

Chapter 3

GROOMING AND APPEARANCE STANDARDS

3.1. Personal Grooming Standards. This chapter outlines personal grooming while wearing any Air Force uniform or civilian clothing in an official capacity. Commander's discretion may be used to determine if individual's personal grooming is within standards of this instruction. Commanders do *not* have authority to waive grooming and appearance standards except as identified in this instruction. The personal grooming standards listed are minimum standards that represent common appearance issues and are *not* all-inclusive. Although Airmen have the right, within established limits, to express their individuality through their appearance, the Air Force has defined what is and what is not an acceptable, professional military image for Airmen. Except for minor variations based on gender differences, all Air Force personnel must comply with the same personal grooming standards. Supervisors have the responsibility to determine compliance with the letter and intent of this AFI and to correct the obvious violations regardless of whether the situation identified is clearly written in this AFI.

3.1.1. Hair-male and female. Will be clean, well-groomed, present a professional appearance, allow proper wear of headgear, helmet or chemical mask and conform to safety requirements. Will *not* contain excessive amounts of grooming aids (e.g. gel, mousse, pomade, moisturizer), appear lopsided, touch either eyebrow, or end below an imaginary line across the forehead at the top of the eyebrows that is parallel to the ground. If applied, dyes, tints, bleaches and frostings must result in natural, human hair colors. The hair color must complement the member's complexion and skin tone. Examples of natural human hair colors are brown, blonde, brunette, natural red, black or grey. Prohibited examples (*not* all inclusive) are burgundy, purple, orange, fluorescent or neon colors. **Exception:** Commander may temporarily authorize cancer patients to wear approved caps (black/tan), wigs or maintain baldness due to a temporary medical condition (i.e., radiation/chemotherapy). If wigs are worn, they must comply with **paragraph 3.1.1.1.**

3.1.1.1. Wigs/Hairpieces/Extensions. Will meet the same standard required for natural hair and will be of good quality, fit properly, and comply with safety, functionality and professionalism. Synthetic hair or other materials are *not* authorized when prohibited by safety and mission requirements.

3.1.1.2. Hair-Nets. Worn as required for health or safety reasons. Made of natural or a synthetic material; must be conservative (plain and moderate, being within reasonable limits; not excessive or extreme), solid color similar to the member's hair color, also strong enough to support and control hair and contain no metal fasteners. Hair-nets are only authorized when performing related duties.

3.1.2. Hair-Male. Tapered appearance on both sides and the back of the head, both with and without headgear. A tapered appearance is one that when viewed from any angle outlines the member's hair so that it conforms to the shape of the head, curving inward to the natural termination point without eccentric directional flow, twists or spiking. A block-cut is permitted with tapered appearance. Hair will *not* exceed 1¼ inch in bulk, regardless of length and ¼ inch at natural termination point; allowing only closely cut or shaved hair on the back of the neck to touch the collar. Hair will not touch the ears or protrude under the front band

of headgear. Cleanly shaven heads, military high-and-tight or flat-top cuts are authorized. Prohibited examples (*not* all inclusive) are Mohawk, mullet, cornrows, dreadlocks or etched design. Men are *not* authorized hair extensions. See [Figure 3.1](#) for sideburns, mustache and beard and for graphic examples of male hair standards.

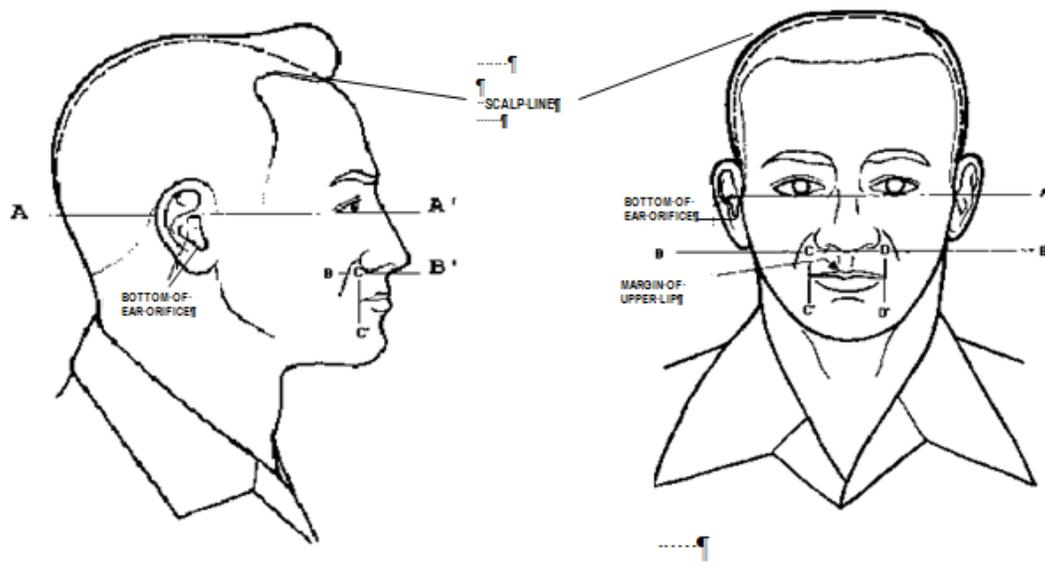
3.1.2.1. Sideburns. If worn, sideburns will be straight and even width (not flared), and will not extend below the bottom of the orifice of the ear opening. Sideburns will end in a clean-shaven horizontal line. See [Figure 3-1](#), orifice of the ear opening is at reference point A.

