IKON.IQ
PROFESSIONAL

PROFESSIONAL APPLICATION GUIDE

PRIMA-HGX

Hard Gel Xpress

UNITED KINGDOM EDITION · 2026

IKON.IQ GmbH · ikoniqnails.com

01 · GETTING READY

Essential tools

Before beginning any hard gel application, ensure you have the following tools and products prepared.

PREPARATION

- Hand sanitiser
- Cuticle pusher
- Cuticle nippers
- Orange stick (single use)
- Files: 100/150 grit shaping, 180 prep, 240 finishing
- Buffer block
- Dust brush
- Lint-free wipes
- Finger rest / support

IKON.IQ SYSTEM

- X7 or X7+ Dehydrator
- X10 Acid-Free Primer
- X8 Cleanser / isopropyl alcohol
- Cuticle oil

PRIMA-HGX & LAMP

- PRIMA HGX Hard Builder Gel
- PRIMA HGX Flexi Base (optional)
- Gel brush (flat or oval)
- Nail forms (for sculpting extensions)
- Certified UV/LED lamp (SUN2C, SIRIUS-48W or equivalent)

02 · CUTICLE WORK

Proper cuticle management

The location of the cuticle is often an area of confusion for manicurists, nail technicians and consumers. The cuticle is a layer of epidermal skin which grows from under the proximal nail fold and sticks to the nail plate. It is vital that only non-living tissue is removed during any nail treatment.

Key nail anatomy for cuticle work

- Proximal Nail Fold (PNF) — the fold of living skin at the base of the nail
- Cuticle Tissue — non-living epidermal skin that sticks to the nail plate (this is what we remove)
- Eponychium Layer — contains stem cells; must never be damaged
- Hyponychium — the seal of skin under the free edge
- Nail Bed — the skin beneath the nail plate

Gel products cannot reliably adhere to the non-living cuticle left on the nail plate — before applying any product, it is essential that all cuticle is fully removed.

03 · CUTICLE WORK

Cuticle removal technique

Carefully push back the proximal nail fold to separate it from the dead cuticle. Then lift the dead cuticle off the nail plate using a cuticle pusher, fine diamond E-file bit or an orangewood stick, according to your preference. Be careful not to miss any — but also be sure not to damage any soft tissue belonging to the proximal nail fold.

Sometimes a 'skirt' of white, dead cuticle remains attached to the proximal nail fold once lifted from the nail plate. In these instances, use nippers to remove it — but only work on the obviously dead tissue (which will be white), not the pink living tissue of the proximal nail fold.

> A GOOD TRICK
> Brush over with acetone, which will make the dead keratin of the cuticle dry up and look very pale — and much more obvious to work on.

Cuticle nippers can also be used to remove hang nails — hard, dry spikes of dead skin protruding from the lateral nail folds at the sides of the nail.

> NEVER
> Never use metal implements to scrape the nail plate. Never cut into the living cuticle tissue.

04 · PREPARATION

Nail surface preparation

Proper nail preparation is the single most important factor in achieving long-lasting gel nail enhancements. Poor prep is the primary cause of lifting and service breakdown.

1. Remove existing product — carefully file off any existing enhancement or gel polish.
2. Shape the free edge — use the 180-grit side of a 180/240 file to shape the natural nail to the desired shape and length.
3. Complete cuticle work — push back and remove dead cuticle as described in the previous section.
4. Remove the shine — lightly buff the entire nail surface with a 180-grit file or buffer to remove the natural shine. Work in one direction. The goal is to create micro-scratches for adhesion, NOT to thin the nail.
5. Dust off — use a dust brush to remove all filing debris from the nail surface and surrounding skin.
6. Dehydrate — apply X7 or X7+ dehydrator to all natural nail surfaces. Allow to air dry completely.
7. Prime — apply a thin coat of X10 primer. Allow to become slightly tacky before proceeding.

CRITICAL

Do not touch the nail surface after dehydrating and priming. Natural oils from your fingers will contaminate the prepared surface and compromise adhesion. If a prepared nail is accidentally touched, repeat dehydration and priming on that nail.

KEY POINT

The better your nail prep, the better the wear time. Never skip these steps.

05 · APPLICATION

How to apply PRIMA-HGX

Once you have completed nail preparation, including dehydrator and primer, you are ready to apply PRIMA HGX.

When working with a builder gel, you must correctly place an apex in the stress area to provide maximum strength and support, and avoid lifting. An apex is created by building a thicker area of gel. This thicker area should be central, over zone 2 (just forward of the cuticle). This is the area of the nail most prone to bending and breaking. The thickness of the application should reduce at the cuticle area, sidewalls and free edge.

> THICKNESS RULE
> Product should be much thinner at the cuticle area, and at the free edge should be about the thickness of a credit card.

Step 1 — Apply Flexi Base (optional)

Apply a thin foundation coat of PRIMA HGX Flexi Base, ensuring you get as close to the outer edges of the nail as possible. Cap the free edge, then fully cure for 60 seconds. At this step you can work on the whole of each hand as the application is minimal.

> NOTE
> Flexi Base is optional and helps with clients who struggle with adhesion. If not required, skip to Step 2.

06 · APPLICATION

Slip layer, apex & refine

Step 2 — Slip layer & apex

From this point, work on one nail at a time, swapping between hands so each nail can be flash-cured immediately after application.

