Length on Top: Inches, Fingers and "Take an Inch Off"



LIFE 101 B: Adult Haircuts, Lecture 2

Anderson Academy

Three Core Questions

2.1



How do you describe the exact length you want on top?



What do “finger length” and “take an inch [25 mm] off” really mean?



How do wet hair, curls, and growth rates change the final result?

Measuring Length on Top

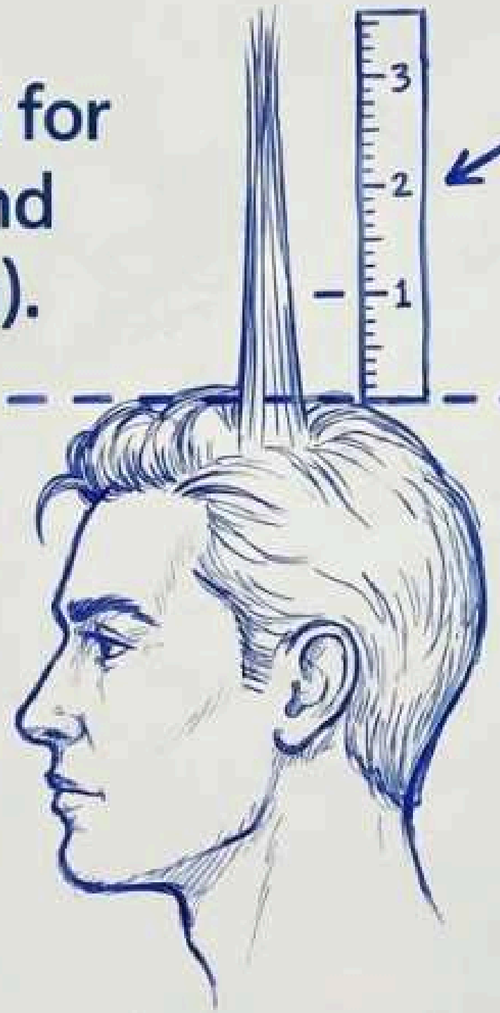
2.2

Scissor Zone

Scissors used for lengths beyond 1 inch (25 mm).

Guard Zone

Clippers used here. (e.g., #6 guard = 3/4 inch / 19 mm; #8 guard = 1 inch / 25 mm).



Lifted straight up or out from the scalp.

Target What You Want Left, Not Removed

2.3



"Take a bit off"

Ambiguous: depends on current length and the barber's guess

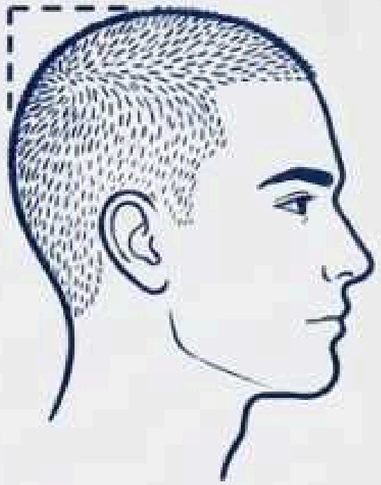


Current Length + Target Left = Perfect Request.

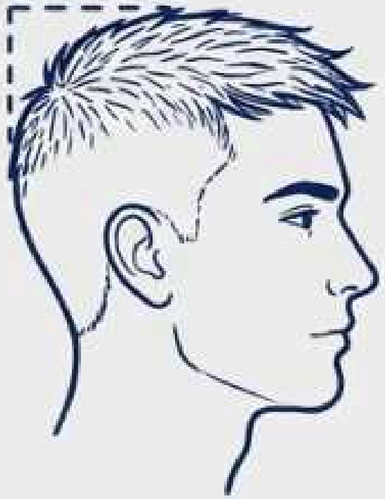
It's about 3 inches [75 mm] now; I'd like about 2 inches [50 mm] left.

