

Getting Started

Here are some answers to basic questions that you may have regarding stretching.

Am I ready to stretch? Above all, stretching takes patience, care and financial investment.

Patience- You must wait for weeks or sometimes months between stretches for your piercing to regain its elasticity. Many people take years to reach their desired size.

Care- There is some care involved, whether it's keeping your lobes clean or dealing with a blowout.

Financial investment- The cost of stretching can really add up over time because almost every stretch involves buying new tapers, plugs, and other things needed to care for your piercing.

Is my piercing ready to stretch? Before you start, your piercing must be **FULLY** healed. Generally, a good rule of thumb is that if you can pull down on your jewelry and see a space between your jewelry and piercing, then you are ready to stretch.

Does it hurt? No, when done properly, stretching does not hurt.

What's with "the smell?" The smell is an accumulation of oils and dead skin cells. This can be cut down by washing your piercing and jewelry daily, or by wearing organic jewelry.

What's the difference between "gauging" and "stretching"?

Incorrect example: "I want to gauge my ears."

Correct example: "I want to stretch my ears."

Will my ears go back to normal if I decide I don't want to stretch anymore? If you don't stretch too big, then there is a chance, but no guarantees. Stretching should be viewed as permanent.

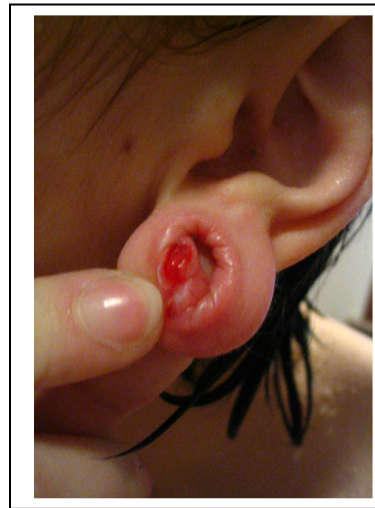
Can I hide my holes? There are many ways to hide your stretched lobes. You can use "hiders", retainers, or just wear more discreet jewelry.

Can I use a household object to stretch? Yes, you can, but it's not at all recommended. If you don't have the money to buy proper tools and jewelry, wait to stretch until you can afford it.

Common Terms

Gauge- A form of measurement referring to the size of jewelry.

Tearing- Refers to a tear within the skin of your piercing. Usually this is indicated by bleeding and, like blowouts, is commonly caused by stretching too fast (see picture).



when stretched too fast.

Blowout- When some of the skin inside the piercing is forced outside, resulting in a "lip" of skin around the piercing.

"Cat ass"- Refers to the wrinkled and puckered effect some ears take on

Flares- Flares are rims on the end of a plug that hold the jewelry in place. Plugs come in three forms: no flare, single flared and double flared.

Taping- A way of gradually stretching your ears by applying an additional layer of tape around a plug every day or so until the next size is reached.

Organics- Refers to jewelry made of bone, wood, stone, horn, etc. Due to their porous nature, they should be worn in healed piercings only.

Let's Go!

Now that you know the basics and common terms, you can begin the stretching process.

First: You must find out what gauge your piercing currently is. Lobes are generally pierced with a 20ga needle, while other body parts are pierced with various sizes of needles. To be safe, check with the professional who pierced you, and they will be able to determine the size.

Second: You must buy your jewelry. Buy jewelry that is **one size** larger than your current size. (Refer to the gauge and conversion chart on the back of this pamphlet.)

Buying correct jewelry to stretch with is where things get tricky, because there are multiple DOs and DON'Ts.

DO BUY:

- No flare or single flared jewelry.
- Stainless steel, titanium and glass are the **best materials**.
- A taper, which stretches the piercing gradually. (**Note:** The large end of the taper is the gauge you will stretch to. A taper **SHOULD NOT** be used to skip multiple sizes and **SHOULD NOT** be used as jewelry!)
- A form of liquid lubricant such as water-based sex lubes, nut or seed oils (olive, jojoba, etc.) or emu oil. Do not use silicone-based or petroleum-based lubricants.

DO NOT BUY:

- Acrylic, silicone, or organic materials.
- Externally threaded jewelry.
- Double flared jewelry.

Third: You are now ready to stretch. Make sure you have all of the materials that you will need. Please be aware that stretching properly **SHOULD NOT hurt** and **SHOULD NOT bleed**.

1. Lubricate all tapers and jewelry that you will be inserting and also lubricate your piercing.

You may be able to skip using a taper if the ends of your jewelry are rounded. If you are using a taper, half of the taper should slide in without any resistance. If there is resistance or it hurts/burns, your piercing is not ready to be stretched or your jewelry is too large.

2. Gently push the taper through your piercing, making sure that it is well-lubricated. You shouldn't encounter much resistance if your piercing is lubricated and ready to be stretched.
3. Inserting the jewelry must be done quickly after the taper leaves your piercing. The easiest way to do this is to hold the taper and jewelry together while pushing the taper out with the jewelry. This is the most effective way of inserting jewelry. Tunnels and eyelets require a very steady hand because they lack rounded ends.

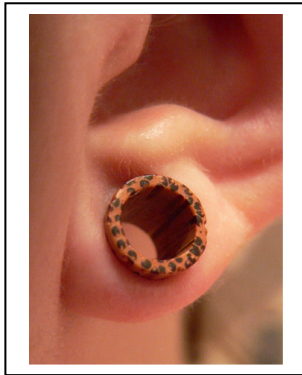
Aftercare

It is essential to take good care of your newly stretched piercing.

Soap and warm water will do the trick!

Obviously, washing your piercing and jewelry daily is a great way to keep it clean.

Bleeding or discharge? Insert a smaller gauge of jewelry, and treat it as a new piercing.



Massages and rubs are great for your lobes and help keep them moisturized and soft. **Emu oil** is great to use because it penetrates deeply into the skin and moisturizes. It also does not clog pores, promotes faster healing, and reduces recent scarring.

Jojoba oil is a vegan-friendly oil that can be used for both massages and to maintain organics. **Extra virgin olive oil** can also be used as a cheap household alternative.

Link Me!

These are great links for body jewelry, oils, message boards and communities.

<http://www.bodyartforms.com/>
"Low prices and huge selection."

<http://www.glasswearstudios.com/>
Specializing in glass jewelry.

<http://www.getgorilla.com/>
"Cutting edge glass jewelry."

<http://www.kaossoftwear.com/>
"The world's most flexible and comfortable body jewelry."

<http://community.livejournal.com/stretched/profile>
A LiveJournal community.

<http://www.bmezine.com>
All you ever wanted to know about body modification.

CONVERSION CHART

Gauge	Millimeter	Inch
16g	1.2mm	3/64"
14g	1.6mm	1/16"
12g	2mm	5/64"
10g	2.4mm	3/32"
8g	3.2mm	1/8"
6g	4mm	5/32"
4g	5mm	3/16"
2g	6mm	1/4"
0g	8mm	5/16"
00g	9.5mm	3/8"
000g	10mm	
	11mm	7/16"
	13mm	1/2"
	14mm	9/16"
	16mm	5/8"
	19mm	3/4"
	22mm	7/8"
	25mm	1"

STRETCHED

A guide to stretching your piercing safely

