SOHO FORMULATION QUICK REFERENCE HANDBOOK

Masters of Balayage · SOHO Luxury Color · Professional Education

Every formula. Every tone. Every rule. Distilled for the chair.

SECTION	TOPIC	PAGE
1	Developer Protocol — The Two Rules	2
2	Underlying Pigment Chart	2
3	Tone Family Reference	2
4	Grey Coverage Algorithm	3
5	Level-by-Level Formulation Guide	3
6	Porosity & Pre-Pigmentation	4
7	Color Correction Troubleshooting	4
8	Homecare by Color Type	5
9	Client Consultation Quick Scripts	5
10	Safety & Reaction Protocol	6

"An unofficial SOHO Quick Reference Handbook to better support my loyal clients."

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SECTION 1

Developer Protocol

The ratio is the switch. The developer is the dial. Every SOHO service flows from these two decisions.

MODE	RATIO	DEV	H2O2%	LIFT	TIME	USE WHEN...
DEMI	1:2	5 Vol	1.5%	None	20 min	Sheer toner · Shine gloss · Platinum toning
DEMI	1:2	10 Vol	3%	None	20 min	Color refresh · Grey blend · Color melt on ends
PERM	1:1	20 Vol	6%	1–2 Lvls	35 min	Grey coverage · Gentle lift · Most common service
PERM	1:1	30 Vol	9%	2–3 Lvls	35 min	Moderate lift · Dark to medium blonde
PERM	1:1	40 Vol	12%	3–4 Lvls	35 min	Maximum lift only. Not for grey coverage.

NATURAL BASE	TARGET LEVEL	LEVELS OF LIFT	USE
Any	Same level	0 — Deposit only	5 or 10 Vol · 1:2
Any	+1 level	1 level	20 Vol · 1:1
Any	+2 levels	2 levels	20–30 Vol · 1:1
Any	+3 levels	3 levels	30–40 Vol · 1:1
Any	+4 levels	4 levels	40 Vol · 1:1 — strand test required

The Two Rules
1:1 + 20/30/40 Vol = **Permanent**. Opens fully, lifts and deposits, grey coverage, 35 min.
1:2 + 5/10 Vol = **Demi**. Deposit only, toning and glazing, 20 min.
Same tube. Same chemistry. The ratio is the switch.

SECTION 2

Underlying Pigment

Every time you lift, these pigments are exposed. Neutralize or enhance them with intention.

LVL	NATURAL LEVEL	UNDERLYING PIGMENT	NEUTRALIZE WITH	ENHANCE WITH
1–3	Black → Dark Brown	Deep Red / Red-Crimson	.7 Matte	.6 Red · .5 Mahogany
4	Medium Brown	Red-Orange	.7 Matte + .1 Ash	.4 Copper · .5 Mahogany
5	Light Brown	Pure Orange	.1 Ash	.4 Copper · .43 Cu-Gold
6	Dark Blonde	Orange-Yellow	.1 Ash + .2 Violet	.3 Gold · .43 Cu-Gold
7	Medium Blonde	Yellow-Orange	.2 Violet + .1 Ash	.3 Gold · .4 Copper
8	Light Blonde	Pure Yellow	.2 Violet / Pearl	.3 Gold
9	Very Light Blonde	Light Yellow	.2 Violet / Pearl	.3 Gold · .0 Natural
10	Lightest Blonde	Pale Yellow	Sheer .2 at 5 Vol	.0 Natural Platinum

UNDERLYING COLOR	LEVELS	NEUTRALIZER	SOHO TONE
Orange	4–6	Blue	.1 Ash
Yellow	7–10	Violet	.2 Violet/Pearl
Red / Red-Orange	1–5	Green	.7 Matte
Deep Orange (dark)	3–5	Deep Blue	.8 Blue/Pearl

3 Questions Before Every Formula
1. What level am I lifting to?
2. What underlying pigment will be exposed at that level?
3. What SOHO tone do I need to neutralize or enhance it?

SECTION 3

Tone Family Reference

Each tone family carries its own temperature, target pigment, and mixing rules.

