



GELLING HAIR FOR A COMPETITION

This document outlines everything you need to know about how to gel your hair for an Artistic Swimming Competition. The perfect gel job takes time – be sure to leave yourself at least 1 hour to do this the first time you gel on your own. If you are at the pool, your gelling time will be indicated on your schedule.

LIST OF MATERIALS

- Paint brush (to apply gel)
- Whisk or fork
- Gel bowl (not too big!)
- 5 packages of Knox gelatine (more if you need it!)
- Kettle (1-2 to share amongst the team)
- 2 or 3 thick hair elastics for a ponytail
- Bun pins/ bobby pins
- 3 small hair elastics for braids (braces elastics work great!)
- Hairbrush
- Fine toothed comb
- Regular comb
- Gelling towel



In addition to these materials, the following can be helpful:

- Microwave: if you have clumps in your gel, microwave the bowl for short bursts of time (~10-15 sec) to dissolve them. Stir in between bursts if the clumps aren't quite out yet.
- Hairdryer: If your gel is dripping, you can use a hairdryer to harden it quicker. You can also use this to dry your gel between coats. The "cool" setting works best to dry the gel quickly. If you are going to use this strategy, just be careful that you leave a little extra time!

HOW TO GEL

General steps to follow:

- Ponytail → layer 1 gel (very thin) → braids & bun → layer 2 gel (moderately thick) → layer 3 gel (moderately thick)



1) PUTTING UP YOUR PONYTAIL

- Wet hair - it should look as if you just got out of the pool, or shower
- Make ponytail - slick hair back using a brush or comb to make sure there are no bumps in the hair overlying the scalp. Secure the ponytail using a thick hair elastic
 - Note: The ponytail should sit on top of a horizontal line at the level of the eyes
- Smooth hair - comb hair back while the ponytail is in and use a second hair elastic to tighten the ponytail
- Repeat process with a fine toothed comb until hair is as smooth as possible

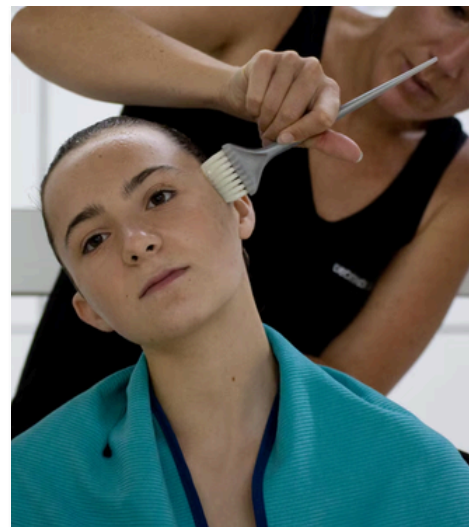
We recommend doing the bun after the first coat of gel

2) MAKING GEL

- Place 1-2 packs of gel in your gel bowl and add boiling water to the gelatine powder
 - ALWAYS put the powder in the bowl first and water second – never the other way around!
- Add only enough water to wet all the gelatine powder at first and stir right away – this will avoid clumping!
- Add water gradually and mix gel to the desired thickness - gel will appear clear when it is fully dissolved
 - Gel layer 1 is about the thickness of oily salad dressing (1 pack)
 - Gel layer 2+ will be about the thickness of ranch salad dressing (2 packs)
- If there are clumps, pick them out or microwave gel for approx. 15 sec (if a microwave is available)
- If it is runny, stir the gel repeatedly as it cools down. Be patient with this – if you let it sit, it may start to clump.

3) APPLYING GEL

- Use paintbrush to paint gel into hair
- First gel layer only: comb gel back using fine-toothed comb IMMEDIATELY after gel is applied. You will only be able to comb 1-2 strokes before the gel starts to dry. If you continue combing afterward, it will cause clumps to form!
- Afterward, tighten the ponytail by removing second hair elastic from the ponytail, and then re-applying it underneath the first hair elastic. You can continue stacking the hair elastics in this way to get the ponytail as tight as possible.
- Be sure to apply any extra gel to hair around face, bangs, and back of head – these are usually the first to fall out!
- You could use your hair dryer to dry the layer 1 hair before starting on the braids and bun. Make sure you leave a little extra time if you plan on using the hair dryer.



4) MAKING THE BRAIDS & BUN

- Divide the ponytail into 2-3 sections for small braids – make the braids as tight as possible, and tie them off using small hair elastics
- Wrap braids 1 by 1 to make bun, use bun pins to secure (there is no such thing as too many bun pins!!). Always try to wrap the braids in a way that makes the bun as even as possible.

5) FINAL LAYERS OF GEL

- Make and apply gel for layers 2 and 3 of gel after bun is complete - use 2 packs, gel should be about the thickness of ranch dressing. Recall that you could use the hair dryer to dry your gel in between layers, especially if it is running.
 - Layer 2: Apply to head only
 - Layer 3: Apply to head and bun
- Once your gel is done, you can wipe around the ears, hairline, and neck to get any gel that may have dripped. It is important to do this before the gel hardens. Once you are done your final wipe, HANDS OFF! Avoid touching or picking at your gel as much as possible.