The Length Ladder: What Each Length Allows

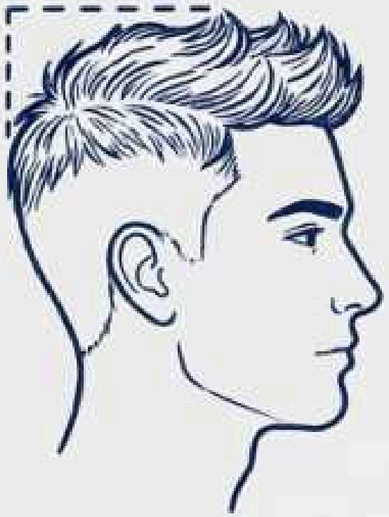
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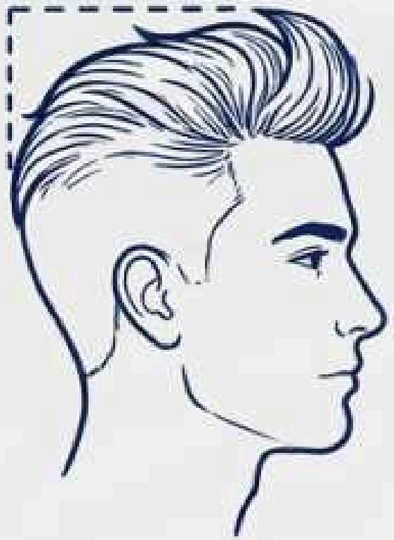
½ inch (13 mm)
= Short, even brush.



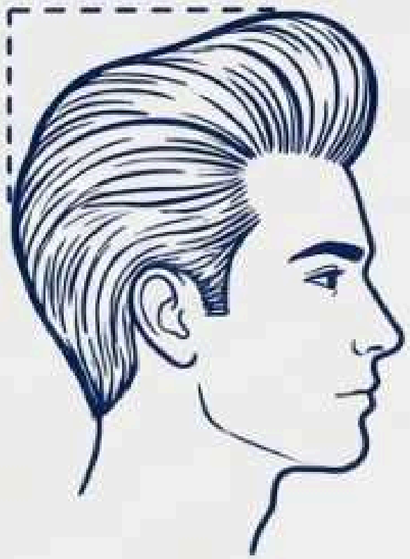
1 inch (25 mm)
= Pushed forward or to the side.



2 inches (50 mm)
= Textured crop or short side part.



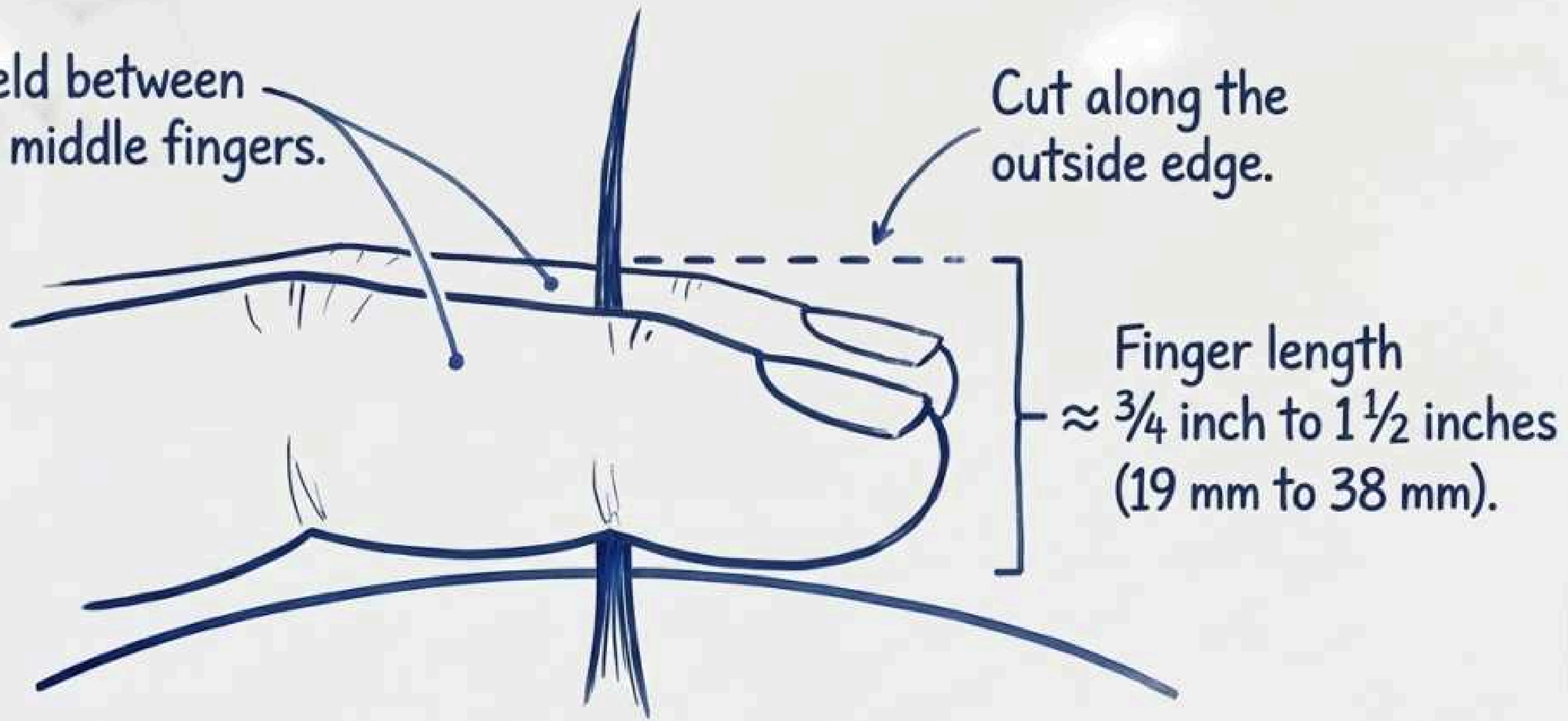
3 inches (75 mm)
= Swept back or lifted into a quiff.



