

# MILADY

STANDARD



Razor Cutting  
by Nick Arrojo



# **Milady Standard Razor Cutting by Nick Arrojo**

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by Nick Arrojo**

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# BRIEF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1	THE RAZOR'S EDGE .....	3
CHAPTER 2	BEFORE YOU BEGIN: THE KEY TENETS .....	13
CHAPTER 3	RAZORING A ONE-LENGTH LINE .....	29
CHAPTER 4	CLASSIC LONG LAYERS.....	51
CHAPTER 5	RAZOR GRADUATION .....	75
CHAPTER 6	THE RAZOR AND YOU .....	99

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Chapter 1 The Razor's Edge . . . . .</b>	<b>3</b>	Headsheet Front . . . . .	45
<b>Introduction: A Brief History of Razor Cutting . . . . .</b>	<b>4</b>	Headsheet Left Side . . . . .	46
<b>Tapered Edges Become Fashionable . . . . .</b>	<b>5</b>	Headsheet Right Side . . . . .	47
<b>Why I Made Razor Cutting My Signature Technique . . . . .</b>	<b>6</b>	Headsheet Back . . . . .	48
<b>A Tool Tailored to Fashion-Forward Clients . . . . .</b>	<b>8</b>	Headsheet Top . . . . .	49
<b>Why the Razor Can Take You to the Sharp End of Success . . . . .</b>	<b>10</b>		
<b>Chapter 2 Before You Begin: The Key Tenets . . . . .</b>	<b>13</b>		
<b>Health and Safety Always Come First . . . . .</b>	<b>14</b>		
<b>How to Handle and Hold the Razor with the Guard . . . . .</b>	<b>15</b>		
<b>Changing the Blades . . . . .</b>	<b>18</b>		
<b>Moving the Razor . . . . .</b>	<b>20</b>		
<b>How to Hold Hair for Perfect Razor Cuts . . . . .</b>	<b>21</b>		
<b>Razor Aerobics . . . . .</b>	<b>23</b>		
<b>The Angle of the Blade: Different Uses, Features, and Benefits . . . . .</b>	<b>24</b>		
<b>Results of Different Hair Types . . . . .</b>	<b>25</b>		
<b>Talking to Clients About the Razor Cut . . . . .</b>	<b>27</b>		
<b>Chapter 3 Razoring a One-Length Line . . . . .</b>	<b>29</b>		
<b>The One-Length Bob with Blunt Bangs . . . . .</b>	<b>30</b>		
<b>Performance Rubrics . . . . .</b>	<b>43</b>		
		<b>Chapter 4 Classic Long Layers . . . . .</b>	<b>51</b>
		<b>Classic Long Layer with Choppy Bangs . . . . .</b>	<b>52</b>
		<b>Performance Rubrics . . . . .</b>	<b>67</b>
		Headsheet Front . . . . .	69
		Headsheet Left Side . . . . .	70
		Headsheet Right Side . . . . .	71
		Headsheet Back . . . . .	72
		Headsheet Top . . . . .	73
		<b>Chapter 5 Razor Graduation . . . . .</b>	<b>75</b>
		<b>Bob with Graduation and Side-Swept Bangs . . . . .</b>	<b>76</b>
		<b>Performance Rubrics . . . . .</b>	<b>91</b>
		Headsheet Front . . . . .	94
		Headsheet Left Side . . . . .	95
		Headsheet Right Side . . . . .	96
		Headsheet Back . . . . .	97
		<b>Chapter 6 The Razor and You . . . . .</b>	<b>99</b>
		<b>Paying It Forward: After the Fundamentals . . . . .</b>	<b>100</b>
		<b>Creative Potential . . . . .</b>	<b>100</b>
		<b>Contemporary Razor Cuts . . . . .</b>	<b>103</b>
		<b>Where You Go from Here . . . . .</b>	<b>109</b>
		<b>And Finally . . . . .</b>	<b>110</b>



# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Nick Arrojo's** career began at Vidal Sassoon, Manchester, England. His talent for creative hairstyling was apparent early on, earning Nick the position of Vidal's youngest-ever Creative Director. He eventually moved to the United States, creating a multifaceted, multi-award-winning brand. Over a 30-year career, his work has graced the fashion magazines of the world on countless occasions while, as hairdressing host for seven seasons of TLC's *What Not to Wear*, Nick became an American household name. His beauty empire includes his NYC studio, a professional product line carried by hundreds of salons across America, and a cosmetology school and advanced academy that are both celebrated for their commitment to excellence, integrity, and raising the profile of the hairdressing craft. It is, however, Nick's pioneering method of modern and creative, precision-based razor cutting that draws the most acclaim. Taught around the world, his process enables hairstyles with the chic contemporary aesthetic of tapered edges and deconstructed textures. Nick lives in New York City with his wife Lina, and twin sons, Marco and Nico.



