



Gelling 101

WHAT YOU'LL NEED (covers 1 head + touch ups):

Round plastic or pyrex container with lid (not square – gel gets stuck in the corners) (suggestion: ZipLoc disposable 2 cup round container with screw off lid...important to have screw top for opening container full of hot gel without spilling!)

Twelve(12) packets of **Knox** gelatin (do not use bulk brand gel, it dissolves in the water...ie. when the girls are swimming!);

1 cup lukewarm water (using lukewarm water will ensure no lumps or clumps);

plastic spoon

1-1/2 inch paint or basting or hair colour application brush

slow cooker or pan of boiling water

You may prepare a smaller or larger quantity of gel by using the ratio of 4 packets of gel to 1/3 cup water. Left over gel may be frozen and defrosted on counter and reheated for re-use.

ADVANCE GEL PREPARATION (easiest method is the Crockpot method):

Empty 12 packets of Knox gelatin into appropriately sized Crockpot or small round Ziploc container and then add 1 cup lukewarm tap water; SLOWLY and very gently stir the water and gel powder with a spoon. (Stirring slowly is key to avoiding unwanted bubbles and foam from developing during the mixing process). The mixture will be thick, clumpy and white.

Crock pot method: prepare as above, turn on heat, cover and leave for two hours, until melted and clear. Either use immediately, leave in Crockpot and reheat when needed or pour into plastic container for later use. If time between preparation and use is more than a day, then store in refrigerator.

Simmering pan method: prepare as above, place container in pan of simmering water on the stove. Stir *gently*, occasionally. Mixture will gradually clear from the bottom up and be yellow-brown in colour. When clear (looks like chicken stock) remove to counter and let sit 10 minutes or so. Skim off whitish film/bubbles from top (letting it sit 10 minutes on the counter causes this to form into a skin on top so it's easier to remove). May be used immediately or put aside and stored for later use. If time between preparation and use is more than a day, then store in refrigerator.

HOW TO USE THE PRE-PREPARED GEL:

Remove lid from container of gelled gel (if frozen, defrost on counter). If using a mini Crockpot, place gel directly into Crockpot and turn on; it will take minimum 1.5-2 hours to melt gel and heat to temperature needed for gelling. To decrease time needed, microwave gel in container until liquid and hot and pour into mini Crockpot to keep warm for use. If it cools and thickens during gelling, simply place container in the simmering water for a few minutes or in the microwave for 10-15 seconds.

If heating multiple containers of gel in a large Crockpot, bring an inch of water to simmer in bottom of Crockpot and place containers of prepared gel in the water.

RECOMMENDATION:

Prepare your gel a few days before it is needed– refrigerate if preparing several days ahead. This is especially handy for early morning gelling sessions.

When you are ready to do your hair, melt the gel slowly as indicated above – you will need at least 1.5-2 hours to melt the gel if you are taking it from the fridge and using the slow cooker.

The slow cooker is the preferred method for preparing and melting the gel because it produces no foam/bubbles. Multiple containers can be stacked in the slow cooker for heating at the same time (the slow cooker is portable too – take it to the pool!)

Containers of gel may also be left in the slow cooker with their lids on. During application, should the gel start to cool and thicken,

simply exchange the container for one from the slow cooker and continue your application, rotating containers as necessary to ensure you are always using the best (most fluid) gel, until the job is done.

HAIR PREPARATION:

The ultimate secret to a successful gel job is the preparation of the swimmer's hair before the gel is applied. Ensure the hair is slightly damp, pull it into a very smooth tight ponytail and then divide into 3 or more braids depending on the thickness of the hair. Wrap the braids and pin (using open hairpins) snugly into a tight bun; cover the bun with a hairnet.

Apply gel generously (but not too thickly) – starting from just past the hairline and apply towards the bun in smooth even strokes. 2-3 thin coats will be more effective than one thick coat of gel. Let gel dry to a tacky state between coats.