CHOOSING SOFTWARE

Salon software buyer's checklist

The questions to ask every vendor on your shortlist.
Same questions, same order,on every demo—that is the only way to compare fairly.

PRINT IT. TAKE IT IN. GET THE ANSWERS IN WRITING.

01 Before you book any demos

- [ ] Write down your three biggest daily frustrations — buy for those, not for a feature list
- [ ] Count your bookable staff now, and realistically in two years
- [ ] Find your current no-show rate, rebooking rate and retail attach percentage
- [ ] Note what share of bookings arrive online, by phone, and as walk-ins
- [ ] Agree a monthly budget ceiling that includes payment processing

02 What it really costs

- [ ] Monthly subscription at YOUR staff count, not the headline
- [ ] Rate Per-staff, per-calendar or per-location charges
- [ ] Card processing rate — card-present AND keyed, they differ
- [ ] SMS and email costs beyond the included allowance
- [ ] Marketplace or new-client commission, if any
- [ ] Hardware: terminal, tablet, cash drawer, printer
- [ ] Data migration, onboarding and training fees
- [ ] Contract length, notice period and early-termination terms
- [ ] Add it all up for twelve months before comparing

03 Payments

- [ ] What is the card-present rate, and what is the keyed rate?
- [ ] When does money actually reach my bank account?
- [ ] Are deposits, online payments and in-person taps on the same settlement timing?
- [ ] Is there a fee to get paid faster?
- [ ] Do I see all payment types in one dashboard, or several?
- [ ] What happens on a refund or chargeback, and who handles it?

04 Deposits and no-shows

- [ ] Can I take a deposit on ONLINE bookings?
- [ ] Can I take a deposit on PHONE bookings?
- [ ] Can I take a deposit on WALK-IN rebookings at the counter?
- [ ] Can I set different rules by service, by value, or for new clients only?
- [ ] Does the deposit apply automatically at checkout, or does the front desk calculate it?
- [ ] Can I store a card on file and charge only if they don't show?

05 Reporting — ask them to demo each one live

- [ ] Show me utilisation by stylist for last month
- [ ] Show me which services are most and least profitable
- [ ] Show me rebooking rate by team member
- [ ] Show me retail attach rate per stylist
- [ ] Show me average ticket, split service versus retail
- [ ] Can I ask a question in plain English and get an answer?

06 The day-to-day — make them run YOUR workflow

- [ ] Book a colour service with a processing gap
- [ ] Check out a client paying part gift card, part card, with a retail add-on
- [ ] Handle a walk-in when every column is booked
- [ ] Record a colour formula and pull it up at the next visit
- [ ] Reschedule an appointment that has a deposit against it
- [ ] Process a refund on a past service

07 Support

- [ ] What hours is support available, and in which timezone?
- [ ] Do I reach a person or a ticket queue?
- [ ] What is the typical response time on a Saturday?
- [ ] Is support included, or a paid tier?
- [ ] Who handles onboarding, and for how long?

08 Your data

- [ ] What migrates across: clients, appointment history, colour formulas, stock, gift card balances?
- [ ] Who does the migration, and what does it cost?
- [ ] How long will I run both systems in parallel?
- [ ] If I leave, what format do I get my data in?
- [ ] Do I get appointment history, or just a client list?

09 Before you sign

- [ ] Full fee schedule in writing
- [ ] Contract term and notice period confirmed
- [ ] Migration scope confirmed in writing
- [ ] Exit data format confirmed
- [ ] Two reference calls with salons your size, in your country
- [ ] Trial or sandbox access, if offered

Notes

Full 2026 comparison of eight salon platforms: shortcutssoftware.com/blog