-tail comb and wide-tooth comb
- Duckbill clips
- Spray bottle with water
- Scissors
- Hand mirror and timer

Materials

- Braid spray
- Hair food or cream
- Soft covered bands
- Clean towel and apron
- Disinfectant for combs

Steps

1. Put on your apron, wash your hands and set up a clean workstation.
2. Detangle the dummy's hair from ends to roots and mist it lightly.
3. Find the centre line from the forehead to the nape. Part the centre row about 2.5 cm wide and clip the rest away.
4. Braid the centre row with the underhand stitch, picking up the same amount of hair at each stitch. Time yourself.
5. Part and braid the rows on each side in turn, working outwards, until there are 8 rows. Curve the side rows neatly round the ears.
6. Continue each row as an underhand plait to the end and finish the tips.
7. Check the style with a mirror from the front, sides and back. Note any crooked partings or uneven rows.
8. Clean and disinfect your combs, tidy the station and record your total time.

Safety

- Keep scissors closed and away from the edge of the trolley.
- Practise light, even tension even on the dummy, so it becomes a habit.
- Stand with a straight back; adjust the clamp height so you are not bending.

Practical task 6.2: Feed-in lines on a client

Tools and equipment

- Styling chair and mirror
- Rat-tail comb, wide-tooth comb
- Clips and spray bottle
- Scissors
- Client record card

Materials

- Pre-stretched extension (packets as calculated)
- Braid spray, edge gel, hair food
- Cape, towel and neck strip
- Apron

Steps

1. Consult the client: agree the number of rows, design, colour, time and price. Record them on the card.
2. Drape the client and put on your apron. Analyse the hair, scalp and edges; do not proceed if there are signs of infection or inflamed skin.
3. Confirm the hair has been prepared (washed, conditioned, blow-dried, detangled) as in Chapter 5.
4. Calculate and prepare the extension pieces, sorted from small to larger.
5. Part the first row. Start with natural hair only, then add small pieces every two or three stitches.
6. Complete all rows, checking the client's comfort after every row.
7. Finish the ends, apply a light mist of braid spray and smooth the edges with a little gel.
8. Do a mirror check with the client, collect payment and update the record card.

Safety

- Leave fragile baby hairs out and add no extension at the hairline.
- Stop and loosen any row that causes pain, ridges or bumps.
- Use clean, disinfected combs and a fresh neck strip for every client.

Chapter summary

- All styles in this chapter are built from a few hand movements: crossing three strands, wrapping two strands, and picking up hair along a row.
- In an overhand plait the outer strand crosses over the centre; in an underhand plait it crosses under. The underhand plait is the cornrow stitch.
- Two-strand twists must have equal strands, be wrapped in one direction and have coiled ends.
- Cornrows need clean partings, the same amount of hair picked up at each stitch, and hands that stay close to the scalp.
- Feed-in braids start with natural hair and add small pieces of extension gradually, so they look natural and are lighter at the edges.
- Tension must be firm but never tight. Pain, ridges, bumps and thin edges are warning signs of traction alopecia.
- Knowing the time and cost of each style lets you book clients well and quote honest prices.

Check your competence

- [ ] I can position myself and the client comfortably for a long braiding service.
- [ ] I can make an even three-strand plait by the overhand and the underhand method.
- [ ] I can make two-strand twists that are even and do not unravel.
- [ ] I can part clean, straight rows and plan a curved or patterned cornrow design.
- [ ] I can braid cornrows close to the scalp, the same size from front to back.
- [ ] I can add extension gradually to make neat feed-in braids.
- [ ] I can keep tension safe, recognise the signs of over-tight braiding and correct them.
- [ ] I can refuse to braid over an unhealthy scalp and refer the client politely.
- [ ] I can estimate the time, materials and price of a cornrow, twist or feed-in style.

Practice questions

1. Explain the difference between an overhand and an underhand plait. Which one is used for cornrows, and why?
2. List, in order, the main steps of braiding one cornrow from the front hairline to the nape.
3. Give two reasons why feed-in braids are kinder to the hairline than braids that start with a knot of extension.
4. Name four signs that a client's braids are too tight. What should you do if you see them?
5. What is traction alopecia? Name the three factors that cause it in braiding and give three ways to prevent it.
6. Calculation: A client wants 12 feed-in lines. One packet of pre-stretched extension feeds 3 lines. How many packets are needed, and what is the hair cost at KSh 250 per packet?
7. Calculation: A braider does 10 lines of own hair at 9 minutes per line, plus 30 minutes for parting and finishing. The style costs KSh 800 and products cost KSh 20. Work out the total time and the earnings per hour.
8. Oral: A mother brings her 7-year-old daughter, whose edges are already thin, and asks you to braid the lines "very tight so they last two months". What will you tell her, and what will you do?
9. Give three ways to stop two-strand twists from unravelling.
10. Practical: On a head dummy, plan and braid a curved side-sweep design of 6 cornrows. Your trainer will check partings, row size, closeness to the scalp, tension and finishing.

Enjoyed the sample?

The full **Cosmetology Level 3** study guide has 15 chapters across all three core units: Plaiting and Braiding, Barbering, and Manicure and Pedicure. It has 95 realistic, labelled illustrations, practical task cards, hygiene and safety guidance, costing examples, practice questions with answers and three 200-mark mock practical assessments.

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