4–5 inches (100–125 mm)
= Pompadours and slick-backs.

Anatomy of "Finger Length"

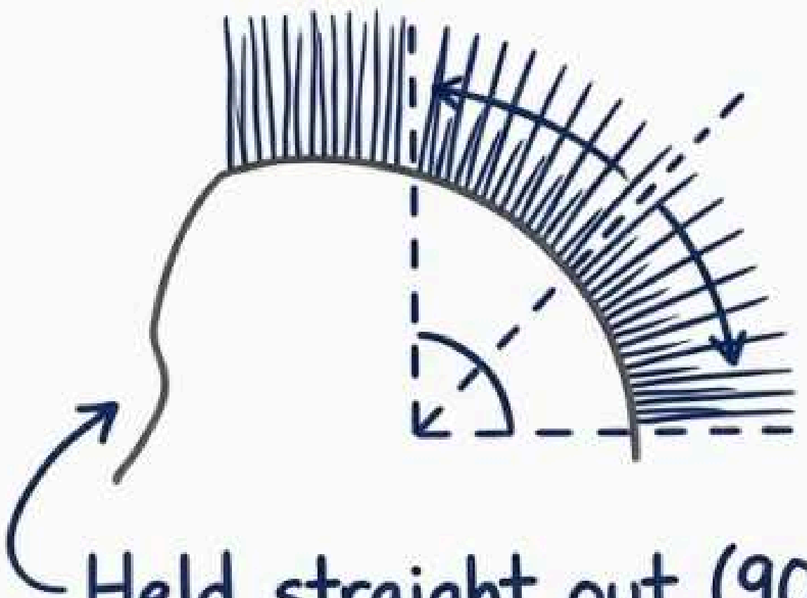
2.5



Fingers differ. Always pair this phrase with a figure in inches.

Elevation Determines the Shape

90° Elevation



Held straight out (90°).

Result: Lengths stack, creating layers.

0° Elevation



Combed down (0°).

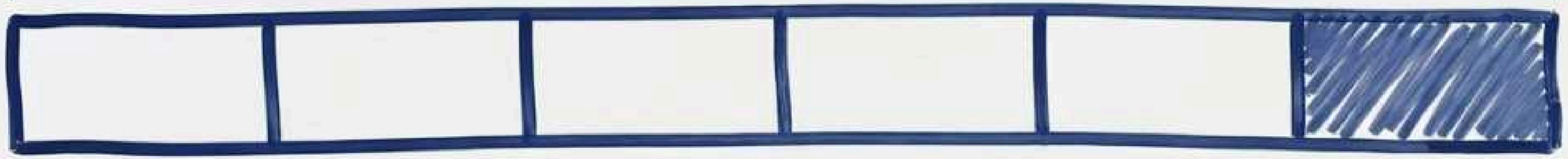
Result: Heavy, one-length edge.

The "Take an Inch Off" Trap

On 3 inch (75 mm) hair: 1 inch (25 mm) removes ⅓ of the length.



