

## INTRODUCTION:

A suspicious briefcase, containing a strange nailpolish set, has been confiscated by the TSA.

The TSA decides to forward the briefcase to an elite team of cosmetics experts – EARPA. (EARPA is the Estheticians Advaced Research Projects Agency.)

However, EARPA is suffering from budget cuts and has placed most of its research staff on furlough. Understaffed and unable to crack the nailpolish mystery, EARPA reaches out and passes the job on to CARPA.

CARPA receives the briefcase and a letter from EARPA explaining the problem. This letter also requests that CARPA consider a merger with EARPA so that both organizations may survive these financially tough times.



Figure 1. Letter from EARPA to CARPA explaining the need for assistance in this and future projects.



Figure 2. Briefcase containing suspicious nailpolish. It is initially confiscated by the TSA and forwarded to EARPA, who then pass it on to CARPA.

**CONTENTS OF THE BRIEFCASE:**

Upon opening the briefcase, CARPA agents find the following items:

- A copy of AHLAN!, the gossip magazine of Dubai (A)
- Nail polish accessories, such as emery boards and acetone (B)
- One sample of a mainstream magnetic nailpolish (C)
- A box containing five bottles of custom-mixed magnetic nailpolish (D)
- Secret stash of nailpolish BOTTLE CAPS hidden beneath the false bottom of the suitcase (E)