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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to my Milady Standard Razor Cutting workbook. Over six chapters, I am going to share my experience and expertise of this remarkable tool, giving you the elementary principles of proper use of the razor, so you can add a new range of techniques to your professional arsenal.

I believe you will find the razor perfect for shaping fashionable, low-maintenance modern hairstyles that your clients will love. Because the blade cuts length and weight at the same time, it empowers you to create tapered outlines naturally. Once you find a level of comfort using the tool, it becomes easier to put movement into styles, create more texture, and make beautiful, soft and fluid cuts.

To do these things well, you will need to develop an appreciation of the aesthetic differences of razor cutting, commit to mastering the technical fundamentals, and then have the passion and creative inspiration to want to develop your skills to the level of *a master*.

I begin the book with a look back at how the razor rose to prominence, and how its features and benefits match the fashion and beauty zeitgeist, creating conditions where proponents of razor cutting thrive.

Once the scene is set, I will show you the basics of contemporary razoring. From changing the blades safely to the all-important grip to moving and rotating the tool for a medley of effects, you will learn the fundamentals that go together to build a platform for success.

Then the fun really begins! Step by step by step, you will learn, practice, and master three razor hair cuts--the One-Length Bob with Blunt Bangs, Classic Long Layers with Choppy, Square Bangs, and The Bob with Graduation and Side-Swept Bangs--that give you an opportunity to implement the core skills of effective and artistic razor cutting.

In the nonfiction book, *Outliers: The Story of Success*, Malcolm Gladwell makes a compelling argument that the key to great accomplishments in any field is a matter of practicing a specific task for a total of 10,000 hours. It is something I wholeheartedly believe in; I was a hairdresser for 10 years before I began to feel like a master of the craft.

Please allow that thought to sink in. Realize that to become a master of razor cutting will take you many, many hours of practice. To make the most of this

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time, as you study the techniques in this book, I encourage you to scrutinize everything from body position and posture to the way I interact with the razor to how I carefully section the hair to how I focus on precise strokes and methodically check every section.

Soon enough, these techniques will become second nature to you, too, and you will begin to see the great potential of razor cutting to inspire ingenuity in your work, to make magic happen for your clients, and to become a signature of the success of your career.



# HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

## Performance Rubrics

At the end of each procedure, you will find a list of rubrics, or ways to note and comment on your performance for each of the key tasks. Rubrics are used in education for organizing and interpreting data gathered from observations of student performance. Rubrics are specifically developed scoring documents used to differentiate between levels of development in a specific skill, performance, or behavior. You can use rubrics to evaluate yourself, other stylists, and/or other students. As an instructor, you can use rubrics to evaluate your own students.

## What's on the DVD?

To assist you in learning each and every step, the procedures can also be found on the companion DVD Series, *Milady Standard Razor Cutting with Nick Arrojo*. If you own this DVD or know that your school owns it, we encourage you to watch the procedure to strengthen your understanding of that particular procedure.

For more products serving practicing and future cosmetologists, please visit both [www.milady.cengage.com](http://www.milady.cengage.com) and [www.miladypro.com](http://www.miladypro.com).

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## CHAPTER 2

# BEFORE YOU BEGIN: THE KEY TENETS

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### Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

- ✓ LO 1 List the four golden rules of razor safety.
- ✓ LO 2 Cite the three key advantages to using a guarded razor.
- ✓ LO 3 Identify the anatomy of a razor.
- ✓ LO 4 List the steps on how to properly hold a razor.
- ✓ LO 5 Demonstrate how to comb and hold the hair in preparation for razor cutting.
- ✓ LO 6 Perform the proper razor cutting motion using the arm and shoulders; forearm; wrist and fingers.
- ✓ LO 7 Demonstrate the three core razor cutting techniques.
- ✓ LO 8 Demonstrate the steps on how to safely change the blades of a feather plier razor with detachable guards.



## HEALTH AND SAFETY ALWAYS COME FIRST

Before getting excited about whipping out your razors, it is important to be aware of the possible dangerous situations you may encounter. Cutting yourself, a fellow stylist, staff member, or a client can do more than lacerate skin; it can break confidence in yourself, from your clients, and potentially peers. In the salon, the sight of blood is never good, especially in our world of beauty. As a beginner, I caution you to start out using a guarded razor as it is a lot less risky than the straightedge blade. While it still has the potential to cause injury, it is not nearly as bad. A guarded razor should help relieve any worry or nervousness you may have as you begin your razor cutting journey, not make you complacent.

