

# The nail NAVIGATOR



Education & Exploration with **LAURA HUGHES**

## GEL FAQs

**I'd like to address the questions on the subject of 'gels' that I've been answering on a daily basis this month at Grafton HQ.**

**Q. Why don't all gels work in an LED lamp?**

The ingredient that is added to gel to start the polymerisation process (cure/set) is called a photo initiator. This ingredient in the past has only reacted with UV light, however in the last few years we have seen this ingredient change to a photo initiator that will react with LED light as well as UV light. In most cases if a product is LED curable it will be UV curable also. However, there are still many gel products that will only react with UV light, it's always best to check with the manufacturer if you're unsure.

**Q. Will UV light cause skin damage to my customer's hands?**

This is a hot topic right now with the internet fuelling the fire unfortunately. UV light used in nail services should be called UVA light, as the only light produced from the lamp is UVA. UVA is the safest type of UV light and the industry has been using it to cure nails since the 70s.

**Q. My gel isn't curing?**

This is usually down to two things. The inhibition layer is a surface residue that remains on the top of the finished gel nail, because the oxygen touching the gel prevents the top layer from curing. Once this top layer is removed the gel will be fully cured.

Gel lamp bulbs don't last forever! The blue hue you see from the light is not actually the UVA light that is curing the product, this light is totally invisible. So just because you can still see the blue light does not mean your lamp is still able to fully cure your gel. The bulbs need changing every three months to be able to

fully cure your gel. If your bulbs are not changed it can lead to real issues with the final nail, such as breakages, lifting, discolouration and ultimately damage to the natural nail.

**Q. I'm struggling with my white gel, why is it different to work with than all the other colours?**

White gel contains more pigment than all other colours, and also reflects the LED/UV light rather than absorbing it. Therefore it's essential to apply white in extremely thin layers and build up the colour. If the white gel looks wrinkled when it comes out of the lamp, this is a clear sign it has been applied too thick.

**Q. My gel polish has gone hard in the bottle, is it faulty?**

All gel products will cure if exposed to UV light, this includes the sun! So sitting in front of the salon window is not a great position to be. Even if the sun isn't out UV light is still present and can cause your product to cure. Once this has happened you cannot go back and your product is wasted. With the addition of photo initiators that react with LED light, the products have now become even more sensitive to light. So it's essential to have the right working conditions for you and your products.

I hope this Q&A gives you a better understanding of the gel products you're using and the challenges you may be facing. **S**



**WHO IS... LAURA HUGHES?**  
National education manager,  
Grafton International

Laura is an industry insider with over a decade of experience within the nail industry, working with beauty and fashion press and high profile events with celebrities. Now, Laura is an educator and trains nail professionals using a range of brands and is dedicated to education and the future growth of the nail industry.

[www.graftons.co.uk](http://www.graftons.co.uk)

"UV light used in nail services should be called UVA light, as the only light produced from the lamp is UVA. UVA is the safest type of UV light and the industry has been using it to cure nails since the 70s."