- Apply a thin coat of PRIMA HGX colour gel to the nail and DO NOT CURE. This slip layer helps the next builder layer self-level towards the cuticle and sidewalls.
- Apply a bead of PRIMA HGX colour into the apex area (zone 2) and guide the bead up a little towards the cuticle.
- Work the bead from one side of the nail to the other using the tip of the brush while tilting the nail down. The brush should settle on the surface of the bead, not press through it.
- Sweep from side to side while working towards the nail tip — imagine drawing a smile.

Step 3 — Refine & flash-cure

- If you need to tidy the gel at the sidewalls or pull product out to better cover these areas, use a striper brush to gently guide the gel where you want it.
- If you didn't have enough product to leave an apex, apply a second smaller bead of HGX into the apex area. It will self-level at the edges to blend with the previously applied coat.
- If you had enough product but have lost the apex, hold the nail upside-down and allow gravity to move the HGX towards the apex area. Flip the hand back over to check — tilt the nail to make small corrections if needed.
- Flash-cure this nail while you apply the same technique to a nail on the other hand. Keep switching back and forth.
- When all ten nails are done, fully cure each hand for 60 seconds.

> GOLDEN RULE
> Apply in thin, controlled layers. PRIMA HGX's low viscosity means it self-levels beautifully — resist the temptation to over-load the brush. A smooth, well-placed apex beats a thick, uneven one every time.

07 · FINISH

Finish filing routine

Finish filing transforms a cured gel application into a beautifully shaped, smooth nail enhancement. This is where your technical skill truly shows.

1. Check the apex — view from the side. The highest point should be at approximately 50–60% of the nail length from the cuticle. File to adjust if needed.
2. Shape the sidewalls — looking from the tip, sidewalls should be straight and parallel (or follow the chosen shape). File with a 100-grit file.
3. Taper the free edge — the nail should taper from the apex towards the free edge, becoming thinner at the tip. This creates a natural look and proper balance.
4. Blend the cuticle area — using a 150-grit file, gently blend product near the cuticle area so there is no visible ledge or bump. The transition should be seamless.
5. Refine the surface — use a 240-grit file or buffer to smooth out any file marks. Surface should be even, free of flat spots or bumps.
6. Check your work — examine from all angles. The nail should have a consistent C-curve, smooth upper arch, tapered free edge and invisible blend at the cuticle.

> THE BARREL ROLL TECHNIQUE
> When filing the surface, roll the file over the barrel (curve) of the nail in a smooth, continuous motion. This prevents flat spots and maintains the natural round contour of the enhancement. Start at one sidewall and roll to the other in a single fluid motion.

08 · MAINTENANCE

Maintenance & infills

Regular maintenance (infill) appointments are essential for the longevity and appearance of PRIMA HGX enhancements. Infills are typically required every 2–4 weeks as the natural nail grows out.

Infill procedure

- Sanitise your and your client's hands.
- Check over the client's nails for any breakages, lifting or areas of concern — these need addressing during the first filing step.
- Reduce length if required.
- Remove the gel colour using a 180-grit file.
- Assess how much the apex area has grown out and debulk the nail accordingly.
- If there is any lifting, remove all traces — be careful not to file the natural nail. Never file on top of lifting as it will cause the lifted area to spread further.
- Using your cuticle tool, gently push back the proximal nail fold and remove any non-living tissue on the nail plate. Pay particular attention to the sidewalls — pull back the skin to check.
- Ensure the back of the old product is flush to the natural nail, but be careful not to file the natural nail itself.
- Remove the shine from the natural nail's new growth gently using a 240-grit file. Brush away debris with a manicure brush.
- Cleanse the whole nail with X8 to remove dust and oils.
- Apply X7 dehydrator and X10 bonder to the regrowth area only.
- Continue with your new application of PRIMA HGX using the method previously detailed.

> KEY POINT
> The most common infill mistake is failing to rebalance the apex. Simply filling the gap near the cuticle without addressing the apex results in a nail that grows increasingly top-heavy and prone to breakage.

PART TWO

Removal

09 · REMOVAL

PRIMA-HGX removal

PRIMA HGX is a hard gel and cannot be soaked off — it must be filed off.

Filing method

- Remove unwanted length using tip clippers.
- Using a 100-grit file, debulk the nails to remove PRIMA HGX. Carefully remove any lifting, if present, in the same way you would when preparing enhancements for infills.
- Regularly check the free edge and side views to gauge how much product is remaining as you work.
- When you are just breaking through the surface of the thinned gel to the natural nail, switch to a 180-grit file. Ensure your file remains on the edge of the remaining gel and does not pass over the exposed natural nail. Apply less pressure on the file at this point.
- It may not be possible to remove every scrap of PRIMA HGX without putting the natural nail at risk. In this case, use a 180/240 nail buffer to smooth the product remaining on the natural nail. It will be so thin that it will likely pop off of its own accord over the following few days.
- Cleanse the nail thoroughly with X8 and apply cuticle oil to the whole nail.

> NEVER
> Never peel or pick off gel. This will remove layers of the natural nail plate and cause permanent damage.

IKON.IQ
PROFESSIONAL

WHAT NEXT

Continue your IKON.IQ journey

This application guide is one chapter. The full PRIMA-HGX training manual covers nail anatomy, gel chemistry, advanced technique, client consultation and troubleshooting — and IKON.IQ accredited training is available across the UK and EU.

TRAINING MANUAL

The full PRIMA-HGX training manual

Nail anatomy, gel chemistry, full client consultation forms, advanced technique and troubleshooting.

ikoniqnails.com/training

BUILD THE SYSTEM

Shop the IKON.IQ system

Bases, colours, top coats, X-line nail prep, files, lamps and the X3 soak-off liquid used in this guide.

ikoniqnails.com/gb