Whenever I approach a razor cut, I imagine the razor as an extension of my mind's eye. I find how I handle and interact with the tool to be a critical part of the technique. So before we move on to the technical procedures and creative potential of razor cutting, we will examine how to handle and hold the razor, and the guarded blade, as well as how to safely change those blades. After we do that, I will show you how I like to interact with the hair as I razor cut and how I like to move and rotate the razor while I work, using a piston-like motion for smooth strokes and changing the angle of the blade for a range of creative effects. This is the beginning of your razor cutting journey. There are many exciting places it can take you.

Practicing the following safety routines will help to ensure no minor accidents while you master the tool. By the time you become more skilled, ready to take off the guard and work with a straightedge blade, your safety practices will be so ingrained that they will become second nature (Figures 2-1 and 2-2).



▲ **Figure 2-1** Even master stylists must take precautions when working with a tool as sharp as the straightedge razor.



▲ **Figure 2-2** The guarded razor is the recommended tool of choice for beginners.

Accidents can happen at any time, but the good news is a simple commitment to vigilance and professionalism minimizes the risk, whether the blade used is guarded or not. Beginners should memorize and practice these four golden rules:

1. You must always be aware of where the razor is.
2. Make sure to close the razor anytime it is not in use.

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3. Make sure the blades you are using have a guard attached.
4. While holding the razor, open or closed, always be aware of your body position and of what is around you.

These rules are easy to follow when picking up and putting away the tool, as there is not much else to distract you; but when you are working with a model or a client, and focused on your technique and creativity, while feeling the pressure to make the person in your chair happy, as well as having all the workings of a busy salon going on around you, it is easier for the brain to get muddled (**Figure 2-3**).



▲ **Figure 2-3** Be mindful of who and what is in your vicinity in the salon, as fellow stylists and their clients will usually be in close proximity.

Imagine for a moment that you have back-to-back clients on a busy and noisy day in the salon. Your first client arrived late, and your second arrived early. You are trying to perfect your first client's cut, while also being mindful of the time to not keep your second client waiting too long. The stylists that are working to your left and right are just as busy. With all this going on, you drop your comb as you prepare to razor cut your client's bangs. In this situation it would be easy to bend down to pick up your comb without thinking. This is where the dangers lie. With the razor blade open, you could cut yourself, your client, or a colleague. You must think first about where you are, where the razor is, and shutting the blade before doing anything else so the hazards are eliminated. The golden rules of cutting safely with a razor must be committed to mind and muscle memory. These rules should be memorized and practiced until they become an automatic trigger of your nervous system.

- LO 2 Cite the three key advantages to using a guarded razor.
- LO 3 Identify the anatomy of a razor.

## HOW TO HANDLE AND HOLD THE RAZOR WITH THE GUARD

There are a couple of different types of razors available: stick razors (**Figure 2-4**) and electrical razor cutting combs (**Figure 2-5**). However, these two tools may limit the ability to advance technique and creativity. Either of these two razor types



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## CHAPTER 4

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# CLASSIC LONG LAYERS

### Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

- ✓ LO ① Demonstrate the proper positioning to correctly cut the front section of the haircut.
- ✓ LO ② Recognize and identify the correct C-shaped cut from the front hairline to the baseline using the closed blade cutting technique.
- ✓ LO ③ Demonstrate how to check for balance both visually and technically.
- ✓ LO ④ Implement gradual elevation and overdirection while working from front through to the sides and back.
- ✓ LO ⑤ Execute correct ear-to-ear parting (incorporating the drop back crown) to properly add layers in the back.
- ✓ LO ⑥ Demonstrate how to add light layers to the back of the head while removing the corner weight.
- ✓ LO ⑦ Understand and perform cutting square, choppy bangs using diagonal lines to create texture.

## PROCEDURE: Classic Long Layer with Choppy Bangs



- 1 Position the client at chest level. The client's head position should be upright, in its natural position, for the entire cut.

### HERE'S A TIP:

When cutting the long layers in from the front, remember to remain standing in front of the client, moving no further to the side than the arm of the chair. Using the client as a point to pivot from helps to keep layers even and balanced.



- 2 Using the wide teeth of the sectioning comb, create a central parting from the front hairline to the top of the head.

### HERE'S A TIP:

Hairs are combed toward you, always using the fine teeth of the comb for maximum tension.

# PROCEDURE: Classic Long Layer with Choppy Bangs



**3** Next position yourself directly in front of the client. Begin the cut, starting on your favored side, by creating a half-inch, deep diagonal parting from the front hairline to the side hairline. This section determines the face-framing layers. Comb all hair into natural fall.