3.1.2.2. Mustaches. Male Airmen may have mustaches; however they will be conservative (moderate, being within reasonable limits; not excessive or extreme) and will not extend downward beyond the lip line of the upper lip or extend sideways beyond a vertical line drawn upward from both corners of the mouth. See [Figure 3-1](#), reference points B, C, and D.

3.1.2.3. Beards. Beards are not authorized (exception in [paragraph 3.1.2.3.1](#)) unless for medical reasons, when authorized by a commander on the advice of a medical official. If commander authorizes, members will keep all facial hair trimmed not to exceed $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in length. Individuals granted a shaving waiver will not shave or trim any facial hair in such a manner as to give a sculptured appearance. Commanders and supervisors will monitor progress in treatment to control these waivers. If necessary for medical reasons, facial hair will be kept neat and conservative (moderate, being within required limits (not more than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch); not excessive or extreme), as defined by the local commander.

3.1.2.3.1. During tours of less than 30 days, Air Force Reserve (AFR) and Air National Guard (ANG) chaplains not on extended active duty may request a beard waiver for religious observance when consistent with their faith. For AFR waiver processing instructions see AFMAN 36-8001, *Participation and Training Procedures*. For ANG waiver process instructions contact ANG/HC.

Figure 3.1. Male Hair Grooming Standards.



3.1.3. Hair-Female. Minimum length is one inch, unless approved by the commander upon recommendation from a military treatment facility for medical reasons, to a maximum bulk of three inches from scalp. Hair will end above the bottom edge of collar and any side of an invisible line drawn parallel to the ground. When in doubt, assess correct length of hair with Airman standing in the position of attention. Except in the physical training uniform (PTU), hair lengths that would be below the bottom edge of the collar will be pinned-up with no loose ends. Bangs will *not* touch either eyebrow, to include an invisible line drawn across eyebrows and parallel to the ground. If worn, hairpins, combs, headbands, elastic bands and barrettes must match the hair color (i.e., blonde, brunette, natural red, black, grey), but hair must still comply with bulk and appearance standards. Ornaments are *not* authorized (i.e., ribbons, beads, jeweled pins). Scrunches are not authorized. See **Figure 3.2**, for women's hair. **Exception:** While wearing the PTU, long hair will be secured but may have loose ends and may extend below the collar; i.e. ponytails.

