

Hair contouring is the magic way to accent your face shape with highlights



by Caitlin Miller [Follow](#)



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How to highlight your hair based on your face shape

You're likely familiar with the concept of contouring — sculpting something to look aesthetically pleasing. We've watch Kim Kardashian do this with makeup to make her nose, cheeks and neck slimmer and trimmer. We've even seen the trend pop up with self-tanner, a trend known as tantouring, where self-tanner is used to sculpt perfect facial contours.

But now the sculpted concept has jumped to another part of the head: your hair. Hair contouring, a term coined by Marc Trinder, a U.K.-based stylist and art director at [Charles Worthington](#), refers to the method of placing hair color in a way that uses light and shadows to alter the appearance of the face. So how exactly does this trend work? We tapped the minds of colorist Miguel Angarita from [Mizu Hair Salon in New York City](#) and Nick Penna, owner and lead stylist of [SalonCapri](#) in Boston, to get the details.

"Hair contouring is when you apply highlights and lowlights — so dark and light tones — on your hair to actually contour your face, similar to makeup contouring," explains Angarita.

Using your hair to accentuate your face? Can this be? “As a colorist, you can apply color to parts of the hair – most commonly, with face framing highlights to highlight and accentuate features,” Angarita insists. “You can also use it to alter face shape to seem slimmer and more defined.”

How it works and how to ask your stylist for it



There are a few things to keep in mind when it comes to hair contouring. The trend is based on the idea of strategically placed highlights and lowlights, so first, it's important to think about color. The combination of highlights and shadows is what makes hair contouring work.

“A light color shade draws the eyes towards the area and a darker shade (placed near a lighter shade) works to draw the eyes away from that area,” explains Penna. “Overall, hair contouring is meant to be subtle and natural looking. There should never be a major difference between the lighter and darker shades that your stylists will use,” he adds.

Needless to say, as a form of highlights, this more intricate balayage technique requires an experienced colorist that can literally "paint" on your highlights or lowlights on very specific parts of your hair – i.e., this isn't a 'do you can try with an at-home kit. You need someone to match up colors just right.

Secondly, as anyone who's had a great highlight job (or worse, a bad one) knows, the placement of the highlights is everything. And not only is the placement key, but like a good cut, it should vary based on your unique face shape.

"Go into the salon and talk to your stylist about your face shape. What you like about the shape and what areas may bother you a bit," says Penna. "The goal of hair contouring is to help a woman highlight her best features or hide the ones that may make her a little self-conscious."

Thinking of trying the hair contouring trend for your next salon visit? Because face shape is critical in hair contouring, we've created this cheat sheet to help you know how to ask your stylist for the perfect 'do specifically for you.

Round faces



Image: Terese Condella/SheKnows

Those with a round face generally have very strong bone structure but wish to elongate their face. Ask your stylist to apply light tones around the hairline, from ear to ear and then paint on darker tones underneath the ears and toward the lower ends of the hair. "This brightens and elongates the face, while giving your face more of a point," says Angarita.

Oval faces



Image: Terese Condella/SheKnows

Those with a more oval shape can have a bit of fun with their contouring. "An oval shape is really most people's ideal face shape, so hair contouring for someone with an oval shape may end up being painted strands all around the face and roots in an effort to just brightening up the face and skin tone and to make it look a little thicker," says Penna. To accentuate an oval face, ask your colorist to add depth with a thick texture and shine.

Square faces



Image: Terese Condella/SheKnows

Those with a square face have a more prominent jaw and have wider facial features, and similar to a round face, the goal with contouring is to elongate. "Colorists should use multi-tonal layers of light and dark highlights or lowlights that are applied to the corners of the face and around the jawline and temples, says Angarita. This will soften facial lines and add more depth to the face, adding overall balance and highlighting the facial structure, he adds. Specifically, ask your colorist for darker shades right next to the face or cheeks to draw the eyes up and down and lighter shades towards the top of the head and at the end of the strands.

Heart-shaped faces



Image: Terese Condella/SheKnows

Finally, those with a heart-shaped face should aim to make their faces appear more oval and widen the jaw area. To do this with color, ask your colorist to weave light highlighted pieces around the jawline, ears and tips to soften the bottom half of the face and reserve darker shades for the roots.