

# Nail Technician

Business Opportunity Profile

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## Introduction

Nail technicians apply, repair and remove artificial nails and offer treatment such as manicures and pedicures, nail shaping, cuticle grooming, callus removal and applying nail polish. They usually provide nail treatment in clients' homes or work in a salon on agreed days or times of the week.

Nail technicians may need to be licensed by their local authority. A technician with clients in more than one local authority area may need to be licensed or registered with each local authority.

This profile provides information about starting up and trading as a nail technician. It describes the training available, the current market trends and the key trading and legal issues.

## Training and resources

There are no qualifications legally required to start up as a nail technician. However, some local authorities require technicians to have a massage and special treatment (MST) licence.

Most local authorities usually require technicians to provide evidence of relevant qualifications or experience before issuing a licence.

The following courses provided by the Guild of Professional Beauty Therapists are suitable for nail technicians who have experience and/or qualifications in beauty, but lack business experience:

- Starting and Marketing your Business, which is an online course that costs around £71 and covers business planning, pricing, promotion, social media and business accounting. Go to [www.beautyguild.com/Courses/CourseView?CourseID=75c3814f-7106-4621-9c56-3ef2641152ce](http://www.beautyguild.com/Courses/CourseView?CourseID=75c3814f-7106-4621-9c56-3ef2641152ce) for more information.
- Social Media for Salon Businesses, which is an online course that costs around £47 and covers algorithms, engagement, influencers and creating content. Go to [www.beautyguild.com/Courses/CourseView?CourseID=2152dc9a-8c9f-42ca-9d40-e2a120dbcb83](http://www.beautyguild.com/Courses/CourseView?CourseID=2152dc9a-8c9f-42ca-9d40-e2a120dbcb83) for more information.
- Health and Safety, which is an online course that costs around £47 and covers incidents, injuries and safety measures. Go to [www.beautyguild.com/Courses/CourseView?CourseID=104fcd98-aa1a-4806-9ef7-8cc1eff26571](http://www.beautyguild.com/Courses/CourseView?CourseID=104fcd98-aa1a-4806-9ef7-8cc1eff26571) for more information.

There are various online resources, journals and events to help nail technicians develop their knowledge and skills, including:

- Training and resources provided by nail product manufacturers and trade suppliers. For examples of training, go to [www.opi.com/en-GB/pages/pro-education](http://www.opi.com/en-GB/pages/pro-education) and [www.cnd.com/pages/classes](http://www.cnd.com/pages/classes) (registration required).
- 'Scratch' ([www.scratchmagazine.co.uk](http://www.scratchmagazine.co.uk)), which is an online and monthly print-based journal for the UK nail sector that features reviews of new nail products and techniques, nail art ideas, and a selection of blogs from nail technicians and other nail professionals.
- 'NAILS Magazine' ([www.nailsmag.com](http://www.nailsmag.com)) and 'Nailpro' ([www.nailpro.com](http://www.nailpro.com)), which are online and print-based journals for the nail sector in the US.
- 'Vitality', which is a journal available exclusively to British Association of Beauty Therapy & Cosmetology (BABTAC) members ([www.babtac.com/263-vitality](http://www.babtac.com/263-vitality)).
- 'Guild Gazette' ([www.beautyguild.com/Guild-Gazette](http://www.beautyguild.com/Guild-Gazette)), which is a monthly trade journal published by the Guild of Professional Beauty Therapists.
- Professional Beauty (<https://professionalbeauty.co.uk/professional-beauty-autumn>), formerly known as Salon Beauty, which is a trade-only exhibition for the hair and beauty industry that is held over two days at ExCeL, London each October.
- Salon Geek ([www.salongeek.com](http://www.salongeek.com)), which is an online community for hair and beauty professionals that provides opportunities to share best practice and discuss industry developments.

## Key market issues and trends

Current market issues affecting both start-up and established nail technicians include the following:

- According to research by The Nail Tech Org in 2024, nail technicians earn around £28,000 per year. They see around 16 clients per week and charge around £38 per set of nails. Their total annual outgoings are around £18,000, which includes £4,000 spent on products and £1,100 spent on tools (<https://thenailtech.org/national-nail-tech-price-increase/>).
- In 2024, nail salons were the most common beauty business in the UK. There were 2,106 nail salons operating in the UK compared to 1,873 hair salons (<https://professionalbeauty.co.uk/revealed-the-most-common-beauty-businesses-in-the-uk>).
- In 2023, the overall average spend on manicures and pedicures was £560 per client. Female clients spent an average of £475 per year, while male clients spent £655 (<https://professionalbeauty.co.uk/brits-spend-over-ps45k-on-self-care-annually>).
- Franchises provide both opportunities and competition for start-up nail technicians. Examples include Mooeys (<https://mooeysfranchise.co.uk/franchise>), Townhouse (<https://townhouse.co.uk/franchise/>) and Nail'D It (<https://naildit.com/franchise/>).