On 6 inch (150 mm) hair: 1 inch (25 mm) removes only ⅙ of the length.



Key Takeaway: Always say the exact amount AND the exact place (e.g., "an inch off the back only").

Wet Hair & The Physics of Shrinkage

2.8

Straight Hair



Straight Hair: Lies flat when wet, lifts slightly as it dries.

Curly / Coily Hair



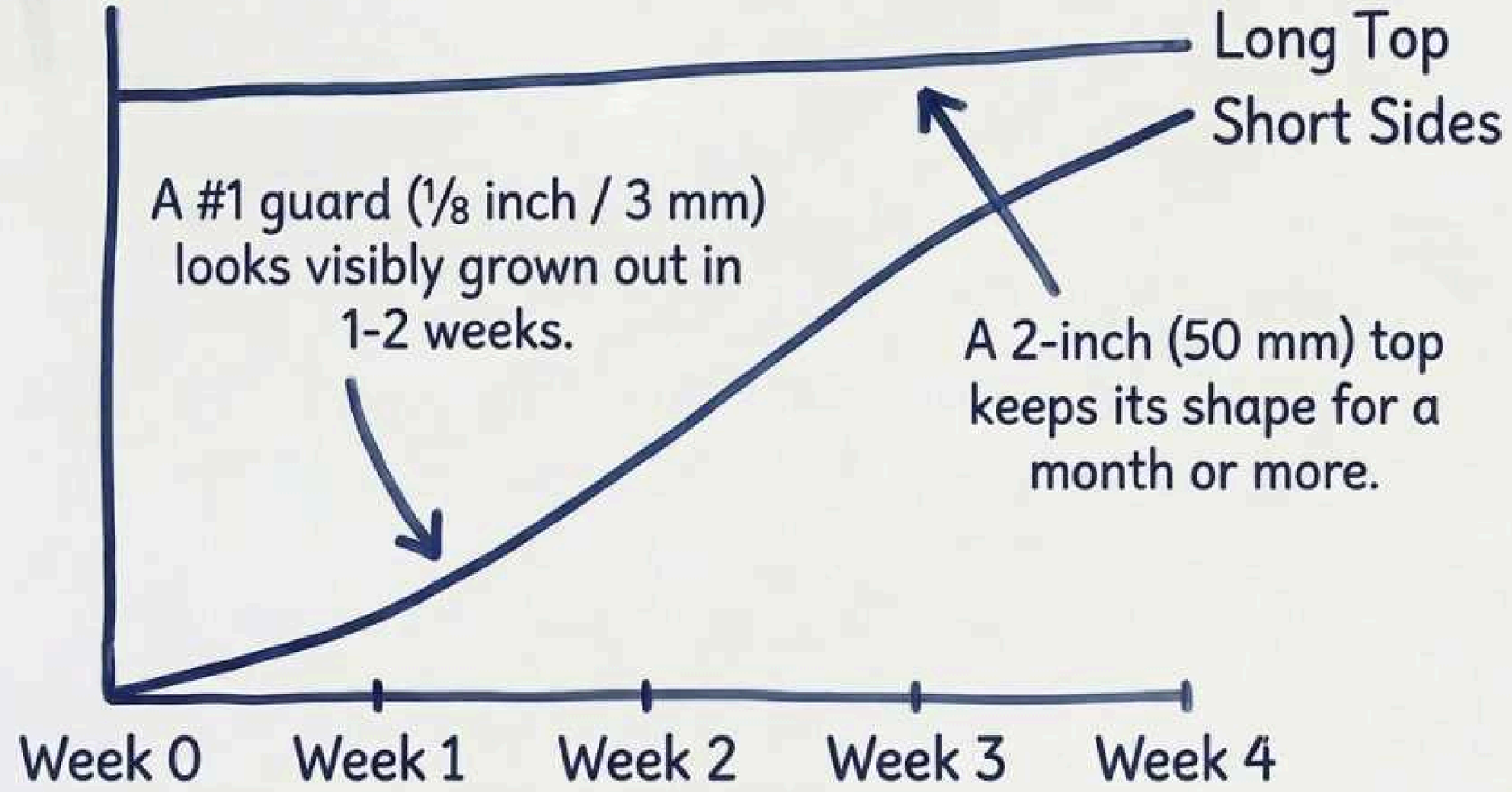
Curly / Coily Hair: Shrinks by a large share of its length as it dries.

