

Find Your Porosity Without the Float Test

The float test is pseudoscience and doesn't accurately determine your hair's porosity. Here's how to find your porosity without using the float test.

BLEACH RAISES YOUR POROSITY IN

1 minute

SUN STARTS RAISING POROSITY IN

3 hours

HOME TESTS THAT MEASURE POROSITY

None

What you need

- ☐ One ordinary wash day
- ☐ A clock or your phone timer
- ☐ Your honest hair history

Start with what you've done to your hair

- 1 Have you bleached, highlighted, or lightened your hair?
- 2 Have you used permanent color, a relaxer, a perm, or keratin?
- 3 How often do you use a flat iron or a hot blow dryer?
- 4 The more of these you say yes to, and the more recently you did them, the higher your porosity is likely to be.

How to read your answers

Your porosity comes down to how easily water gets into your hair and how easily it gets back out. If your hair takes a long time to get wet and a long time to dry, water is struggling to get past your cuticle, and that's low porosity. If your hair soaks instantly and dries quickly, water is moving in and out too freely, and that's high porosity. Anything in between is medium porosity, which is where most people want to be. And if your roots and your ends seem to disagree with each other, they probably do, because your ends are older and have been through more than your new growth has.

Watch how your hair behaves

- 1 In the shower, does your hair soak instantly, or does water run off it at first?
- 2 Air drying, does it take hours, or is it dry before you've finished styling?
- 3 On a humid day, does your hair hold its shape, or swell and frizz?
- 4 Does conditioner sit on top of your hair, work normally, or vanish once it dries?

Considerations

- The float test reads the oil and product sitting on your strand, not the water inside it, so it can't tell you much about your porosity.
- The strand test reads friction. A cuticle scale lifts by about a millionth of a meter, so your fingers can't feel the difference.
- Cold water doesn't close your cuticle, because your cuticle doesn't open and close like a door. It's either damaged or it isn't.

What to do about it

- Low porosity: warmth is what helps you most. Deep condition under a plastic cap, and apply your products to soaking wet hair so they have water to travel in on.
- Medium porosity: change less. Deep condition every week or two, and use a protein treatment about once a month.
- High porosity: getting water in was never your problem, so focus on keeping it there. Seal after you moisturize, and use coconut oil before you shampoo.