## Trading, commercial and legal issues

Start-up and established nail technicians face the following trading, commercial and legal issues:

### Local authority licensing

Some local authorities across the UK require nail technicians providing certain treatments such as manicures and pedicures to have a massage and special treatment (MST) practitioner licence.

A technician with clients in more than one local authority area may need to be licensed or registered with each local authority. MST licence fees vary according to the local authority, but are typically around £170.

### Trade bodies

Membership of a trade body can provide a wide range of individual and business benefits. Relevant bodies include:

- The Federation of Nail Professionals (<https://the-fnp.co.uk>), which is a professional body representing professional nail technicians in the UK. Membership benefits include access to webinars and trade discounts. Annual standard membership costs £50.
- The British Association of Beauty Therapy & Cosmetology (BABTAC, [www.babtac.com](http://www.babtac.com)), which is a professional body representing the UK's beauty sector. Membership benefits include professional indemnity, public liability, malpractice and treatment risk insurance cover, a free listing in the BABTAC directory and access to business, marketing and employment tools and guidance. Annual membership for a self-employed nail technician costs from £59.
- The Guild of Professional Beauty Therapists ([www.beautyguild.com](http://www.beautyguild.com)), which represents beauticians, including nail technicians, working in the UK who hold a nationally recognised qualification. Membership benefits include a subscription to 'Guild Gazette', business and marketing support, discounted accounting services and up to £6 million of treatment risk, public liability and professional indemnity insurance cover. Annual membership fees start from £85.
- The National Hairdressing & Beauty Federation ([www.nhbf.co.uk/home](http://www.nhbf.co.uk/home)), which is a trade body representing the UK's hair and beauty sectors. Membership benefits include treatment risk insurance cover, a subscription to 'Salonfocus', and 'how to' guides on topics such as chair rental, workplace health and safety, and marketing a beauty business. Annual individual membership costs £192.

### Specialist equipment and products

Examples of specialist equipment used by nail technicians (with costs including VAT) are as follows:

- Product trolleys and cases (from £35 to £160 each, depending on capacity, make and finish).
- Manicure lamps (from £40 to £95 each, depending on make and power).

- UV lamps and LED lamps, used to dry gel nails (around £40 each for UV lamps and around £75 to £100 each for LED lamps).
- Pedicure stool (from £25 to £250), pedicure foot rest (from £30 to £100) and manicure arm rest (from £10 to £30 each).
- Professional nail scissors (from £5 to £11), nail files (from £80 to £275 each for an electric file or around £5 for ten manual files) and nail brushes (from £5 for a pack of 20).

Examples of suppliers specialising in professional hair and beauty equipment, including nail equipment, include Salons Direct ([www.salonsdirect.com](http://www.salonsdirect.com)), Sally Salon Services ([www.salon-services.com](http://www.salon-services.com)) and Capital Hair & Beauty ([www.capitalhairandbeauty.co.uk](http://www.capitalhairandbeauty.co.uk)).

Nail products such as acrylic nails, nail polish, cuticle oils and acetone are available from specialist suppliers such as TNBL UK ([www.tnbl.co.uk](http://www.tnbl.co.uk)), The Nail Company ([www.thenailcompany.co.uk](http://www.thenailcompany.co.uk)), Beauty Boss HQ (<https://beautybossherquarters.co.uk>) and Alan Howard ([www.alanhoward.co.uk](http://www.alanhoward.co.uk)).

## Room and chair rental

The majority of nail technicians work on a mobile basis. However, some also rent a chair or room in a nail or beauty salon, but run their business independently on a self-employed basis with their own clients.

Room rental fees vary and are typically charged on a weekly or daily basis. Websites such as Healthy Pages ([www.healthypages.co.uk](http://www.healthypages.co.uk)) and Therapy Rooms to Rent ([www.therapyroomstorent.co.uk](http://www.therapyroomstorent.co.uk)) provide listings of chairs and rooms for hire.

## Specialist software

Many technicians use software to manage client records, appointments, reminders and payments.