	CODE	TONE	TEMP	NEUTRALIZES	BEST LEVELS	NEVER MIX WITH
	.0	Natural	Neutral	Nothing — balanced base	All	Universal
	.00	Intense Natural	Neutral	Grey translucency / transparency	All	Do not use at 1:2 demi
	.1	Ash	Cool	Orange (Levels 4–6)	4–8	.5 Mahogany
	.2	Violet / Pearl	Cool	Yellow (Levels 7–10)	7–10	.8 on same formula
	.3	Gold	Warm	Enhances warmth	6–10	Orange/brassy hair
	.4	Copper	Warm	Amplifies warmth	5–8	Blue/violet previous color
	.5	Mahogany	Warm/Neutral	Subtle green	3–6	.1 Ash
	.6	Red	Warm	Green tones	4–8	No anchor on grey
	.7	Matte	Cool	Red / Red-Orange (Levels 3–5)	3–6	Levels 7+
	.8	Blue / Pearl	Cool	Intense orange on dark bases	3–6	.2 on same formula

Key Tone Rules
Cool tones cancel warm underlying pigment. Warm tones amplify it.
Never use a fashion tone alone on grey. Always anchor with **.0** or **.00**.
Never mix **.5 Mahogany** with **.1 Ash**.
Never mix **.8** and **.2** in the same formula.

SECTION 4

Grey Coverage

More grey means more Natural base. The Natural base creates opacity; the fashion tone brings the finish.

GREY %	NATURAL BASE	FASHION TONE	SERIES	DEV	TIME
Up to 25%	1/4 oz (7 ml)	3/4 oz	.0 Standard	20 Vol · 1:1	35 min
26–50%	1/2 oz (15 ml)	1/2 oz	.0 Standard	20 Vol · 1:1	35 min
51–100%	3/4 oz (22 ml)	1/4 oz	.00 Intense Natural	20 Vol · 1:1	35 min

CLIENT WANTS...	APPROACH	FORMULA
Zero grey visible — polished	Opaque Coverage	.0 or .00 + fashion tone · 20 Vol · 1:1 · 35 min
Natural silver — enhanced, not hidden	Matte Grey	.00 + .7 Matte · 20 Vol · 1:1 · 35 min + demi .7 gloss
Luminous, shimmery pearl silver	Iridescent Grey	.00 + .8 or .2 · 20 Vol · 1:1 · 35 min + 5 Vol pearl gloss
Low maintenance intentional grow-out	Grey Blending	Balayage first → permanent roots + demi color-melt ends
Refresh and tone between services	Demi Gloss	Fashion tone · 10 Vol · 1:2 · 20 min

4 Principles of Grey Coverage
1. Always anchor with .0 or .00.
2. Match the Natural series to the grey percentage.
3. When using .00, formulate one full level lighter than target.
4. Grey hair needs the full 35 minutes.

SECTION 5

Level-by-Level Formulation

Starting point, underlying pigment, recommended tones, and developer at a glance.

LEVEL	NATURAL LEVEL	UNDERLYING PIGMENT	SOHO TONES	DEV
1	Black	Deep Red-Crimson	4.5 · 5.56 · deposit only	5/10 Vol · 1:2
2	Darkest Brown	Deep Red	3.0 · 4.0 · 5.56	40 Vol · 1:1 for lift
3	Dark Brown	Dark Red	3.0 · 4.5 · 5.1 — add .7 to kill red	30–40 Vol · 1:1
4	Medium Brown	Red-Orange	4.1 · 5.1 · 4.0 · 4.43	20–30 Vol · 1:1
5	Light Brown	Pure Orange	5.1 · 6.1 · 7.1 · 5.43 · 6.4	20–30 Vol · 1:1
6	Dark Blonde	Orange-Yellow	6.1 · 7.1 · 6.43 · 7.3 · 6.0	20–30 Vol · 1:1
7	Medium Blonde	Yellow-Orange	7.1 · 7.2 · 8.2 · 7.3 · 7.43	20 Vol · 1:1

LEVEL	NATURAL LEVEL	UNDERLYING PIGMENT	SOHO TONES	DEV
8	Light Blonde	Pure Yellow	8.2 · 9.2 · 8.1 · 9.0 · 9.3	20 Vol · 1:1
9	Very Light Blonde	Light Yellow	9.2 · 10.2 · 9.0 — gloss only	5–10 Vol · 1:2
10	Lightest Blonde	Pale Yellow	10.2 · 10.1 · 10.0 — deposit only	5 Vol · 1:2

CODE	MEANS
7.1	Level 7 · Primary: Ash — neutralizes orange-yellow at Level 7
7.43	Level 7 · Copper + Gold — vibrant warm copper-gold blonde
6.00	Level 6 · Intense Natural — maximum pigment for resistant grey
9.2	Level 9 · Violet/Pearl — neutralizes pale yellow on near-platinum blonde
5.56	Level 5 · Mahogany + Red — deep dimensional red-brunette

SECTION 6

Porosity & Pre-Pigmentation

Porosity changes how hair receives color. Pre-pigmentation restores warm missing pigments before a warm target formula.

