One Touch Beauty Salon — Bonamoussadi, Douala

Braiding Foundations

Preparing hair, making sections, and keeping clean parts

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A beautiful braid begins long before the first strand is crossed. It begins with the wash, with gentle detangling, and above all with preparation: clean, moisturised hair, divided into equal sections, with clean, straight parts. That invisible work decides whether a style will look good, feel comfortable, and last.

This short book teaches the foundations of braiding, step by step: knowing the hair, preparing it, holding your tools, dividing into sections, making clean parts, and braiding with even tension. Read it slowly, practise each chapter on a training head or a patient volunteer, and the quality of your braids will change.

Chapter 1 — Know the hair before you braid

The Afro and mixed-texture hair most often braided in the salon is fragile at the ends and strong at the root when it is healthy. Before braiding, look and feel: is the hair dry, breaking, full of flakes? Is the scalp sore or irritated? If the scalp is unwell, do not braid: treat first, or advise the client to see a specialist.

Always ask the client how her hair behaves: does it break easily? Does pulling hurt? Her answers guide your gentleness. A good braider listens before she touches.

Note length and thickness too: very short hair needs fine, short braids; long, thick hair can carry bigger ones. Fitting the style to the hair — never the other way round — is the first mark of the trade.

Remember:

- Inspect the scalp before any work
- Listen to the client: breakage, pain, habits
- Match braid size to length and thickness

Chapter 2 — Wash and detangle without breakage

Never braid dirty hair: dirt sealed inside a braid itches and harms the scalp. Wash with a gentle shampoo, massaging the scalp with the fingertips — never the nails. Rinse thoroughly: leftover shampoo becomes white flakes inside the braid.

After washing, apply a detangling conditioner, then detangle starting at the ends and working up to the root, in small sections, with a wide-tooth comb or your fingers. Never tear at a knot: loosen it gently, or snip only the knot itself with the client's agreement.

Dry without roughness: blot with a towel, then air-dry or use warm — not hot — air. Hair that is still wet braids badly and can mildew under extensions; hair that is bone dry snaps. Aim for the middle: dry to the touch, supple in the hand.

Remember:

- Always wash before braiding
- Detangle from ends to root, in small sections
- Braid hair that is dry to the touch but supple

Chapter 3 — Moisturise and prepare the hair

Preparation decides how a style wears. On clean, detangled hair, apply a light cream or oil, section by section. Moisture protects the hair through the weeks the braids will stay in, and it gives the parts a clean, polished look.

If you are adding extensions, prepare them in advance: stretch them, split them into small, equal bundles, and keep them within reach. Hunting for hair in the middle of a braid breaks your rhythm and your evenness.

Seat the client comfortably, at a good height, with a clean towel over her shoulders. A tidy workstation — comb, scissors, clips, cream, extensions — is half of a clean job.

Remember:

- Moisturise section by section before braiding
- Prepare and equalise extensions in advance
- A tidy station makes a clean job

Chapter 4 — Divide into equal sections

Sectioning is the skeleton of the style. Start with big separations: first in two (ear to ear, then forehead to nape), then in four, then into rows. Clip each section up so it cannot mix with its neighbours.

Equal sections are the secret of even braids: if one section is bigger than its neighbour, its braid will be bigger, will pull differently, and the style will look unbalanced. Take time to compare each new section with the last before you braid it.

Work row by row, always in the same order — for example from the nape upward. A constant order means no area is forgotten and the parts line up from one side of the head to the other.

Remember:

- Big separations first, rows second
- Compare each section with the one before
- Always work in the same order

Chapter 5 — Make clean parts

A clean part is drawn with the tail of the comb, in one slow, confident stroke. Set the point at the start and draw the line along your planned division, without wobbling or going back. If a part strays, redo it at once: a part corrected later costs ten times the time.

Tidy the part: stray baby hairs settle with a fingertip of gel or edge cream. Use very little — too much dries white and dirties the style.

Check your parts from far as well as near: step back and look at the whole head. Parts that look straight up close can form a broken line from a distance. The overall view is the braider's quality control.

Remember:

- Draw slowly, in one confident stroke
- Settle stray hairs with very little product
- Check from a distance as well as up close

Chapter 6 — Braid with even tension

Tension is the soul of braiding. Too loose, and the braid unravels in days; too tight, and it hurts, breaks the edges, and can injure the scalp. Good tension is firm but painless: the client should never wince. If she says it pulls, loosen — always.

Keep the same grip from start to finish: the three strands cross in the same rhythm, your hands stay close to the head at the root, then travel down the braid without jerks. An even gesture makes an even braid.

At the end of each braid, check: same size as its neighbours, same length, tip neatly finished. A successful style is one where all the braids resemble each other like sisters.

Remember:

- Firm but never painful — listen to the client
- Same grip, same rhythm, start to finish
- Compare each finished braid with its neighbours

Remember — the checklist

- Hair observed, and the client listened to, before work
- A gentle wash and patient detangling
- Light moisture, section by section
- Equal sections, row by row
- Parts drawn slowly and checked from a distance
- Tension firm, even, and pain-free

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