

Chapter 3 Tools of the Trade and the Massage Environment

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Introduction

- Success as a massage therapist depends on two factors:
 - Education and skills training
 - High-quality tools and their proper use
- Massage room/massage studio—where massage is actually performed
- Massage office/paper office—where paperwork and scheduling are done

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Introduction

- Décor and furnishing of the massage room will depend on the type of massage
 - Clinical massage—might resemble a doctor's office
 - Sports and rehabilitative massage—might have sports theme and reference information
 - Stress-reduction massage—might have warm colors and scents; subdued lighting for relaxed atmosphere

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Massage Tables

- Stationary—stays in massage room
- Portable—can be moved to client location
 - Account for 90–98% of purchases
 - Cost \$200–\$600
- Table should be purchased from a reputable manufacturer

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Massage Table Features



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Selecting a Table Manufacturer

- Benefits of purchasing table from a reputable manufacturer
 - They provide great customer service
 - Most offer trial period
 - Best warranties
 - Table will have higher resale value

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Massage Table Features

- Width
 - Most are between 28 and 31 inches wide
 - Depends primarily on height of therapist
 - If table is too wide, therapist cannot reach across table due to loss of leverage.
 - Wide portable tables are more difficult to carry when folded.
 - Large clients may require side extensions to feel secure

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Massage Table Features

- Height
 - Adjustable—between 22 and 34 inches
 - Depends on height of therapist, type of massage, and girth of client
 - If table is too high, therapist is unable to utilize leverage and lower body strength to apply massage strokes. This may result in achy arms and shoulders.

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Massage Table Features

- Two methods of determining table height
 - Fist
 - Fingers



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Massage Table Features

- Length
 - Most are 72 to 73 inches long
 - Face rests add length to table
 - Bolsters reduce the length of table needed
- Frames
 - Wood—heavier
 - Aluminum—lighter, quicker leg adjustments
 - Carbon fiber—slightly lighter, but may flex and wobble

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Massage Table Features

- Padding
 - Density—light, medium, or high
 - Loft—from 1.5 inches (firm) to 3 inches (plush)
 - Memory is the ability of the foam to return to its original height after its surface has been disturbed
 - Newer padding such as aerocell and layering system last much longer than single padding

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Massage Table Features

- Fabric
 - Vinyl is most common choice
 - Vinyl substitute such as ultra leather available

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Vinyl Fabric Care

- Daily cleaning
 - Wipe daily with soft, lint-free towel and clean with gentle cleanser
 - Disinfect only when vinyl comes in contact with unidentifiable substances or body fluids
- Avoid extreme temperature change
- Avoid oil, isopropyl alcohol, and chlorine bleach
- Use carrying case when transporting

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Massage Table Accessories

- Face rest
 - Allows client to keep head straight while lying prone
 - Extends table length by 10–12 inches
 - May be stationary or adjustable
 - Other options include face hole in table (with plug) and prone pillow

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Massage Table Accessories

- Arm shelf
 - Provide resting place for arms when client is in prone position
- Side extensions
 - Provide resting place for arms when client is in supine position

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Massage Table Accessories

- Footrest
 - Can increase table length by 10–12 inches
- Carrying case
 - Protects fabric from damage
 - Provides handles and straps for lifting and carrying table
- Table carts
 - Allow table to be rolled across floor

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Massage Table Accessories

- Bolsters
 - Enhance spine and muscle relaxation
 - Many shapes available
 - Made of foam or stuffed
 - Multiple sizes for customized fit



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Massage Chairs

- Used in malls, airports, offices
- Fully clothed massage
- Cost is about same as massage table
- Key features—portability, weight, stability

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Massage Linens

- Sheets
 - Top and bottom sheets, bolster and face rest covers, pillowcases and eye pillow covers, and armrest covers
 - Popular fabrics are flannel, cotton, cotton blends, and percale
- Towels
 - Can be used as top drapes

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Massage Linens

- Blankets
 - Provides warmth
 - Weight adds comfort
- Massage linen care
 - Launder after each use
 - Replace when stained, odorous, or threadbare

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Massage Media

- Primary purpose: reduces the friction between the therapist's hands and forearms and the client's skin
- Too little lubricant can cause burning sensation on client's skin

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Massage Medium Guidelines

- Does it nourish the skin?
 - Cold-pressed vegetable, nut and seed oils are good for the skin
 - Avoid mineral oil and isopropyl alcohol as they clog pores and deplete nutrients
 - Stearyl and cetyl alcohol are safe ingredients found in many creams and lotions

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Massage Medium Guidelines

- How will the skin react to it?
 - Ask the client about potential allergies to products in the massage medium
 - Keep a copy of all product ingredient lists

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Massage Medium Guidelines

- How will the skin react to it?
 - Keep hypoallergenic cream or lotion on hand for use when requested or when you are unsure how a client might react to your primary lubricant
 - Hypoallergenic products have undergone testing for allergenicity and found not to cause reactions in the majority of test subjects
 - Hypoallergenic does not guarantee a product will not cause an allergic reaction

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Massage Medium Guidelines

- How will massage linens react to it?
 - Oil-based products are more likely to stain than water-based products
 - Bottom linens are more likely to stain than top linens
 - Stained linens appear unsanitary (even if clean) and should be replaced

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Massage Medium Guidelines

- How much does it cost?
 - Cost depends on therapist's finances and importance placed on lubricant quality
 - Quality tends to be more expensive

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Using Lubricants

- Factors affecting amount of lubricant required:
 - Emollient properties of lubricant
 - Dryness of the client's skin
 - Amount of body hair the client has
 - Massage type and therapist intent
- Less is better: more can be added as needed

