

A hand holding a fist is positioned at the top left of the page. The background is a vertical gradient from red at the top to yellow in the middle, and then green at the bottom. The hand is rendered in a light, almost white tone.

Freshman year is a great time to explore who you are and find ways to express yourself. So how do you break the news of your unicorn hair or your foot tattoo to Mom? >>

By Laura Hayes

DON'T TELL



It was my freshman year of college when I colored my hair for the first time.

My friend swore that she had done this a million times.

“What was the worst that could happen?” she said.

So, I went to WalMart and bought a box of electric blue hair dye, and that night we gathered into the communal bathroom of our dorm, rubber gloves and hair ties spread across the floor.

It felt like I sat on the bathroom floor for hours, waiting for my hair to be bleached before slathering blue on it. When my friend finally declared that I was done, I looked in the mirror.

The curl closest to my face that I chose to color looked more turquoise than sapphire blue that the box advertised, but I was thrilled.

I snapped a picture and texted it to my older sister, along with a message:

“Don’t tell mom.”

I love my mom, and even though I wasn’t living at home anymore, part of me was still scared of disappointing her.

I did tell her, though. Years later after that blue curl faded to poop green, I told her when I got my first tattoo, but not before I texted my sister first, “Don’t tell mom.”

So here are some tips for coloring your hair for the first time or getting your first tattoo if you, like me, are too scared to tell your mom.



After I colored my hair for the first time, my friends and I did a fancy photo shoot to show off our new looks.

Flawless Hair

There’s many reasons why someone decides to color their hair, like if they think their hair color is boring or if they have gray hair, said Deuce Gibb of the Deuce Gibb Salon in New Cumberland.

Getting your hair to the bright pinks, purples and blues you see on Instagram takes multiple steps. Depending on what color your hair is, your hair may have to be lightened before it can be colored, like if it’s dark brown.

“It’s the same as having a dark brown piece of paper and coloring with a pink crayon,” Gibb said.

If you use a box

Gibb cautioned that the boxed hair color can be harsher because it has to work on all hair types whereas stylists can adjust it for your hair type. He recommended starting with either semi- or demi-permanent hair color, “but never permanent.”

“Once it’s in there, it’s in there,” Gibb said.

Try coloring a strand of your hair first to see how it looks. Putting Vaseline along your hairline and ears will make it easier to wash off any color that you get on your skin. Gibb recommends mixing the color and putting it on the

back of your neck to see if it will irritate your skin.

“As long as you’re doing something that isn’t a drastic change, how bad can it be?” Gibb said.

If you go to a stylist

However, he said when you spend money doing it yourself and the odds that it will come out successful, you may have to spend twice the money getting it fixed.

A full head of highlights is impossible to do on your own, Gibb said, because it may end up splotchy.

Tell your stylist ahead of time so that they can book enough time, Gibb advised. Depending on the shade of your hair, it could take anywhere from 45 minutes to three hours.

He likes it when clients bring in pictures of what they want their hair to look like.

“I love them because I find that most people aren’t good at asking for what they really want,” he said.

Keep your color bright

In general, using hot tools like flat irons day in and out is a bad idea.

Look for products that have sunscreen in them, and when you’re outside, use a hat or a scarf, Gibb suggested.

HOUSE OF PAIN

- Ribs
Top of Feet
Chest/Sternum
- Wrist
Elbow
Bend in Knee
- Inside Arm
Arms
Legs*
Places with Muscle

* Unless over a bone like an ankle

Getting Inked

Before you commit to that anchor tattoo, heed the words of a professional artist.

Think about what you really want

"It is going on you forever. Never rush a tattoo," said Bridget Grant, owner of Ink-Credible Tattoo Factory in Middletown and Lancaster.

Grant wishes someone would've talked her out of her first tattoo — her initials with a crown over it and a banner with her name — though it's long since been covered.

She recommended avoiding popular tattoos at the time like an infinity symbol or the name of the person you've been dating for a couple of months.

Know that tattoo artists won't copy someone else's work, but they may do something similar.

Black ink stays longer than colors, and light colors like yellow or pale orange can fade quicker, Grant said.

If a tattoo is done well, it shouldn't need to be touched-up before five to 10 years, though it depends on the quality.

Be prepared

If you make an appointment, keep it.

She recommended getting a consultation before getting your tattoo. A small tattoo could only take a couple of minutes, but a larger tattoo could take hours.

"Understand that tattoos are not something that you just walk in and get like a big sleeve. There's a lot of time and effort that goes into putting it on your body," Grant said.

Tips are always appreciated.

Tip your artist based on how happy you are with your tattoo, though Grant said for a \$60 tattoo, her shop's minimum, it's nice to get a \$5-10 tip. Most people who get a \$200 tattoo tip anywhere from \$20-40.

Try to get a tattoo in places you can cover

"You don't know what kind of career you're going to be in," Grant said.

Unfortunately, visible tattoos are still frowned upon in some professional settings.

"You have the whole rest of your life to get tattooed-up. Just wait," Grant said.

Protect your tattoo

Cleaning your tattoo after you get it is the most important, because, as Grant puts it, a tattoo is an open wound. Keep it covered for the first couple of hours after, though foot tattoos require extra attention.

Wash your tattoo with a non-perfumed soap several times a day, and put a healing ointment like Aquaphor on it a couple of times a day to keep it from scabbing.

Avoid pools or soaking in tubs. Sun damage is the worst and can fade your tattoo, Grant said. Try to avoid the sun and use a high-SPF sunscreen when you are in the sun.

Don't scratch. Pat instead.