POROSITY	CUTICLE BEHAVIOR	SOHO ADJUSTMENT
Low	Tightly closed · resistant to lift	Use 20–30 Vol. Add 5–10 min. Apply to dry hair. Gentle heat helps.
Medium	Slightly raised · ideal	Standard SOHO formulation — no adjustment needed.
High	Raised / damaged · over-absorbs and fades fast	10 Vol max. Choose 1 level lighter. Reduce time 5–10 min. Apply to damp hair.

PROBLEM	CAUSE	FIX
Ends absorb too dark	Porous ends over-absorb	Apply roots first. Dilute end formula with 5 Vol or go 1 level lighter on ends.
Fades in 2 weeks	Cuticle cannot hold molecules	Formulate 1 level deeper. Seal with acidic gloss at 5 Vol.
Patchy / uneven tone	Inconsistent porosity	Protein filler on porous zones first. Apply in sections by porosity.
Ends darker than roots	Roots low / ends high porosity	Standard formula at roots. Demi 1:2 at 5–10 Vol on ends only.

STARTING LEVEL	FILLER SHADE	DEV	TIME	THEN APPLY
Level 7–8	7.4 or 7.43	5 Vol · 1:2	10 min	Target red or copper formula — no rinse
Level 8–9	8.4 or 8.43	5 Vol · 1:2	10 min	Target warm copper-red formula — no rinse
Level 9–10	9.4 or 9.3	5 Vol · 1:2	10 min	Target red or warm golden formula — no rinse
Any Level	6.4 or 7.4	10 Vol · 1:2	15 min	Any red, copper, or mahogany permanent formula

SECTION 7

Color Correction Troubleshooting

Match the fix to the reason the result went wrong.

Rule: Never stack permanent color over a problem without diagnosing the cause first. A demi gloss correction is almost always safer and more reversible.

PROBLEM	MOST LIKELY CAUSE	SOHO CORRECTION	DEV & TIME
Too brassy / orange	Insufficient Ash or processing time	.1 Ash demi gloss at target level	10 Vol · 1:2 · 20 min
Too yellow	Needs violet neutralization	.2 Pearl 1 level lighter as toner	5–10 Vol · 1:2 · 15–20 min
Too dark	Porous hair or formula too deep	Clarify twice. If still dark, use gentle color remover before reformulating.	Do not lift over recent color
Too flat / ashy / grey	Warmth over-cancelled	.3 Gold or .43 Copper-Gold gloss	10 Vol · 1:2 · 20 min
Grey not fully covered	Insufficient Natural base or premature rinse	Re-apply with .00 as 3/4 of formula. Full 35 min.	20 Vol · 1:1 · 35 min
Faded within 2 weeks	High porosity or insufficient deposit	Refresh demi gloss 1 level deeper. Seal with acidic conditioner.	10 Vol · 1:2 · 20 min

PROBLEM	MOST LIKELY CAUSE	SOHO CORRECTION	DEV & TIME
Roots darker than ends	Porous ends over-absorbed	Lightening gloss roots only, then tone whole head to unify.	5 Vol · 1:2 · 15 min
Red pulling through brunette	Pheomelanin not neutralized	Add .7 Matte as secondary tone to affected areas.	10 Vol · 1:2 · 20 min
Result is green / muddy	Complementaries cancelled each other	Apply .4 Copper or .43 Copper-Gold gloss.	10 Vol · 1:2 · 20 min

SECTION 8

Client Homecare & Maintenance

The service ends at the shampoo bowl. Homecare determines whether color fades beautifully or disappoints quickly.