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Types of Lubricants

- Cream
 - The best-selling lubricant
 - More emollient than other lubricants
 - Less messy than other media; most expensive
- Butters
 - Made from fruits, nuts, or seeds
 - Extremely hydrating
 - Allergic reactions are rare

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Types of Lubricants

- Oils and gels
 - Relatively inexpensive
 - Nut and seed oils preferred
 - Drawback: most staining to cloth
- Lotions
 - Two different uses: rehabilitation and spa
 - Deep tissue lotions used for specific injuries and conditions
 - Hydrating lotions used as finishing treatment

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Types of Lubricants

- Powder
 - Minimal friction reduction
 - Used when doing lymphatic drainage and massage during labor
- Liniments
 - Used as analgesics
 - All liniments are rubefacient and provide the sensation of heat
 - Avoid using near mucous membranes

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Lubricant Dispenser

- Either single-use or pump dispenser best
 - Prevents cross-contamination
- Dispenser can be placed on table between client's knees
- Holsters available to suspend dispenser from waist or hips

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Storage and Shelf Life

- Store lubricants in cool, dark place
- Shelf life of 12 to 18 months
- Refrigeration or freezing extends shelf life 1 additional year

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Massage Supplies

- Bought frequently: paper towels, drinking cups
- Bought less frequently and kept for customer convenience: hair spray, cotton balls, etc.

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Massage Supplies

MESSAGE SUPPLY CHECKLIST	
<input type="checkbox"/> Lubricant	Facial Massage Supplies:
<input type="checkbox"/> Liquid soap	<input type="checkbox"/> Makeup remover
<input type="checkbox"/> Disposable gloves and finger cots	<input type="checkbox"/> Cleansing cream
<input type="checkbox"/> Cleaning and disinfectant supplies	<input type="checkbox"/> Toner/astringent
<input type="checkbox"/> Box of facial tissues	<input type="checkbox"/> Moisturizing cream
<input type="checkbox"/> Paper towels	<input type="checkbox"/> Clay masque
<input type="checkbox"/> Toilet paper	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Cotton balls	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Disposable cups	
<input type="checkbox"/> Hairspray	
<input type="checkbox"/> Contact lens solution	
<input type="checkbox"/> Waterless hand cleaner	
<input type="checkbox"/> Bottled water	
<input type="checkbox"/> Mints or candy	

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Furnishing the Massage Room

- Furnishings help to create the proper atmosphere
- Other important room characteristics—window treatments, light sources, and floor and wall treatments

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Furnishing the Massage Room

- Mirror
 - Used for client grooming, client assessment, and room decor
- Clocks
 - Help keep therapist on schedule
 - Help regulate timed treatments
 - Should be more easily seen by therapist than by client

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Furnishing the Massage Room

- Water dispenser
 - Consider offering water to clients before and after each massage
- Wastebasket
 - Most states require lidded type; foot-operated models are preferable

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Furnishing the Massage Room

- Supply cabinet
 - Should have doors to keep supplies out of sight; vented cabinets help reduce odors from linens
- Chairs and stools
 - Chair is convenient for client for dressing
 - Therapists often use stools when massaging neck, face, and extremities
 - Best-designed stools are easy to adjust

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Furnishing the Massage Room

- Storage for client's personal items
 - Small baskets are handy for keys and other small but important items
- Wall hangings
 - Can be used to enhance ambiance, inform and educate client, provide acoustical properties, and add professionalism
 - Consider the type of practice you have and atmosphere you want to create

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Furnishing the Massage Room

- Window treatments
 - Provide wall decoration, reduce sound, block or filter light, and provide privacy
- Flooring
 - Carpet is best choice—provides warmth, sound absorption, and safety
- Sound proofing
 - Interior walls can be insulated or sound-absorbing panels can be used

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Massage Room Environment

- Beyond the therapist's professional appearance, atmosphere is key to client appeal
- Room characteristics contributing to atmosphere include light, music, temperature, and color

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Massage Room Environment

- Light
 - Two or more light levels may be used in the studio
 - Best light source: sunlight
 - Indirect lighting can be used on overcast days or after dusk

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Massage Room Environment

- Music
 - Helps therapist to keep rhythm of movements
 - Soft, slow music with an even melody or nature sounds help clients to relax
 - Provide a variety of music choices or allow clients to bring their own

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Massage Room Environment

- Room temperature
 - Ideal room temperature approximately 75°F
 - Be prepared to make adjustments
 - Massage tends to cool the body
 - Therapists should wear loose clothing or use a small fan to keep themselves cool

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Massage Room Environment

- Color
 - Divided into “warm” and “cool” categories
 - Warm colors create feeling of warmth and stimulation
 - Cool colors create cool, relaxing feeling
 - Consider shade when choosing colors

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Safety Guidelines for the Treatment Facility

- Comply with state and municipal building fire and safety codes
- Have current liability insurance
- Maintain a fire extinguisher and smoke detector
- Post fire escape routes and mark all building exits

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Safety Guidelines for the Treatment Facility

- Provide safe, unobstructed passage in public areas
- Choose nonslip flooring
- Make bathrooms accessible to the physically challenged
- Use lever-style door handles
- Have a designated handicapped-accessible parking space

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Safety Guidelines for the Treatment Facility

- Provide public telephones with adjustable volume control
- Keep list of emergency numbers by the telephone
- Display street address on outside of the building
- Maintain all equipment in safe condition

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Summary

- Tools of the trade support a massage therapist's knowledge, skills, and abilities
- Choice of massage table is important
- Consider cleaning and disinfection when selecting massage linens and media
- A carefully designed massage environment can tie everything together
- Follow safety guidelines to maintain safe, accessible facility

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