

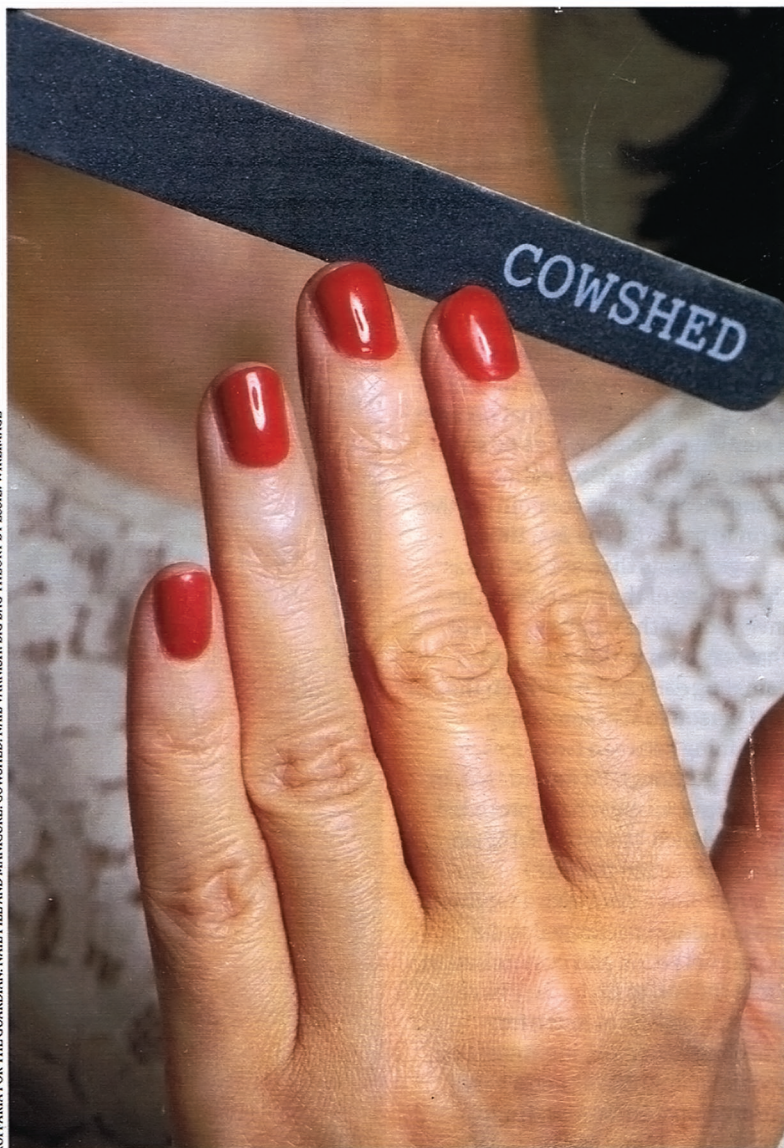
Get the look Sali Hughes on summer nail colours

I have terrible-looking hands. But they work properly, are good at putting on make-up and opening stiff jars, and resemble my late father's, so for the most part I don't mind.

I'd been ignoring them for years, when my friend Alexandra Heminsley, writer of excellent nail blog *The Definite Cuticle*, literally forced my hand. Alex changes polish daily and remembers all films by the lead actor's manicure. For several months, I hid my hands whenever we met until I realised she was a keeper and that I was going to have to up my game.

I'm so enjoying making up for lost time. Pastel colours and french manicures seem half-hearted and mimsy, so after my base coat (essential to avoid staining and chipping), I go straight for bold colour, which I prefer on shorter nails to long talons. I do two coats, starting with one horizontal stroke along the half moon at the base, then two-three strokes vertically from that to the tip, staying well away from the sides. I finish with a top coat for staying power and allow 45-60 minutes for drying (Question Time is perfect nail telly, I find).

When polish chips, I remove immediately - a naked nail is always better than a scruffy one. Here's what I'll be wearing for summer:



RUI FARRA FOR THE GUARDIAN. NAIL FILE AND MANICURE: COWSHED. NAIL VARNISH: BIG BAG THEORY BY ESSIE. WIREIMAGE

Estée Lauder
Pure Color in
Metallic Sage
£14, esteelauder.co.uk
Pearlescent can be ageing, but this isn't. A gorgeous, cool khaki with a great brush.



Chanel Vernis
in Morning
Rose £17,
020-7493 3836
I preferred this to Chanel's yolky Mimosa. It's softer, prettier pink, and just girly enough.

Jessica
Enchantress
£8.95,
jessicacosmetics.co.uk
Readers of this column will know I am mad for flattering, retro coral. This one is perfect. It stays put, too.

Essie Big Bag
Theory £9.95,
nailsbymail.co.uk
This muted, pinky-crimson is a great way to stop red looking clichéd and wintry.

Mavala
Cyclades Blue
£3.95, 01732
459412
I adore these dinky bottles of top-quality enamel. This one is lovely for jeans-and-lip-balm days.



Nail Girls in
Black #3 £10,
nailgirls.co.uk
I love this brand. Dense, grown-up glitter in a shimmering charcoal base. People constantly stop and ask me who it's by.