✔ LO 1

## HERE'S A TIP:

Maintain consistent, even, diagonal sections as you work through the front and sides.



**4** Using short cutting strokes with a closed blade, cut in a "C-shape" or curved line from the corner of the mouth down the length with 0-degree elevation and tight tension. The 0-degree, face-framing, "C-shape" angle determines the length and the amount of layering you will create in the front of the face throughout the entire cut. The face frame becomes your guide for your layers throughout the haircut.

✔ LO 2

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## PERFORMANCE RUBRICS

The following rubrics are used for organizing and interpreting data gathered from observations of performance with regard to this long layered guarded razor haircut. It is a clearly developed scoring document used to differentiate between levels of development in a specific skill or behavior. I recommend they be used as a tool to gauge progress, either through self-assessment or with the aid of your educator. Write down your notes, chart the development of your skills, and vow to never stop learning.

**Performance is evaluated according to the following scale:**

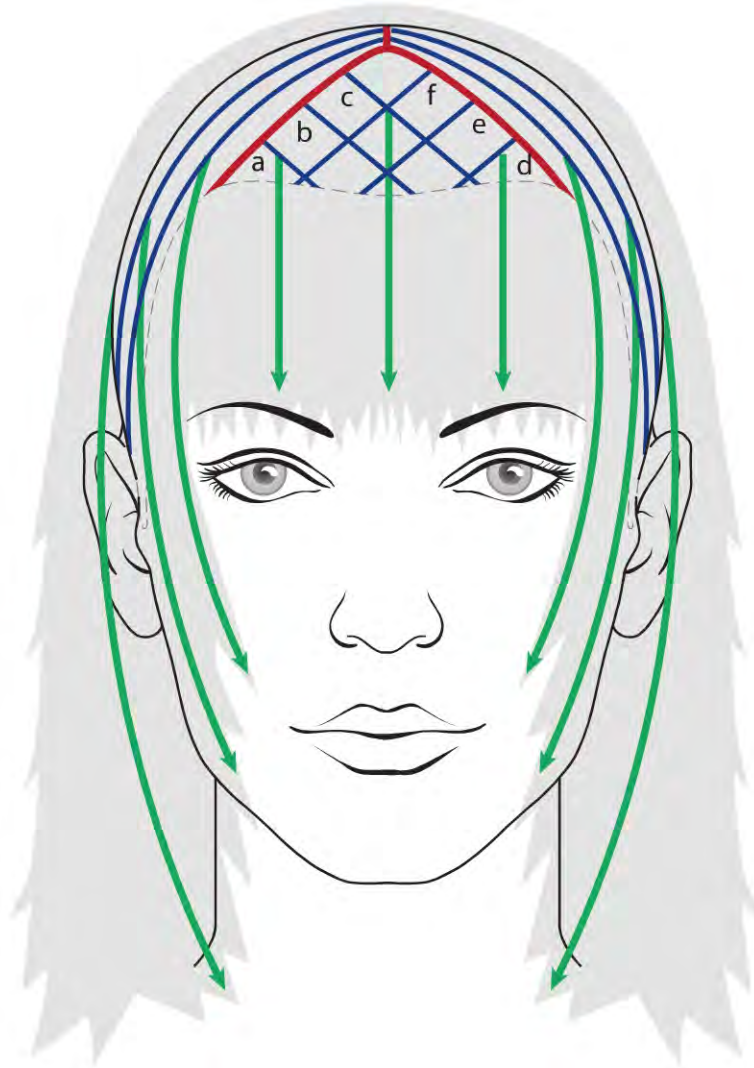
- 1. Development Opportunity:** There is little or no evidence of competency; Assistance is needed; Performance includes multiple errors.
- 2. Fundamental:** There is beginning evidence of competency; Task is completed alone; Performance includes few errors.
- 3. Competent:** There is detailed and consistent evidence of competency; Task is completed alone; Performance includes rare errors.
- 4. Strength:** There is detailed evidence of highly creative, inventive, mature presence of competency. Space is provided for comments to assist you in improving your performance and achieving a higher rating.

Performance Assessed	1	2	3	4	Improvement Plan
Demonstrated correct client body positioning in chair					
Demonstrated correct sectioning patterns for long layers with a guarded razor					
Demonstrated correct 'C'-shaped cutting from front hairline to baseline with 0-degree elevation					
Demonstrated correct amount of hair to cut in each section (half-inch)					
Demonstrated correct and consistent amount of comb tension					
Demonstrated ability to create a strong face frame guideline					
Demonstrated ability to gradually build elevation and overdirection while working from front through to sides and back					
Demonstrated ability to maintain corner length (where face frame meets the baseline)					



# HEADSHEETS

FRONT



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