Pro Tip: If your hair is curly, ask the barber to allow for shrinkage, or cut the length dry.

Growth Rates and Timing

2.9

Core Stat: Scalp hair grows ~ 1/2 inch (13 mm) a month.



Anatomy of "Just a Cleanup"

2.10



Top Zone: Take very little off the top. Keep the same shape.

Side/Back Zone: Re-cut to the original lengths.

Edges Zone: Clean the neckline and around the ears.

"Same as last time, just cleaned up. My last cut was [X] weeks ago."

Shape Matters as Much as Length

2.11



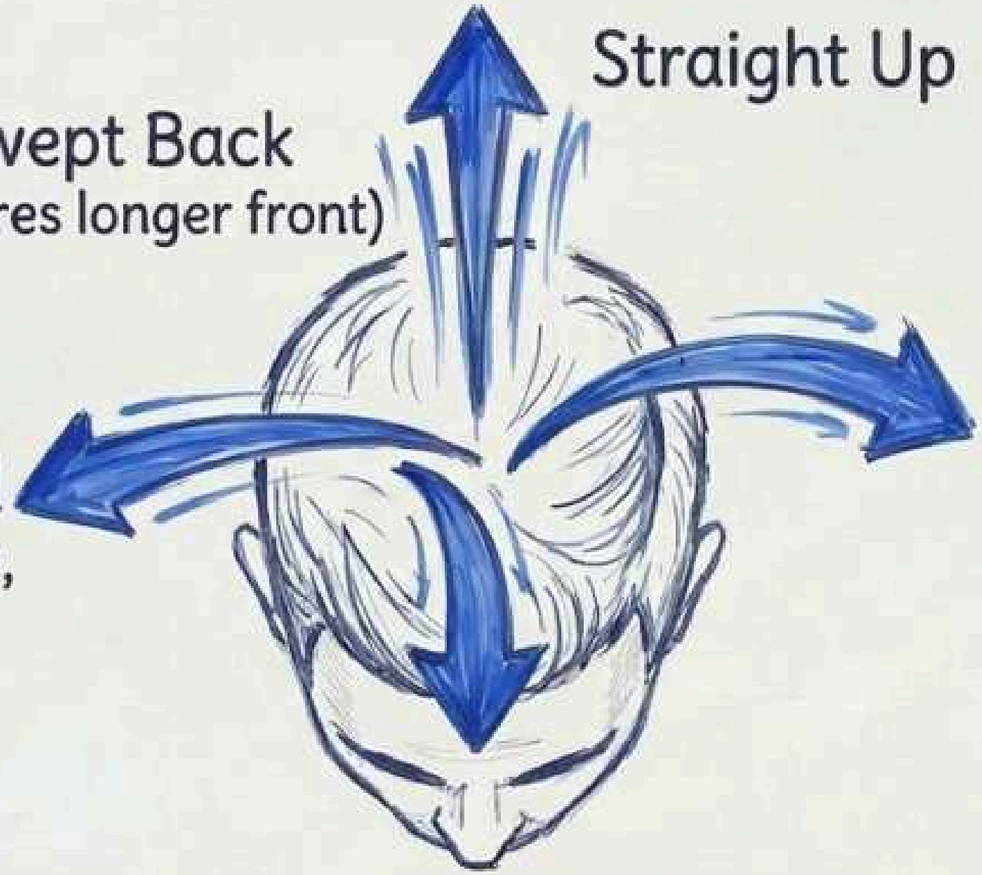
"Even all over."



"Longest at the front."
(Supports a quiff or a fringe,
getting shorter toward the crown).

Takeaway: Always say where you want the most length.

