

My name is Jillian and I have had Alopecia Universalis for about 8 years; I am now 24 years old. I wear a wig, I had semi-permanent makeup done and I put fake eyelashes on every day. I have been through/tried a lot, and I have finally come up with a winning combination for makeup products that will make you feel beautiful.

I want to start by saying that it is a personal choice on how you want to live your life. Wigs, scarves, makeup, no makeup, bald – it's your call. A quote that I have read has always stuck with me, and helpful to keep in mind when life gets hard and living with Alopecia. "I've learned that we have control of little in this world. It doesn't belong to us. It's out of our hands. All we can change is the way we think and the way we live." I still struggle with remaining optimistic sometimes about my "situation"; why me? Why can't I be "normal"? It isn't fair. I feel that with a good support system and a good outlook – WE can do anything. Makeup helps us women feel pretty and gives us a self-confidence that we sometimes lack without our natural hair.

Eyebrows: I just recently had semi-permanent eyebrows done (about a year ago) and I absolutely love them. Prior to having it done, I would use Clinique brow shaper (<http://www.clinique.com/product/CATEGORY4895/PROD679/Makeup/Brows/index.html>) to create a natural looking brow. Remember, less is always more. So they look more natural when they're thin and relatively light; a natural arch is always good too. To make that last all day, I would spray a little bit of hairspray into the palm of my hand, then dab a *tiny* bit along the brow I just drew. I found it created a seal and helped them from fading with my bangs rubbing against them all day. To make them look even more natural, after applying the hairspray, I would use Maybelline expert wear eyeliner (<http://www.maybelline.com/products/25/eyes/eye-liner/expertwear-brow-eye-pencil/medium-brown/153?shadeld=160>) to draw very thin and natural looking light hairs. These pencils were good because you have the ability to sharpen them to a very thin point. If you want to get a foolproof thin line, you could pop them in the freezer and it makes them extra hard. (Also a good idea to do with any eyeliner during the summer; they tend to get soft/melt when it's hot and humid outside.)

Eyeliner: I've also had semi-permanent eyeliner, but I still do this every day. I've tried every eyeliner on the market – no joke – I've spent anywhere between \$.99 to \$38 to find a brand I love. I've netted out with a brand called Prestige (http://shop.prestigecosmetics.com/IW_Products.m4p.pvx?MULTI_ITEM_SUBMIT); it's \$5.25 online, but I think it's around \$4.99 in stores (CVS, Walgreens). It goes on smooth, doesn't tug, and lasts all day; I've even slept in it and it doesn't budge, but it still comes off easily when I wash my face at night. I have a tendency to go a little heavy on my eye makeup, I *try* to lighten it up (by using less eyeliner or eyeshadow) but my sister still continues to say "why is your makeup so dark!". But, to each his own. I use a brown eyeshadow to blend the eyeliner with my eyelid, so it isn't a stark line.

Eyelashes: I've tried wearing just eyeliner, but seeing how I look with eyelashes, it doesn't compare.



I use Cheryn lashes – they are really great quality and last a lot longer than any other lashes I've tried. (<http://shop.cheryn.com/product.sc?productId=7>), they're about \$20 BUT they last a ridiculously long time; the pair I'm wearing now I first started wearing on July 3rd, 2010 – we are now in February 2011. They hold up amazingly well, note: I do not sleep in them; I apply them every morning and remove them before I wash up/go to bed.



They are a little tricky at first to get used to; tricky meaning stiff and probably wider than your eye. Before I wear them, I very carefully put them up on my lash line and see how much I need to remove in order for them to fit appropriately on my eye (everyone's eye size/shape is very different). I like to cut them from the inside corner (I like having the longer lashes on the outside corner of my eye). I probably cut about a millimeter off in order for them to look natural. I'm not talking about trimming the length – I use the "runway" version, and I really like how long/lush they are – they look extremely natural (as if I have long lashes that I've applied mascara to). I gently bend the lashes (holding one corner with my left hand and the other corner with my right, I add a little movement to give them more flexibility). I've found that it's helpful to apply them when you're just in your home at first so you can get used to them, and they could get used to the shape of your eye. Unlike most products, these lashes improve with time.

Unfortunately, these lashes do not come with anything to apply them with. I use the little clamp that I found in this package at the drugstore (http://www.sallybeauty.com/false-eyelash-kit/SBS-240454,default,pd.html?cm_mmc=CJ-_-AFFILIATE-_-3662453-_-10681185), I'm not sure if you can purchase it separately – I haven't found it. The glue that comes in the package with the clamp is great to use, you can also purchase it separately (http://www.target.com/gp/detail.html/187-9016091-6934817?asin=B001JO9RSC&AFID=Froogle_df&LNM=|B001JO9RSC&CPNG=&ref=tgt_adv_XSG10001), which I do when that one runs out. These are my everyday tools (Prestige eyeliner, eyelash glue, tweezers, scissors and clamp) and I keep them in a little makeup bag in my purse just in case.