Examples of software include:

- Salon Iris Solo (<https://saloniris.co.uk/solo/>).
- Square (<https://squareup.com/gb/en/solutions/beauty>).
- SalonIQ ([www.saloniq.com/uk-salon-software/](http://www.saloniq.com/uk-salon-software/)).

## Workplace health, safety and hygiene

According to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the most common types of work-related health issues in the nail industry are work-related nasal symptoms and neck, shoulder, wrist, hand and lower back (musculoskeletal) problems. Go to [www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrpdf/rr627.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrpdf/rr627.pdf) for more details.

Anyone working as a nail technician must maintain high standards of hygiene and infection control. Particular risks involved in foot treatment such as pedicures include the transmission of bacteria and contagious conditions such as athlete's foot, fungal nail infection, impetigo, scabies and verrucas.

Under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) and the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003, nail technicians must have health and safety measures in place to protect themselves and their clients from health risks arising from exposure to potentially harmful substances, such as acrylic fumes and dust filings from artificial nails.

The HSE provides guidance for beauty therapists, including nail technicians, at [www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/industry/beauty.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/industry/beauty.htm).

## Finding clients

Opportunities for a nail technician to find clients include:

- Registering with apps that enable smartphone users to find nail technicians near their location. Go to [www.vagaro.com/en-gb/pro](http://www.vagaro.com/en-gb/pro) for an example.
- Registering with online portals such as Treatwell ([www.treatwell.co.uk/partners](http://www.treatwell.co.uk/partners)) that enable potential clients to search for nail treatments and book appointments.
- Creating short videos and uploading them to YouTube or TikTok.
- Creating a Facebook business page to encourage customer referrals. Go to [www.facebook.com/ClairesClaws](http://www.facebook.com/ClairesClaws) and [www.facebook.com/Prettyroos.co.uk](http://www.facebook.com/Prettyroos.co.uk) for examples of nail technicians with a Facebook business page. Go to [www.facebook.com/business](http://www.facebook.com/business) for further information about how to use Facebook for business promotion.
- Uploading images of nail treatments to Instagram ([www.instagram.com](http://www.instagram.com)) and Pinterest (<https://uk.pinterest.com>).
- Using Google's Business Profile ([www.google.com/business](http://www.google.com/business)) to edit and update the information about their business that appears in Google search results and Google Maps.
- Using Apple Business Connect, which enables nail technicians to manage information about their business that is used within Apple Maps, Apple Wallet and Siri. Go to <https://businessconnect.apple.com> for more information.

## Insurance

A nail technician requires several types of insurance cover, including:

- Public and product liability insurance, which covers the nail technician against claims for compensation from anyone injured or adversely affected as a result of their activities.
- Treatment risk liability insurance, which covers a technician against claims of negligence, malpractice or accidental injury to a client.
- Legal expenses insurance, which provides cover for defending disputes with suppliers, local authorities, salons and clients.

- Equipment insurance, which will be needed to cover the nail technician's equipment and nail products against accidental loss, damage, theft and any business interruption arising as a result.
- Income protection insurance, which will pay an income, usually for a set period of time, if a technician is unable to work as a result of sickness or injury.
- Commercial vehicle insurance to cover 'carriage of own goods', which includes personal possessions, along with any equipment stored in the vehicle.

Specialist insurance for nail technicians is also available from insurers and brokers such as Salon Gold ([www.salongold.co.uk/hair-and-beauty-insurance/freelance-mobile-nail-technician](http://www.salongold.co.uk/hair-and-beauty-insurance/freelance-mobile-nail-technician)) and Policy Bee ([www.policybee.co.uk/nail-technician-insurance](http://www.policybee.co.uk/nail-technician-insurance)).

## Legislation

This section provides an at-a-glance list of the key legislation that nail technicians must comply with.

- The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) and the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003 require employers and the self-employed to have health and safety measures in place to protect themselves and their clients from health risks arising from exposure to potentially harmful substances.
- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 place a general duty of care on nail technicians to protect the health and safety of their clients and anyone else that may be affected by their business activities.
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000 require employers and self-employed people to identify and assess any work-related risks.
- The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 provides local authorities outside London with the power to create by-laws requiring nail technicians to apply for a massage and special treatment (MST) licence. In London, this is covered by the London Local Authorities Act 1991; in Scotland, by the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982; and in Northern Ireland, by the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.

## Related factsheets

SEC003 Hair and Beauty - Sector Update

SYN002 Hair and Beauty - Industry Snapshot

BOP029 Beauty Therapist

BOP175 Nail Salon

BOP374 Make-up Artist

BOP519 Beauty Salon

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