

Shopping & Style

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Shopping

Test drive New innovative hair tools

These recently launched hairdryers, flatirons and curling devices offer next-generation advances, so we investigated to see if they uphold their promises. By **Cristina Velocci**

Cricket Ultra Smooth Professional Styling Iron

What it is: A one-inch-wide flatiron whose ceramic-coated plates are infused with argan oil and keratin
How it works: Just like a normal straightener, this one quickly heats up to a maximum of 450 degrees. The difference is subtle but noticeable: Strands feel smoother and look less frizzy after just a few passes. The hot tool also won't leave behind any greasy residue, making this an easy swap for the product-averse.
Where to buy: \$90, at folica.com

Rowenta Beauty Versa Style Iron

What it is: A combination flatiron and curling tool
How it works: Although the one-inch plates function exactly as a normal flatiron would, the

difference is the barrel's rounded exterior, featuring silicone strips that create friction. By clamping down and pulling the tool taut in various directions, you can create five different styles: pin-straight, flips, loose curls, tight spirals or waves. We managed to master only the first three variations.
Where to buy: \$160, at ulta.com

Rusk Curl Freak

What it is: An automated styling tool that curls hair in a heated-ceramic chamber
How it works: Choose your desired time (8, 10 or 12 seconds, for an increasingly tighter pattern), temperature (375, 410 or 450 degrees) and curl direction (left, right or alternate), then place a one-inch section of hair into the barrel, clamp down and watch as it automatically sucks up strands. After a series of successive beeps,

release to reveal cartoonishly smooth spirals. The Curl Freak is extremely particular: Hair needs to be dry, clean and completely snarl-free, otherwise it won't take.
Where to buy: \$200, at JCPenney, Manhattan Mall, 100 W 33rd St at Sixth Ave (212-295-6120)

Sarah Potempa the Jet-Setter

What it is: A cordless, rechargeable travel-sized flatiron that holds up to 30 minutes of stored power
How it works: Boot up the 7½-inch-long tool using the included wall charger—just as you would a mobile phone—and unplug before using. Although the iron reaches an impressively high heat of 450 degrees, it does so at a slower pace than its full-size brethren. The smaller surface area of the silicone plates also means they're less efficient, making this better for touch-

ups than styling hair from scratch.
Where to buy: \$99 (car charger \$19), at joyus.com

Coolway Go Pro Blow Dryer System

What it is: An ionic hairdryer that styles tresses using low heat, topping out at 299 degrees
How it works: Although this tool (\$120 at coolwayhair.com) comes with good intentions—it relies on an AC motor to increase airflow rather than temperature, minimizing heat-related breakage—it didn't perform well. The kit comes with a styling product that helps strands absorb water and thus transfer heat more effectively, making it a necessary first step. Perhaps because this tester has curls, the process proved frustratingly ineffective—it took longer to get hair straight and even then, it was frizzy.