This is where personal preference comes in and a little bit of practice. What I've found that works best for me, is I put a little dab of glue (about the size of a mini M&M) on a flat surface (I use my countertop because it wipes away easily/gets hard when it dries, so I can pull it off and it doesn't do any damage). I start with my right eye (not sure why, maybe because I'm right handed); put the lashes in the clamp and hold it in my right hand. Then with my left hand, I'll dab my pointer finger in the bit of glue on my counter. From there, I very carefully run the glue on my pointer along the lash line of the lashes in the clamp. Note: a thin white line is all we're looking for, you do not want to get glue on the lash hairs themselves; they get all clumpy.



Once the glue is on the lash line, I take the lashes (still in the clamp) and apply them to my eye (natural lash line) and I found it helpful to apply first to the outer corner. Once that sticks, I release the clamp and switch to tweezers to press the lashes along the rest of my eye. Please be very careful with tools around your eyes, I've found the tweezers give me more control than my fingers and allow me to apply a bit more pressure when sticking them on my lid. I know this sounds really complicated, but honestly, practice makes perfect. I move on and repeat the same steps to apply the lashes to my left eye. Now, you may find they lift a little bit (especially when you're applying a new pair). I use a tiny pair of scissors, dip the tip in the dab of glue on my counter, and apply it to my eye and press down the lashes with my tweezers so they no longer lift. Note: I definitely do not recommend this to everyone because it is a sharp object near your eye; you need to have a steady hand, patience and concentration. You could even use the tip of your tweezers instead of the scissors, just make sure you wipe off the excess glue.



In the beginning of using these lashes, they will lift more frequently than they do after you've used them for a while. That's why I recommend using them at home first, so it gives them a little time to get used to the shape you're putting them in. So if you do wear them out after applying them for the first time, I would bring your tools with you in case they lift.

Bottom eyelashes: I wear bottom lashes from a brand called Blinkies (<http://blinkiesonline.com/index.php>).



I apply a thin line of eyeliner along my bottom lash line and soften it with a little bit of eyeshadow on an angled brush. I do not apply these lashes as the whole strip, I cut them into little sections – so it comes in a pair, one for each eye – then out of an entire strip for one eye, I make about 4 sections (4 sections for each eye). I've found the lighter the lashes are, the more realistic they look. (You could even cut them smaller than 4 sections if you want, all about personal preference here.)



They're pretty long, so I also trim them. I like using 2 of the 4 sections for one eye. It comes with this amazing glue that is a lot stronger than the previous glue I mentioned I used for my top lashes. I don't know why, but I feel like the bottom lashes need a stronger grip. Do not put this glue on your counter

top; it's really hard to get off. I apply a dab on the case itself (same amount as I recommended for the top lashes, but you could definitely use less). I put the first section in my tweezers and run the lash line across the dab of glue. You only need a little bit of this glue, as I mentioned it is very strong and will ruin the lashes if it gets on the hairs themselves. Then I take the tweezers up to my eye and gently press the lash line with the glue on my natural lash line on my bottom lid.



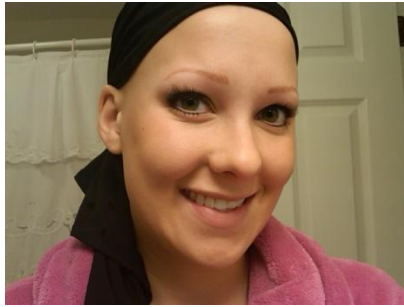
Do the same thing with the 2nd section a little closer to the inner corner of my eye.



Finished product:



Wearing an awesome BeauBeau scarf, courtesy of www.4women.com (and my pink bathrobe)!:



Semi-permanent makeup: I went 7 of my 8 years with Alopecia without having semi-permanent makeup. So I would apply my daily makeup and when I would wash my face at the end of the night, it all came off. One of my Mom's friends (who did not have alopecia) got semi-permanent makeup done. She was around 60 years old and felt that her eyebrows/eyelashes were thinning and needed something more substantial. She gave us the name of a woman who was affiliated with a doctor's office but did at-home appointments, too. I was able to lay on my couch during the whole "procedure"!

I'll start with my eyebrows – to my surprise, they really did not hurt that much. She applied a numbing cream so it wasn't really a pain I was feeling, it was more the vibration of the tool she was using and the little pinching it took to get the ink into my skin. The eyeliner was much more painful. She also applied a numbing cream but the eyes are so sensitive and having an unfamiliar object piercing the skin, it took a lot of courage. I was holding/squeezing my Mom's hand the whole time and I took Benadryl as an anti-histamine. The problem I was having was that my eye was involuntarily twitching, so she would ask me to hold still and my eye would be bouncing all over the place. We eventually worked through it and we were able to get it done. This woman was absolutely amazing. She had an artistic ability that really came in handy; she saw my face as a whole rather than focusing on putting "makeup" on each part. So my eyebrows are comprised of really thin/fine strokes of her tattoo instrument. It really looks like fine hairs; her attention to detail was impeccable.

That's it! Practice makes perfect and it really is wonderful once you get the hang of everything. The makeup and eyelashes help to make your natural beauty pop – and there's no reason why we can't look like "normal" women, just because we don't have hair.

For further reading, please visit my blog at <http://livingwithalopecia.wordpress.com/>, and if you'd like more information or have any questions at all – please email me at apbeauty@live.com.