



Pomades and Pastes and Clays, Oh My!

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Hairstyling is hairy, but the right product can help you master your mane.

Unless he's gone full "Mr. Clean," a man's hair often is his trademark. Whether they're short and spiky or long and luscious, carefully coiffed or casually tousled, his locks define his look, and his look defines his lifestyle.

But hair is a wild animal. Unless you're a barber or a beautician, you may not feel like you have the confidence, the skills or the experience to properly tame it. No matter how high or low your grooming IQ is, however, you're never more than a few minutes from a good hair day. All you need is the right hair product.

But what, exactly, is the right hair product? With so many styling products to choose from, it's hard to know. What's forming cream vs. pomade, for example, or forming cream vs. fiber? What's the best hair gel for men who want a natural look, and the best hair gel for men who want that sharp, slicked-back wet look? What's the difference between molding cream and hair clay?

Styling is a lot simpler when you know the fundamentals, so consult this styling-product study guide the next time you find yourself fighting with your follicles.

Hair Gel



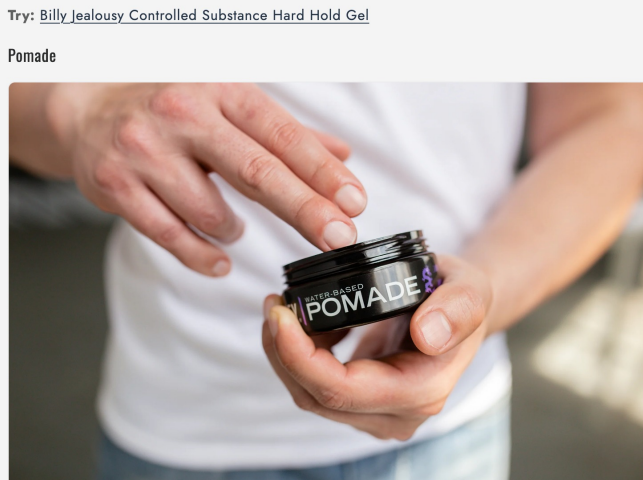
The basics: Hair gel offers maximum all-day hold with an old-school "wet" appearance. Except that gelled hair isn't wet at all; instead, it's hard, crunchy and brittle — which means not even a gale-force wind will move it out of place.

Pros and cons: Hair gel's hold is its best attribute. Also, it washes out easily with water and won't clog your pores if you're prone to acne. On the other hand, gels often contain alcohol, which may cause them to flake in ways that can be mistaken for dandruff. Also, gel tends to dry the hair out, which can leave it looking dull and damaged.

When to use it: Hair gel is best for short and shapely hairstyles, like spikes and ducktails.

Try: [Billy Jealousy Controlled Substance Hard Hold Gel](#)

Pomade



The basics: Pomade is gel-alternative that's typically used in slicked-back hairstyles, providing the same "wet" look as gel with less stiffness and no flakes. Although there are water-based pomades, traditional pomades that were originally popularized in the 1950s are oil-based. Hence the name "greasers" for the groovy guys who used them.

Pros and cons: Unlike gel, pomade won't dry out your hair. So it's better for your locks. And because it's not as rigid, restyling it is easier. While water-based pomade will dissolve easily and have no impact on sensitive skin, the same isn't true for oil-based pomade, which can be tricky to wash out and may cause breakouts.

When to use it: Pomade is ideal for shiny, slicked-back hairstyles like pompadours. It's also great for guys with thick and curly hair because it offers high hold and a frizz-free finish.



Try: [Billy Jealousy Lunatic Fringe Water-Based Pomade](#), [Plaster Master Strong Hold Pomade](#)

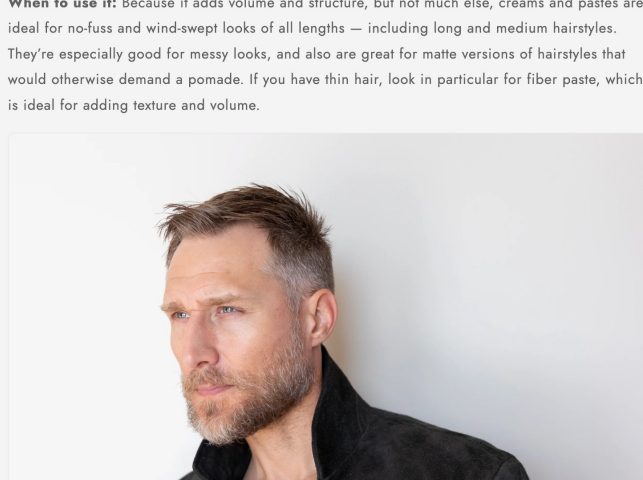
Paste and Cream



The basics: Hair pastes and creams are thick, creamy and tacky (as in sticky, not gauche). Generally speaking, they offer all the hold of gel and pomade, but with a matte finish that looks dry instead of wet and touchable instead of ... well, untouchable. That said, not all pastes and creams are identical. Some offer more or less hold than others, and more or less shine, which makes them extremely versatile.