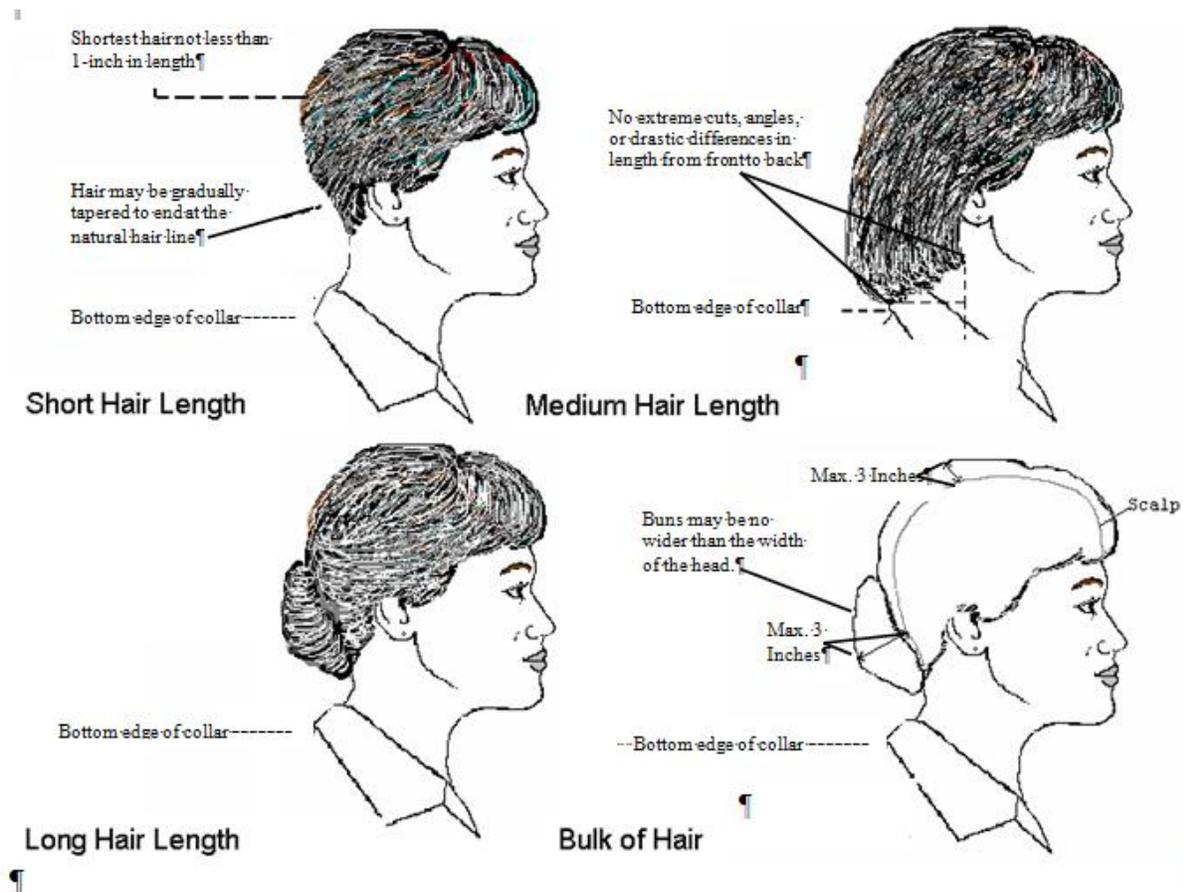
3.1.3.1. The intent is for pinned-up hair to be styled in a manner that prevents loose ends from extending upward on the head. For example, when using a clip or hairpins, hair will *not* present the appearance of a "rooster tail"; when hair is in a bun, all loose ends must be tucked in and secured; when hair is in a pony tail, it must be pulled all the way through the elastic band and may hang naturally downward and not extending below the bottom of the collar (except while in the PTU). As with all hairstyles, a neat and professional image is essential.

3.1.3.2. Braids, micro-braids and cornrows are authorized. However, they must be a natural looking color for human beings similar to the individual's hair color; conservative (moderate, being within reasonable limits; not excessive or extreme) and not present a faddish appearance. A braid is three or more portions/strands of interwoven hair. When worn, multiple braids shall be of uniform dimension, small in diameter (approx ¼ inches), show no more than ¼ inch of scalp between the braids and must be tightly interwoven to present a neat, professional and well-groomed appearance. Braids must continue to the end of the hair in one direction, in a straight line, and may be worn loose or a secured style within hair standards in **paragraph 3.1.3** above. Dreadlocks, (defined as long strands of hair that have been twisted closely from the scalp down to the tips; heavy matted coils of hair which form by themselves, eventually fusing together to form a single dread; or unkempt, twisted, matted individual parts of hair), shaved head, flat-tops and military high-and-tight cuts are *not* authorized hairstyles for female Airmen.

3.1.3.3. Hair color, highlights, and frosting will *not* be faddish and will be natural looking hair color for human beings, similar to the individual's hair color (e.g. black, brunette, blond, natural red, and grey).

3.1.4. Body Hair. Female Airmen will remove leg hair that is visibly protruding beyond the appropriate hosiery or causes a visibly uneven texture under hosiery.

Figure 3.2. Female Hair Grooming Standards.



3.2. Fingernails. Male Airmen are not authorized to wear nail polish. If worn by females, nail polish will be a single color that does not distinctly contrast with the female Airman's complexion, detract from the uniform, or be extreme colors. Some examples of extreme colors included, but are not limited to, purple, gold, blue, black, bright (fire engine) red and florescent colors. Do not apply designs to nails or apply two-tone or multi-tone colors; however, white-tip French manicures are authorized. Fingernails must not exceed $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in length beyond the tip of the finger and must be clean and well-groomed. Fingernails must not interfere with the performance of assigned duties. Fingernails must not hinder proper fit of prescribed safety equipment or uniform items.

3.3. Cosmetics. Male Airmen are not authorized to wear cosmetics. Female Airmen may wear cosmetics; however, if worn, they will be conservative (moderate, being within reasonable limits; not excessive or extreme) and in good taste. Female Airmen will not wear shades of lipstick that distinctly contrast with their complexion, that detract from the uniform, or that are extreme colors. Some examples of extreme colors include but are not limited to, purple, gold, blue, black, bright (fire-engine) red, and fluorescent colors. Cosmetics will not be worn during field conditions.