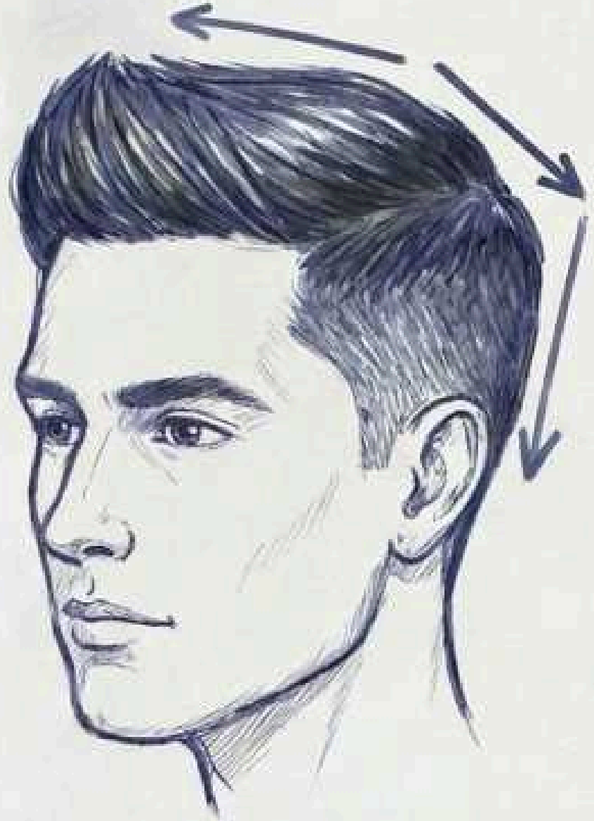
Direction Decides the Cut



Pro Tip: Not sure? Describe your morning routine or show the barber how it naturally falls when dry.

Joining the Top to the Sides

2.13

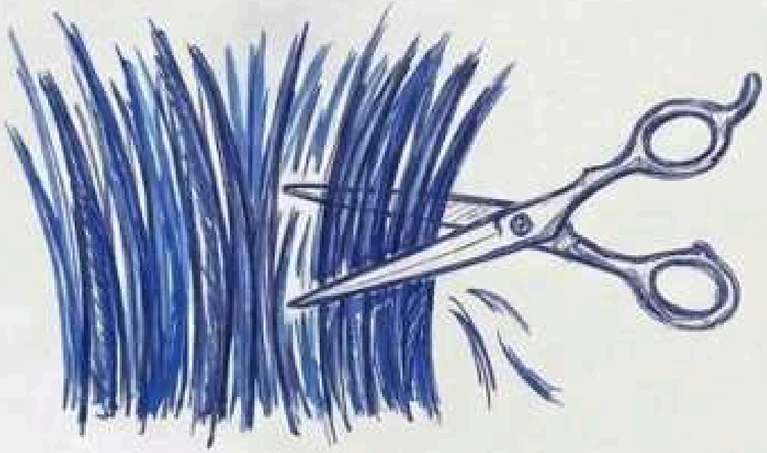


Connected (Blended).
The length changes gradually.
No visible step.

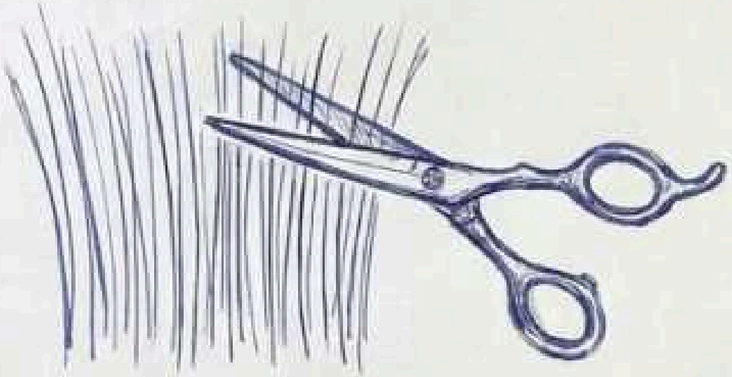


Disconnected. A deliberately abrupt step (e.g., an undercut). Long top hangs over sharply shorter sides.

Managing Weight and Volume



Thick Hair (e.g., 2 inches / 50 mm): Can look bulky. Needs weight removed or texture added to sit close to the head and look 'piecey.'



Fine Hair (e.g., 2 inches / 50 mm): Needs the opposite. Keep the weight to look fuller.

Tip: Tell the barber if your hair "puffs up" or "goes flat by midday."

Putting It All Together: The Scripts

Leave about 2 inches [50 mm] on top,
longest at the front, connected to the sides.

Amount
Shape
Place

Keep the top at finger length, roughly
1 inch [25 mm], so I can push it forward.