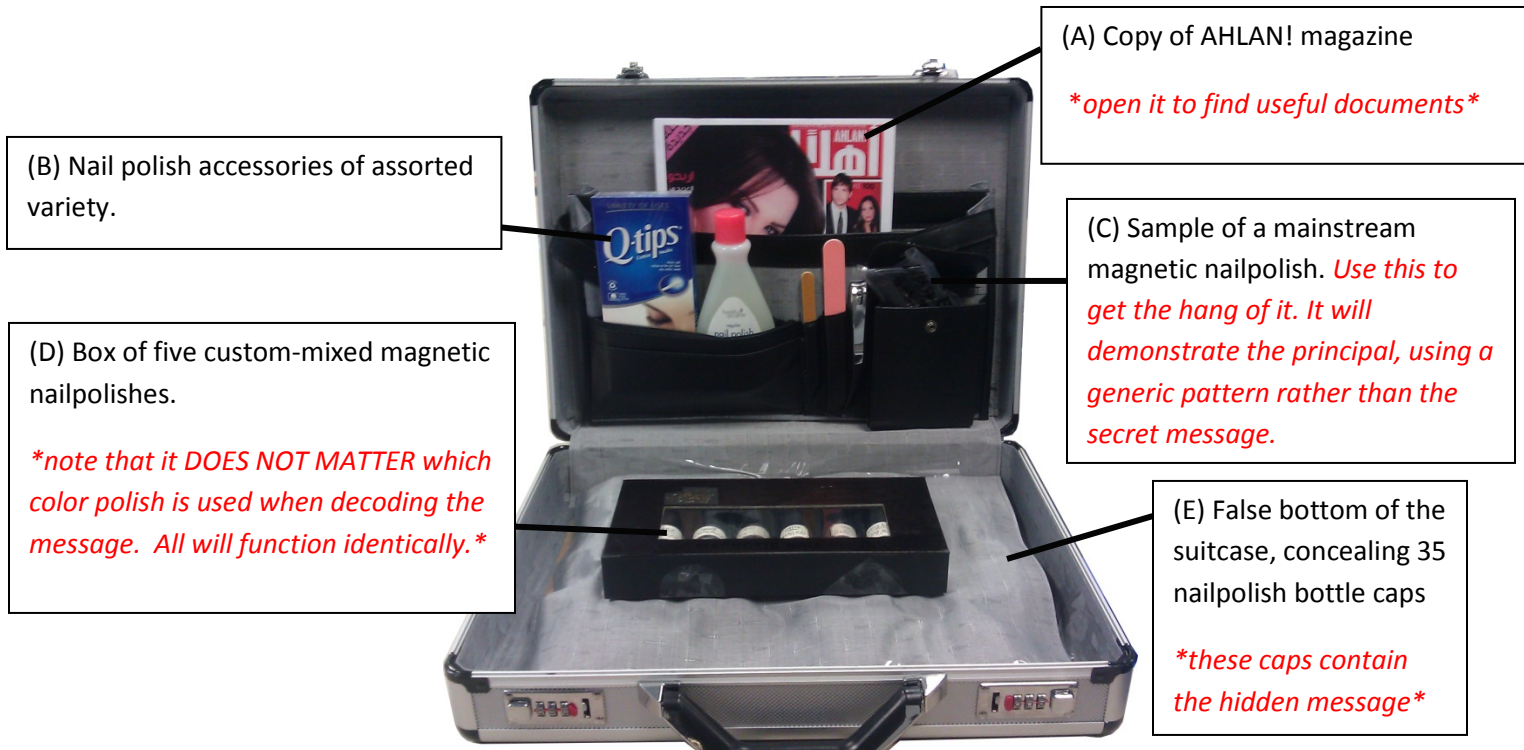


Figure 3. Contents of the briefcase, with descriptions of each item. Important points to take note of are highlighted in red.

**HOW TO DECIPHER THE CODE:**

Before delivering instructions on how to crack the secret message, the following tips must be emphasized:

- It may be HARD TO READ the letters, EVEN IF you faithfully follow the instructions. The letters are in the form of magnetically patterned nailpolish, and thus are inherently hard to read. Be prepared to deal with chicken-scratch!
- Despite the above note, please DO try YOUR BEST to follow instructions as faithfully as possible.
- When 'hovering' the bottle cap over the wet nailpolish on your nail, make the gap between the

cap and your nail as narrow as possible! They must not touch, but they must be as CLOSE AS POSSIBLE! And when doing this, don't move – it will "blur" the letter.

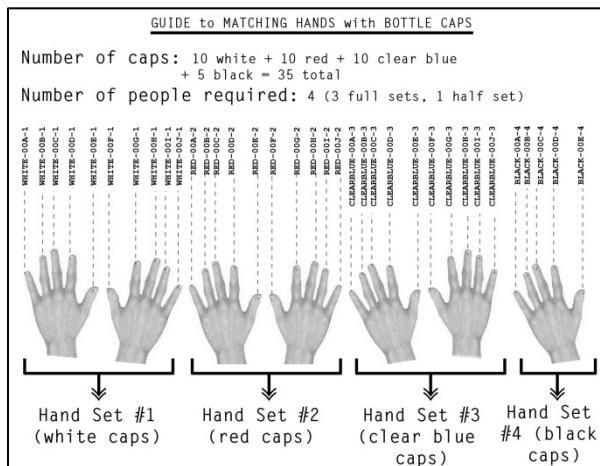
Now, for the instructions:

(a) GETTING STARTED

1. Lift up and turn over the bottom panel of the briefcase to discover 35 bottle caps.



2. These bottle caps are the key to the message! Each bottle cap contains a unique character. (Thus, this makes the message 35 characters long.)
3. Because there are 35 unique characters, 35 fingernails will be needed to reveal the full sequence.
4. Gather 35 fingers. (Unit conversion: 35 fingers = 7 hands = Three and a half people)
5. Follow the guide included in AHLAN! magazine to match bottle caps to fingernails:

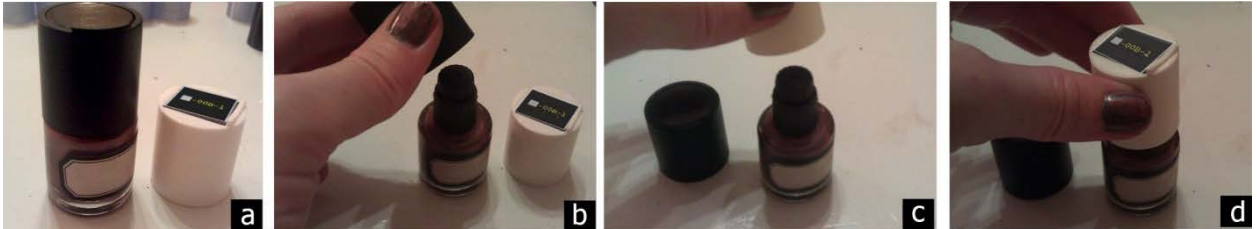


6. Continue reading the following section for how to apply the nailpolish and reveal the message...

(b) PAINTING

7. Choose ANY bottle of nailpolish from the set of five. *Color does not matter – all should function identically.*

8. Select the designated bottle cap as laid out in the sequence according to the guide (see instruction #5 above). *Note - If you are the first person, this will be a white cap. If you are the second person, it will be a red cap. If you are the third person, this will be a clear blue cap. If you are the fourth person, this will be a black cap.*
9. Exchange the default bottle cap (the one which is currently on the nailpolish bottle) with the designated one (the special one with the cryptic number on top). Detailed instructions below:



Remove the exterior bottle cap (a) by lifting up and twisting to the *right* (b). As you can see, the interior bottle cap remains on the bottle (b and c). Pick up the special exterior bottle cap and put in on the bottle by pushing down and twisting to the *right* (c and d).

*(Note – You may also leave the default cap ON as long as you use the special cap to apply the pattern! See <http://www.wikihow.com/Apply-Magnetic-Nail-Polish> and skip steps 9 & 10.)*

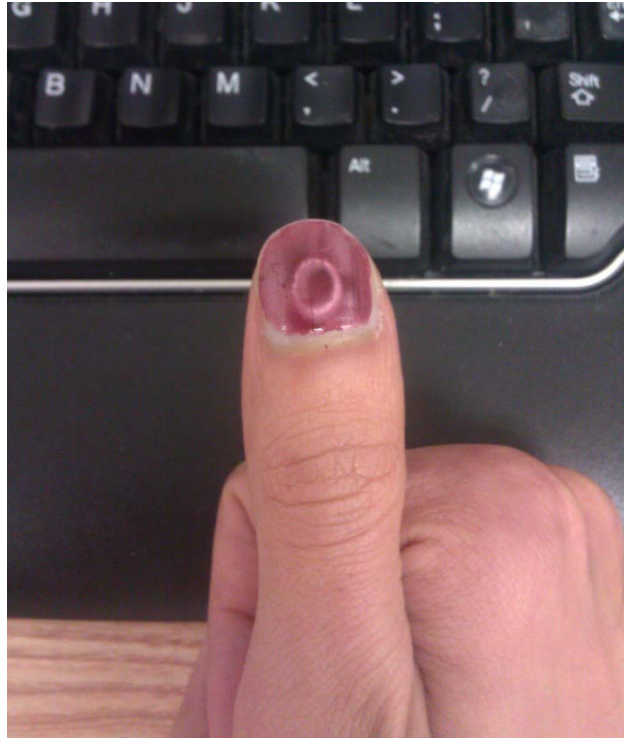
10. Now that the special bottle cap is in place, twist the cap to the *left* to unscrew the nailpolish brush
11. Paint a layer onto your nail. Then quickly turn the cap upside-down and hover it over your nail bed for 15 – 30 seconds. The raised lip on top of the cap should be just at the edge of your nail bed. PLACE THE CAP AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE TO YOUR NAIL WITHOUT TOUCHING IT.



FOR FAQs and TROUBLESHOOTING, see this: <http://www.scrangie.com/2012/02/magnetic-polish-instructions.html>

(c) FINISHING TOUCHES

12. Remove the cap. The letter should be visible now (below shows an example of the letter “o”):



13. If it is NOT LEGIBLE, remove polish using acetone and try again. If it still cannot be deciphered, try applying the polish to a stone, pebble, or the nail of a friend who has flat, wide nail beds.

14. Carry on with the next cap in the sequence, repeating steps #11 - #13 until all 35 characters have been revealed.

**CONCLUSION:**

In conclusion, it is strongly advised that this instructional manual be read in advance by administrators of the project. The code decryption technique is dicey. It might not work very well (or at all). Ah, experimental techniques.

IN the case that the characters in the message are illegible – a genuine possibility – I will reveal it in advance to the administrators. Please use the power of suggestion, i.e. “Aha, that squiggle appears to be a ‘p’, obviously!” to aid in revealing this message.

THE MESSAGE IS:

**FORAFGHANISTAN.COM/album/index.html**