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Show Your Beard Stubble Who's Boss

You've decided not to shave your scruff; now what?

Your dad had a beard before beards were cool. Now both your brother and your brother-in-law have one. So do your best buddy, your cousin and your barber. At least half your co-workers have beards, and almost everyone you see on TV is sporting them, too. But not you. So far, you've refused to jump on the beard bandwagon. Over a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, however, you're starting to question your commitment to a clean-shaven face.

Perhaps you've been working from home. And you've almost certainly been going out less. That means you've probably given your razor more days off than it's used to getting. And you know what? You kind of like the results.

You're not alone. There are lots of reasons to love facial hair. It's rugged and handsome, for one. But that's not all. It also can make you look older if you're baby-faced, and younger if you're starting to wrinkle. It can protect your skin from blemishes. It can even filter allergens and pollutants from the air you breathe. And best of all, it requires a lot less effort than shaving your face each and every morning.

Still, you're not sure: Are you really a beard guy? If you're not, that's OK. Not everyone is. But that doesn't mean you're stuck with a naked face. If you're tired of shaving, but can't see yourself growing a full-blown beard, there's an in-between option that can give you all the benefits of a beard without all the bravado: stubble.

You've had stubble before. Every morning when you wake up, in fact. But if you're going to keep it instead of shave it, there are three things you'll need to know in order to master the look:

You can have long stubble or short stubble.

If you're going to have a stubble beard, the first thing you need to decide is how long it's going to be. Generally speaking, it takes about three days for your 5-o'clock shadow to graduate from scruff to stubble. Most guys, however, let their stubble grow for a little while longer than that. For a shorter, neater look, five-day stubble should give you optimal growth. Although length varies from guy to guy, that should be a length of approximately 2 millimeters. For stubble that's slightly longer and fuller, 10 days of growth — 4 to 5 millimeters — is a good rule of thumb. Anything longer than that will put you into full-beard territory.

You'll still need to shave.

In theory, what makes stubble great is that it's no-fuss and maintenance-free. In reality, though, growing stubble that's sharp instead of sloppy does take some care and effort — and yes, even a razor.

Here's how to grow, style and maintain the perfect stubble beard:

1. **Take your vitamins:** When your facial hair is short, you can't hide behind its length, volume or style. What you see is what you get. For that reason, it's important to have stubble that's strong, healthy, even and consistent. Your genetics have a hand in this, but so does your diet. To ensure you get the nutrients your beard needs, consider taking supplements like biotin, zinc, vitamin B and magnesium, all of which can facilitate faster, healthier hair growth.
2. **First, grow it long:** If you're growing a stubble beard from scratch, you need to create a canvas of facial hair to work from. To do that, grow your beard out for about a week before you attempt to trim or style your stubble. Doing so ensures that you have stubble that's full and even. If you try to trim it too early, you might end up with patchy stubble that's longer in some spots and shorter in others.
3. **Prep your face:** When your beard is long enough, it's time to trim. Before you do so, however, you'll need to prepare your face, just like you do when you're shaving. Start by washing your face with a face exfoliator that will prime your beard by removing dead skin and dirt. To find the best exfoliating face wash for men who are growing a stubble beard, look for something that's effective but gentle, like Billy Jealousy Liquid Sand Exfoliating Facial Cleanser. Next, it's a good idea to apply a pre-shave oil like Billy Jealousy CBD Pre-Shave Oil, which will soften your facial hair and make it easier to trim.
4. **Trim:** Now, finally, it's time to trim. If you want to wear permanent stubble, you'll need to invest in a decent beard trimmer to do the job. Depending on your desired length, use a guard that's 1 to 5 millimeters in length. It's a good idea to start longer and then reduce the length by half a millimeter at a time until you find your perfect length.
5. **Shape and shave:** For a polished look, you need to break out your razor to shave around the edges. Apply your favorite shaving cream — Billy Jealousy Hydroplane Super-Slick Shave Cream is a good choice — to your cheeks and neck, then shape your stubble by shaving distinct neck and cheek lines. Your neck line should start about an inch above your Adam's apple and follow your natural jawline; everything below that should be shaved. For your cheek line, imagine a straight or curved line (your choice) from the bottom of each nostril to your sideburns, then shave everything above it. You can buy plastic beard "templates" to help you draw and shave a clean line if you need guard rails. Finally, apply after-shave lotion like Billy Jealousy Shaved Ice Cooling After-Shave to soothe the shaved portions of your skin.

It that sounds like a lot of work, it really isn't: The whole routine should only take a few minutes. And once you've got your stubble established, you only need to do steps three through five every two to four days, depending on how quickly your beard grows.

Stubble doesn't have to be scratchy.

If there's one downside to stubble, it's that it often is rough and itchy. But it doesn't have to be. Regularly applying a beard moisturizer like Billy Jealousy Beard Quencher and a beard oil like Billy Jealousy Devil's Delight Beard Oil will keep your stubble comfortable, touchable and kissable.

Still think you're not a beard guy? The handsome, scruff-dusted dude in the mirror begs to differ.

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