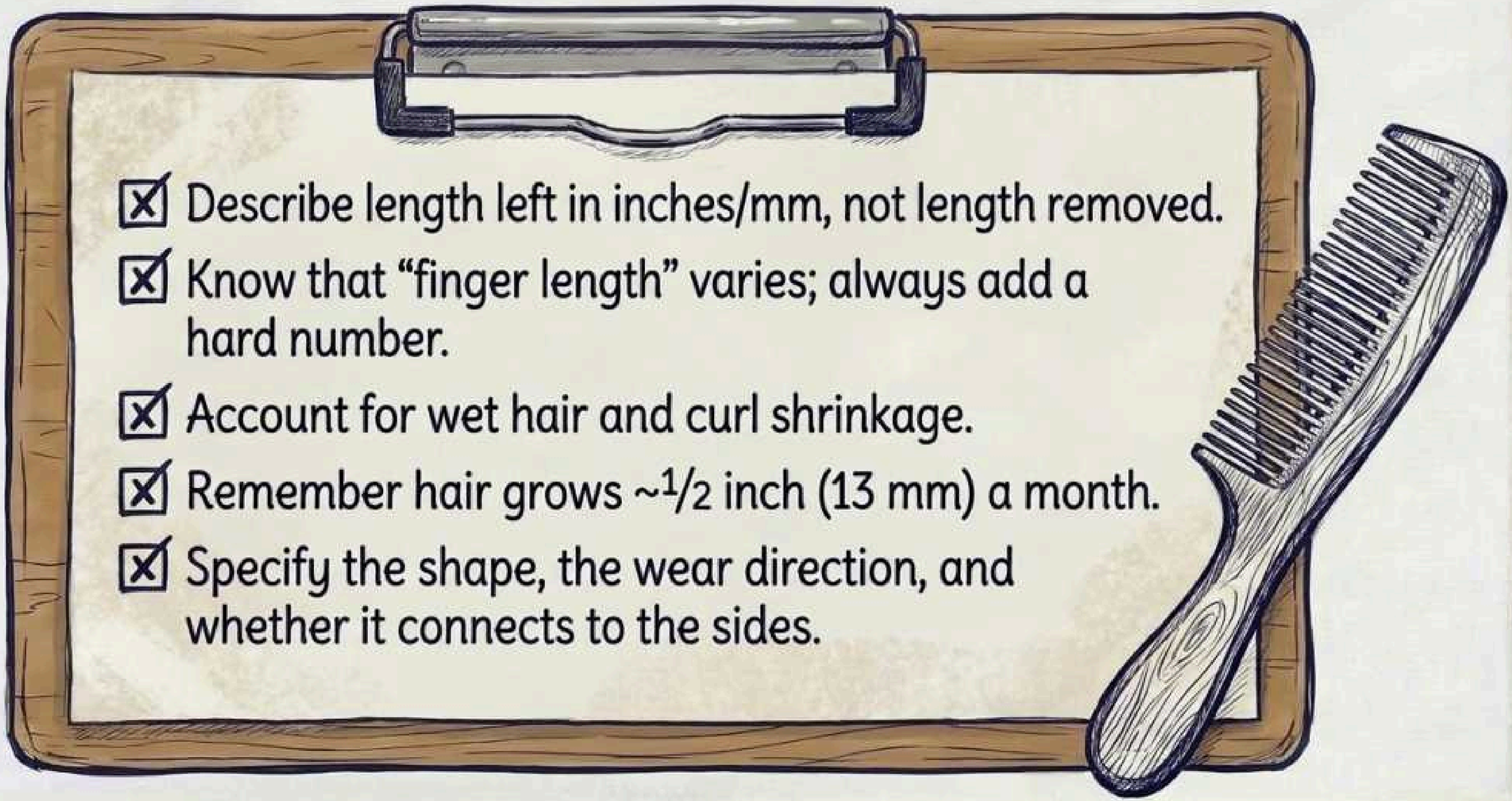
Amount
Shape
Place

Take about 1/2 an inch [13 mm] off the top,
keep the same shape, and clean up the sides.

Amount
Place

Each phrase explicitly states the amount, the place, and the shape.

Lecture 2 Summary Checklist



- ☒ Describe length left in inches/mm, not length removed.
- ☒ Know that “finger length” varies; always add a hard number.
- ☒ Account for wet hair and curl shrinkage.
- ☒ Remember hair grows ~1/2 inch (13 mm) a month.
- ☒ Specify the shape, the wear direction, and whether it connects to the sides.