DO	AVOID
Wait 48 hours before first shampoo	Hot showers — lukewarm only
Color-safe sulfate-free shampoo	Clarifying or anti-dandruff shampoo
Deep conditioning treatment	Chlorinated or salt water swimming
Cool final rinse	Sun exposure without UV protection
Heat protectant before styling	Heat styling above 375°F / 190°C

COLOR TYPE	FADE RATE	HOMECARE	GLOSS REFRESH
Platinum / Icy Blonde	Fast	Purple toning shampoo 1–2x/week. Bond-building conditioner.	Every 3–4 wks
Cool Ash / Smoky Blonde	Moderate	Sulfate-free shampoo. Blue/silver toning conditioner.	Every 4–6 wks
Warm Gold / Copper Blonde	Fast	Color-depositing warm shampoo. UV protection spray.	Every 4 wks
Natural / Dimensional Brunette	Slow	Color-safe shampoo. Monthly deep conditioning.	Every 6–8 wks
Vivid Red / Auburn	Fastest	Red-depositing shampoo. Avoid heat. Cold rinse always.	Every 3–4 wks
Grey Coverage	Slow	Color-safe shampoo. Anti-yellowing conditioner for grey.	Every 4–6 wks

The #1 Homecare Tip
Wash in the coolest water tolerable. Hot water forces the cuticle open and releases color molecules with every wash. Cool water helps lock longevity in.

SECTION 9

Client Consultation Quick Reference

Use these questions and scripts to diagnose accurately and speak with confidence.

#	QUESTION	WHAT IT TELLS YOU
1	What is your color goal today?	Direction: natural, bold, low maintenance, lighter, darker.
2	Have you colored before? When was your last service?	Whether you need a strand test, filler, or corrective approach.
3	How much maintenance are you willing to do?	Full coverage every 4–6 weeks versus grey blending every 10–16 weeks.
4	Have you ever had a reaction to hair color?	If yes, patch test is mandatory 48 hours before service.
5	What did you not like about your last color?	Brassy, too dark, flat, or faded fast gives formulation clues.
6	Do you have reference photos?	Identify level and tone in the photo, then explain how SOHO gets there.
7	Does your color normally fade fast?	Fast fade often means porous hair. Formulate deeper and recommend homecare.

SCENARIO	WHAT TO SAY
Grey coverage — first time	"I use SOHO because it is gentler on the scalp, and I will mix a formula designed to cover every strand. We process for 35 minutes for full coverage that looks polished for four to six weeks."
Grey blending / low maintenance	"Instead of covering the grey, we make it look like it belongs there. I will weave highlights so the grey diffuses into the color and the grow-out looks intentional."
Client concerned about damage	"SOHO has meadowfoam seed oil and amino acids built in, so it conditions while it colors. Most clients tell me their hair feels better after a SOHO service."
Client wants warmer color	"The copper and gold formula works with your natural pigment, not against it. The result will be rich and intentional, not brassy."
Client wants cooler / ashier color	"SOHO already has a blue-violet base working against brassiness, so the final result stays cool and dimensional instead of flat."

SECTION 10

Safety & Reaction Protocol

Know the screening steps, contraindications, and escalation plan before every service.

PROTOCOL	WHEN	PROCEDURE	PASS / FAIL
Patch Test	48 hrs before — all new clients	Mix intended formula. Apply coin-size to inner elbow or behind ear. Leave undisturbed 48 hrs.	Pass: no reaction. Fail: any redness, itching, swelling.
Strand Test	Before lifting or corrective services	Select 10 strands at the nape. Apply formula, process intended time, rinse, dry, evaluate.	Check level achieved, tone accuracy, elasticity, and breakage risk.

Contraindications — Do Not Proceed If

Positive patch test reaction · Open wounds or active scalp irritation · Chemical relaxer within 2 weeks · Severely compromised or breaking hair · Pregnancy without physician guidance · Known sensitivity to hair dye ingredients

SYMPTOM	SEVERITY	IMMEDIATE ACTION
Mild scalp tingling or warmth	Minor	Monitor. If it intensifies, move to the next step.
Persistent itching, burning, redness	Moderate	Rinse immediately with cool water. Shampoo gently with mild sulfate-free shampoo.
Swelling, hives, significant irritation	Significant	Rinse immediately with cool water. Seek medical attention. Document the formula.
Difficulty breathing or extreme swelling	Emergency	Call emergency services immediately and rinse continuously with cool water while awaiting help.

MOST USED SHADES	PRIMARY USE
5.0 Natural	Grey coverage anchor, dark brunette
7.1 Ash	Cool dark blonde / neutralize brassiness
9.2 Violet/Pearl	Platinum toner / neutralize yellow
7.4 Copper	Copper / warm orange-red fashion
5 Vol Developer	Required for all demi-permanent services