

RETHINKING CURL CARE:  
TEXTURE AND PATTERNS

# BEYOND CURL TYPING

SERENA WOODS MCGILL



*“Curl typing is reductive, overlooking the beauty and complexity of the curl spectrum. It diminishes what makes each curl pattern, unique, and extraordinary.”*

Serena Woods McGill



I'm firm in my belief that curl typing lacks merit in determining the best care for patterned hair. The truth is that hair characteristics other than curl pattern play a more significant role in creating an effective hair care routine. Here's a breakdown of the main reasons why the emphasis shouldn't be placed on curl typing.

## 1. Curl Typing is a Set Up!

- Curl typing systems (e.g., 2A, 3B, 4C) primarily classify hair based on its curl pattern, ranging from loose waves to tight curls. However, curl pattern is only one small aspect of hair's overall structure.
- Other factors like porosity, density, strand thickness, and scalp condition play a larger role in how hair behaves and responds to products.
- For example, two people with the same curl pattern (like 3B) may have completely different needs if one has high porosity hair that dries out quickly, while the other has low porosity hair that takes longer to absorb moisture.

## 2. Porosity Affects Product Absorption

- Porosity refers to how easily hair absorbs and retains moisture. It has a direct impact on which types of products work best for an individual.
- High porosity hair tends to lose moisture quickly and may benefit from products that lock in hydration, whereas low porosity hair might need lightweight, water-based products that don't sit on the

surface.

- Using curl typing alone won't account for these differences, leading to a trial-and-error process that can be frustrating and time consuming.

### 3. Density and Strand Thickness aids in Determining Product Amount

- Hair density (the number of strands per square inch) and strand thickness (fine, medium, or coarse) influence the amount of product needed, as well as the styling techniques that work best.

- Fine hair, even if tightly curled, can easily get weighed down by heavier products, while coarse hair might need richer formulations.

- Two people with the same "4A curl pattern", for example, may need completely different amounts of product depending on their density and thickness.

### 4. Curl Typing Doesn't Address Scalp Health

- Healthy hair begins with a healthy scalp. A person's scalp condition—whether it's oily, dry, or balanced—can impact how often they need to cleanse and which types of cleansers to use.

- For instance, someone with a dry scalp might need gentler, moisturizing cleansers, while another with an oily scalp may need more frequent washes with clarifying ingredients.

- Curl typing doesn't take into account these variations, making it less relevant for a wholesome hair care routine.

### 5. Curl Patterns Can Be Mixed and Change Over Time

- Many people have more than one curl pattern on their head, with different textures or patterns around the crown, nape, and sides.

- Additionally, factors like hormonal changes, aging, and even seasonal changes can alter the way curls behave regardless of their type.

- Focusing on curl type can limit flexibility and adaptability in a regimen, whereas focusing on the hair's overall needs allows for adjustments as they show up.

## 6. It Can Lead to Product Mismatches

- Many hair care brands market products based on curl type, leading people to choose products that don't necessarily suit their hair's needs.
- For example, a "Type 4" cream may be too heavy for someone with fine, dense curls, even if they technically fit into the visual 4A-4C category.
- This approach doesn't encourage listening to the hair's unique needs but rather relying on a one-size-fits-all solution, which doesn't tend to work.

## 7. It Overlooks Individual Hair Goals

- Hair care is also about personal goals and preferences—whether someone wants more volume, less frizz, or more defined curls.
- A focus on curl type might not address these specific goals, while an approach based on understanding the unique characteristics of someone's hair allows for more tailored solutions.

### Why It Matters

- Focusing on understanding the specific needs of your hair (like porosity, density, and individual challenges) rather than curl type can lead to a more effective and satisfying hair care journey.
- By moving beyond curl typing, you'll gain a deeper understanding of your hair, leading to better product choices, healthier hair and pride!