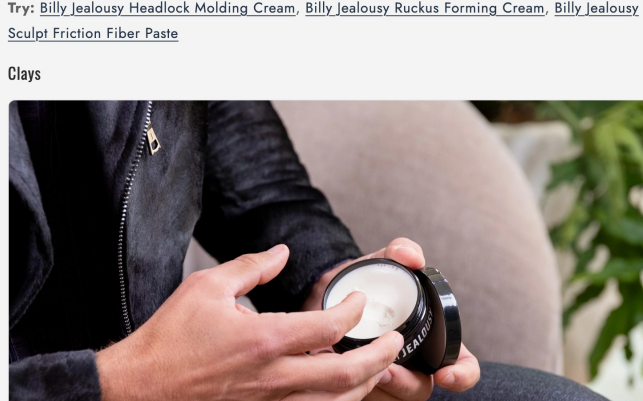
Pros and cons: Pastes and creams adds hold to your hair without stiffness or shine. That's great for guys who want a natural and easy look — but maybe not for guys who want a rock-solid style with high drama and serious architecture.

When to use it: Because it adds volume and structure, but not much else, creams and pastes are ideal for no-fuss and wind-swept looks of all lengths — including long and medium hairstyles. They're especially good for messy looks, and also are great for matte versions of hairstyles that would otherwise demand a pomade. If you have thin hair, look in particular for fiber paste, which is ideal for adding texture and volume.



Try: [Billy Jealousy Headlock Molding Cream](#), [Billy Jealousy Ruckus Forming Cream](#), [Billy Jealousy Sculpt Friction Fiber Paste](#)

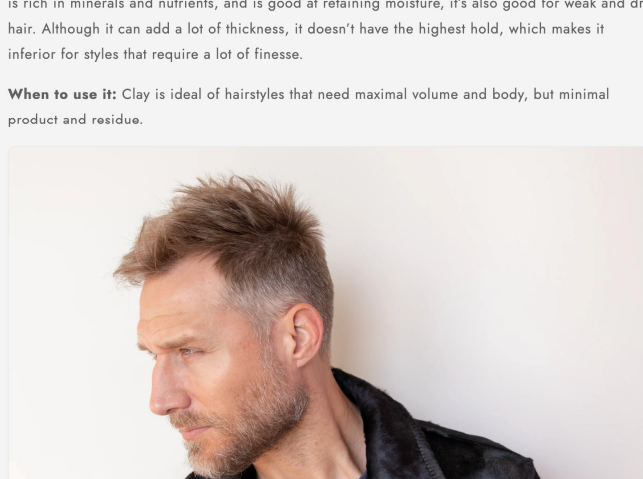
Clays



The basics: In function, hair clay isn't all that different from hair cream or hair paste. In form, however, it's distinct thanks to its signature ingredient — clay. Specifically, bentonite, a natural substance that's derived from volcanic ash. It provides a medium hold and a matte finish, and makes hair look thicker and fuller.

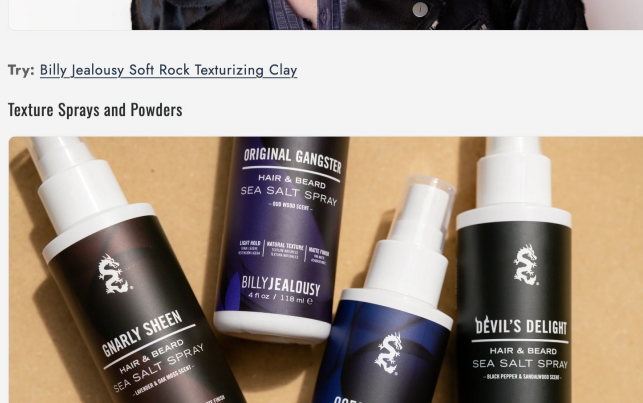
Pros and cons: Bentonite's volumizing properties make clay ideal for thinning hair. Because clay is rich in minerals and nutrients, and is good at retaining moisture, it's also good for weak and dry hair. Although it can add a lot of thickness, it doesn't have the highest hold, which makes it inferior for styles that require a lot of finesse.

When to use it: Clay is ideal of hairstyles that need maximal volume and body, but minimal product and residue.



Try: [Billy Jealousy Soft Rock Texturizing Clay](#)

Texture Sprays and Powders



The basics: Texture products come in spray or powder form and are designed to add easy volume to your hairstyle.

Pros and cons: If it's volume you seek, texture sprays and powders will give it to you quickly and easily. They're easy and breezy, with a super light hold — which is great for on-the-go hair styling and natural, just-out-of-bed looks, but not so great for styles that need serious hold.

When to use it: If you have thin hair and desire a natural look with just a little bit of hold, texture sprays and powders have you covered. For a bit more hold, use them as a pre-styler before you apply another product, like a pomade.

Try: [Billy Jealousy Devil's Delight Texture Sea Salt Spray](#)

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