# Manscaping: from the Castro Clone to smooth balls



The evolution of manscaping among gay men mirrors broader cultural shifts in perceptions of body hair, masculinity, and grooming. In the 1970s and early 80s, body hair and mustaches defined the era’s gay style, epitomised by the 'Castro Clone' look—natural, robust, and unapologetically hairy. This image stood in stark contrast to the subsequent decades, as the AIDS crisis and the rise of gym culture transformed the ideal male aesthetic toward smooth, sculpted, hairless bodies, often displayed by the speedo-clad bodybuilders of the 90s. The early 2000s brought the metrosexual trend, blurring gender lines with meticulously groomed hairstyles and tidy nether regions, further popularising manscaping beyond the gay community.

Yet, as the 2010s unfolded, other subcultures like bears, cubs, and otters embraced a rugged, hairy masculinity, underscoring the diversity within gay aesthetics. Recently, this diversity has only expanded. Thanks partly to medical advances like PrEP and broader cultural acceptance, the strict grooming rules around body hair have softened, allowing for a more fluid and personalised approach. Hairier bodies are no longer niche but have reclaimed visibility alongside the ongoing return of the jockstrap and speedo in summer wardrobes.

Reflecting this spectrum, Queerty gathered a wide array of manscaping views from its readers—ranging from those who advise against any removal of hair to fanatics of extreme waxing. Some, like Steven from Seattle and Bradley in British Columbia, champion leaving hair untouched, valuing a natural look tied perhaps to their cooler, outdoorsy locales. On the opposite end, Edward from North Carolina advocates boldly for waxing, particularly the male Brazilian, praising the smoothness it yields but stressing the importance of proper aftercare such as lotion to soothe delicate skin.

Several respondents highlighted practical guidance where shaving is concerned. Montgomery in Canada advises starting young, avoiding harsh chemical depilatories like Nair due to their tendency to cause burns and scarring, and maintaining rigorous aftercare to prevent irritation. Todd from Dallas warns never to shave against the grain to avoid razor burn, a universal tip echoed by grooming experts. Others, like Andrew from San Diego, provide detailed reminders to manage hair differently by body area—suggesting trimming chest and crotch hair if you want to keep it finger-twirly, completely shaving the balls for sensitivity, and treating back and shoulder hair as a no-go zone for tidy grooming via waxing or laser.

Versatility and seasonal approaches also feature prominently in these testimonials. Ronaldo from Staten Island notes shaving more extensively in summer for comfort and swimwear readiness, while allowing hair growth in winter for warmth and style. Jason in South Africa cheekily points out the basics of hygiene and comfort with trimmed 'junk hair', reinforcing that grooming, after all, is also about feeling good.

More broadly, the mainstream acceptance of manscaping mirrors trends seen in wider society. Nearly half of British men reportedly engage in regular body shaving, with younger men particularly inclined to groom. This trend owes much to cultural figures like David Beckham, whose smooth, groomed appearance in advertising helped embolden men of all sexualities to embrace body hair removal or trimming as part of their routine. Practical advice from grooming authorities supplements personal anecdotes with guidelines on hygiene—emphasising hand-washing, tool sanitisation, exfoliation to prevent ingrown hairs, and using shaving oils or creams to reduce irritation.

The debate over manscaping among gay men today is less a matter of rigid rules and more about personal preference and comfort, reflecting evolving ideals of masculinity and identity. While some hold fast to natural body hair as an expression of sexiness and authenticity, others relish the feeling and appearance of smooth, meticulously maintained skin. This fluidity speaks to a broader cultural recognition that grooming is deeply personal—a practice that can enhance confidence, health, and even athletic performance if done thoughtfully and safely.

There remains, however, a consensual emphasis on proper technique and aftercare among experts and enthusiasts alike, setting safe boundaries for a practice that, despite its domestic familiarity, carries risks of irritation, cuts, and ingrown hairs if rushed or neglected. Whether waxing, shaving, or trimming, men are encouraged to proceed with care, patience, and respect for their skin’s unique sensitivity. As we enter further into 2025, manscaping continues to evolve as both an art and a ritual—a reflection of changing cultural tides and the rich diversity of modern gay male identity. Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.queerty.com/keep-your-bush-wax-your-back-never-use-nair-gays-share-their-best-manscaping-tips-20250706/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/article/2024/aug/29/why-are-so-many-men-now-manscaping> - This article explores the rise of 'manscaping' among men, highlighting that nearly half of British men regularly shave their bodies, with a significant youth bias. It traces the cultural shift from natural body hair to grooming, noting that gay men have long been at the forefront of this trend, with a focus on aesthetics and perfectionism. The piece also discusses the mainstreaming of body grooming, citing examples like David Beckham's depilated appearance in H&M ads, which spurred a crossover interest in male grooming practices.
3. <https://www.gaylife.co.za/gay-mans-guide-to-personal-grooming-manscaping/> - This guide offers a comprehensive overview of manscaping for gay men, detailing various hair removal methods such as trimming, shaving, and waxing. It emphasizes the importance of choosing techniques that align with personal preferences and skin sensitivity. The article also provides tips on maintaining hygiene during the grooming process, including exfoliation to prevent ingrown hairs and the use of shaving oils to reduce irritation. Additionally, it discusses the significance of aftercare to soothe the skin post-grooming.
4. <https://www.gq.com/story/gq-mens-body-grooming-guide> - GQ's guide to body grooming offers practical advice for men looking to manage body hair. It provides step-by-step instructions on cleaning up neck hairs, managing back hair, and trimming chest and stomach areas. The article recommends using body groomers for back hair and suggests seeking assistance for hard-to-reach areas. It also advises on maintaining a clean neckline and offers tips for managing a hairy back, including using a body groomer and seeking help from a partner for a clean finish.
5. <https://www.healthline.com/health/mens-health/manscaping-pubic-hair-tips> - Healthline's article on manscaping provides essential tips for safely grooming pubic hair. It advises washing hands and sanitizing tools before starting and suggests taking a warm bath or shower to soften hairs, reducing skin irritation. The piece discusses various hair removal methods, including shaving, and offers guidance on techniques to minimize risks such as cuts, ingrown hairs, and skin irritation. It emphasizes the importance of using clean, sharp tools and following proper techniques to ensure safety and effectiveness.
6. <https://www.thegentlemendiary.com/2023/08/guide-to-manscaping-tips-and-tricks-for-a-well-groomed-gentleman/> - This guide provides a comprehensive overview of manscaping, emphasizing the importance of hygiene and cleanliness throughout the grooming routine. It offers tips on maintaining grooming tools, exfoliating the skin to prevent ingrown hairs, and proper aftercare to soothe the skin post-grooming. The article also addresses common challenges in manscaping and provides solutions to overcome them, ensuring a safe and effective grooming experience.