Natural Hair: Know the Lingo

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The wonderful world of natural hair can be exciting as well as daunting at the same time. I mean, come on, we practically have our own language with terms such as “TWA,” “prepoo” and “The Big Chop” widely used among most naturalistas.

Today, I’ll take the time to break down the most commonly used terms in hopes of helping newbies during their “transition,” or, perhaps, share a quick glimpse into our world with someone who is simply curious to know what these words seen everyday on Instagram feeds truly mean. Enjoy!

2nd-day hair: Hair that looks good without much work on the second day after it was freshly styled.

3A/3B/3C and 4A/4B/4C: A hair-type classification system. For further clarification, click here.

APL: Arm-pit length is a measure of how long your hair is by the place on the body where your strands end.

Baggy: This is when you put on a shopping bag, plastic cap or shower cap overnight after you moisturize your hair in the evening.

Big Chop, a.k.a. BC: The first major step in taking the natural plunge and cutting off all of your chemically treated hair all at once. Some women do it themselves, but I highly recommend seeing a professional hairdresser who specializes in natural hair.

BNC, or Braid-n-Curl: Hair that has been braided and then rolled on rods or flexis, or flexible rods.

BSL: Refers to bra strap length, another measurement of how long your hair is.

BSS: Beauty supply store

CBL: Refers to collar-bone length, a measurement of how long your hair is.

Co-Wash: Using conditioner to wash the hair in place of shampoo

Cones: These are silicones, chemical ingredients found in hair care products. Silicones sit on top of

your hair and do not wash off with just water. Most naturals try to avoid any silicone-based products.

CG: Refers to the “Curly Girl” method of hair care as explained in the book by Lorraine Massey. It is a philosophy of caring for curls that involves, no or low shampoo, avoiding use of silicones and washing the hair with conditioner.

DT or DC: This refers to a deep treatment or conditioner. A DT is when you leave a moisturizing, or protein-based, conditioner on your hair for an extended period of time and use a heat source to help the product penetrate the cuticle.

EO: Essential oil

EVCO: Extra virgin coconut oil (used in conditioning treatments)

EVOO: Extra virgin olive oil (used in conditioning treatments)

MBL: Refers to hair length, as in mid-back length.

Nattyversary: The anniversary of the day you became a natural

No-poo: It’s just that, no shampoo. Ladies who follow this routine are CG’ers and don’t use silicones or other heavy or oily products that may need shampoo to remove them. Instead of pooing, many ladies wash their hair with a conditioner, or they use conditioner in place of shampoo to cleanse the scalp. I recommend Eufora’s Cleansing Cream.

Pineappleing: This is a protective style used by ladies with longer hair. Pineappleing aids in protecting and preserving the curl in hair strands. To execute this style, gather all of your hair in a high, loose ponytail at the top of your head and go to sleep after wrapping tresses with a satin bonnet, or you can also just sleep on a satin pillowcase. In the morning, take your hair down and shake tresses out gently. All of your curls will have been preserved.

PJ: This refers to a “product junkie,” meaning someone who buys any and all hair care products in sight. PJs are forever on a mission to find the next best thing for their hair. If you take a look under a PJ’s sink you will find just about every bottle, jar, tube or vial of hair product in there. Usually, none of the stuff in these containers are even half way used.

Plopping: This is a quick-dry method for the hair. Instead of rubbing a towel on your hair to dry it, you use a cotton T-shirt, or a curl-friendly material, such as a terrycloth hair wrap, or paper towels, to dry your hair. These materials drastically decrease hair drying times.

Pre-pooing: The act of applying a treatment to your hair prior to shampooing tresses. Pre-pooing usually consists of applying oils, conditioners, or a mix of the two, the night before you shampoo, or immediately prior. This is usually done with a heat source to help the treatment penetrate the

cuticle. Why pre-poo? To help the hair maintain necessary moisture during the drying shampoo process.

Sealing: Essentially, this is sealing moisture in the hair, specifically focusing on the ends. Also, to seal moisture in, you can apply oil to conditioned hair. I recommend jojoba oil, which also controls frizz. I love to use it while working with coarse hair textures.

Slip: Refers to the manageability enjoyed by hair strands from using a particular conditioner. Typically, if hair is easy to detangle after conditioner has been on for the appropriate time it is considered to have “good slip.”

TNC, or Twist-n-Curl: This very simple style is also known as a protective style. To achieve a TNC, twist the hair and roll the ends on rollers.

Transitioning: Those who aren’t yet comfortable doing the Big Chop, usually opt to transition into becoming naturalists. Essentially, transitioning is the period of time since you’ve last relaxed your hair. You are no longer relaxing your natural texture, and you learn how to deal with two different textures of hair on your head.

TWA: Teeny Weeny Afro, this is what your hair becomes after you do the Big Chop. This stage can last anywhere from 6 months to 3 years depending on how quickly an individual’s hair grows and their maintenance routine.

Twist Out: To achieve this style, take two strands of hair and twist them together going down the length of that section of hair. Allow the hair to dry either by air drying or sitting under a dryer. Then, take the twists apart and style. This is also known as a protective style.

Wash and Go, a.k.a. W&G: The act of co-washing your hair, adding a styler (gel, cream) and that’s it. You leave the hair to air dry or dry tresses with a diffuser.

So there you have it folks. I hope these terms will help you understand the natural world a little more, and, maybe, shed light on the words that might seem very foreign to those who are still relaxing their hair.

Happy hair styling everyone!

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