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Reviews

Dyson Airwrap vs. Shark Flexstyle: We put these top-tier multi-stylers to the test

By Sophie Shaw, CNN Underscored

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This article is part of our series [Battle of the Brands](#), in which we compare category-leading products to their counterparts to determine which are actually worth your money.

Multi-styler technology truly changed the game of at-home hair styling, and it just so happens that two major vacuum brands are also leading the charge of innovative hair tools. The Dyson Airwrap Multi-Styler Complete and the Shark Flexstyle Air Drying & Styling System allow users to bring salon-level results home with a bevy of styling attachments and features. Both tools combine drying and styling technology to streamline your routine, so you can blow dry, style and set your hair all with one device.

On the surface, the Airwrap and Flexstyle have more similarities than differences — but let's see how they measure up.



[Dyson Airwrap Multi-Styler Complete](#)

Dyson's Airwrap uses enhanced Coanda airflow technology to make styling surprisingly quick and easy, whether you're going for a sleek and straight look or a volumized and bouncy blowout.

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\$600 at Ulta



[Shark Flexstyle Air Drying & Styling System](#)

A dryer, curler, volumizer and smoother all in one, the Shark Flexstyle also uses the Coanda effect for smart hairstyling. The hair tool is offered as a set with four attachments at major retailers, or you can order direct from Shark's website with your customized pick of three from eight available attachments.

\$280 at Shark

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Dyson Airwrap vs. Shark Flexstyle

The Airwrap and Flexstyle are multi-styler tools that offer similar features. Both market themselves as hot-tool alternatives that are healthier for the hair than traditional hair dryers, curling irons or smoothing systems because of temperature-measuring technology. According to Dyson, the Airwrap measures airflow temperature more than 40 times per second, ensuring that the device stays under 302 degrees Fahrenheit. The Flexstyle also constantly measures airflow temperature (Shark says 1,000 times per second), and features a no-heat setting so you can use the device to speed up your air-drying time.

In terms of look and feel, both are sleek and sophisticated. They take up about the same amount of space; however, the Airwrap comes with a convenient storage case to keep the attachments and device organized between uses. Before I get into the attachment comparisons, let's take a look at the devices' respective specs.

	Shark Flexstyle	Dyson Airwrap
Size	1.8 Inches x 13.5 Inches, with an 8-foot cord	1.9 Inches x 10.7 Inches, with an 8.5-foot cord
Weight	1.54 pounds	1.5 pounds
Number of heat settings	4, plus cool shot	3, plus cool shot

Number of speed settings	3	3
Number of attachments Included	4	7
Additional attachments offered	2 (curling-defining diffuser and wide-tooth comb)	6 (wide-tooth comb, 3 additional Airwrap barrel sizes and lengths, 2 additional smoothing brush sizes and 1 additional round brush size)
Storage case	No	Yes
Color options	1	2

I tested the tools side-by-side by using the Shark Flexstyle on the left side of my head and the Dyson Airwrap on the right side of my head. Because my hair is naturally stick-straight, thick and very long, I typically have a lazy approach to hairstyling and opt for air drying most days because of the time and effort it takes to completely style my hair. I found both tools easy to use and durable, and it was a breeze to switch from one attachment to the next, making it feel like one smooth-sailing process, rather than an involved routine with a bunch of separate steps.

Dryer

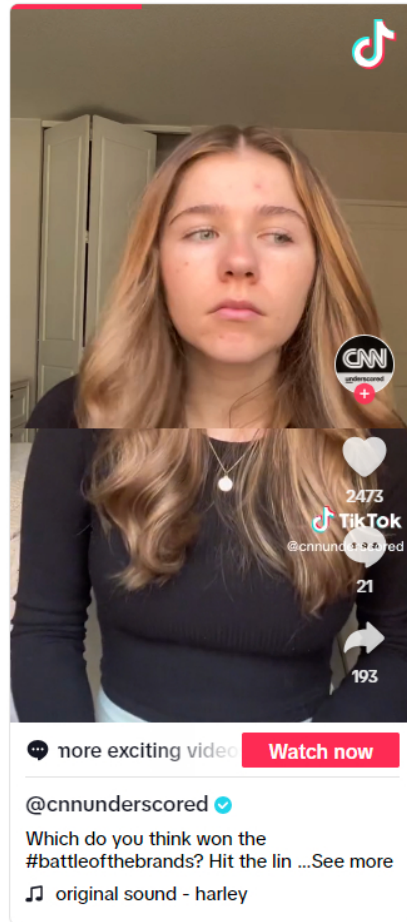


Sophie Shaw/CNN

The Airwrap and Flexstyle both boast a hair drying feature, which allows you to cut down the number of hair appliances in your routine. (The two brands also happen to make tech-driven hair dryers too, the [Dyson Supersonic Hair Dryer](#) and the [Shark HyperAir Hair Dryer](#).) The Airwrap features one Coanda smoothing dryer attachment, while the Flexstyle's dryer is built into the body of the device and then comes with your chosen dryer attachments based on your hair type (the set for straight and wavy hair comes with a concentrator, while the set for curly and coily hair comes with the concentrator and a diffuser but no smoothing brush). Both recommend starting with towel-dried hair, and then rough drying the hair to 80% before using another styling attachment to finish your look. Each

device dried my hair to that 80% state in about 5 minutes, using the max heat and speed settings.

Between the two, the Flexstyle's drying feature impressed me the most. To activate its hair dryer, the top of the device rotates and locks in place at an angle. This gives more control for your styling, and almost feels like you're holding a standard hair dryer.



Since my hair is straight, I typically use a concentrator attachment on my regular hair dryer to keep it smooth. Having the concentrator attachment on the Flexstyle gave it the same functionality and control.

The Airwrap's Coanda dryer attachment, on the other hand, isn't quite as intuitive. It features two modes, Drying and Smoothing, with the latter utilizing the Coanda technology. The Drying mode features a shot of focused airflow, but it didn't provide as much control as I'm used to with a regular hair dryer. According to Dyson, the Smoothing mode is for already dry hair, is best for naturally straight or wavy hair and will help tame flyaways. With the Airwrap's other smoothing attachments, however, I didn't see a need to use this on already dry hair, and instead tried the Smoothing mode to finish drying my hair. While my hair looked straight and smooth, I didn't notice any major difference from how it would look after using a standard dryer.

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Smoothing brush



Sophie Shaw/CNN

The Flexstyle has one paddle brush attachment that features short and long bristles, while the Airwrap has two, the Soft smoothing brush and the Firm smoothing brush. I used these to finish my usual straight styled look on 80% dry hair, after using the dryer attachments.

On the Dyson's smoothing attachments, the airflow is more concentrated and uses the Coanda technology to attract the hair, however, the Flexstyle's dual-length bristles gripped my hair the best out of any of the smoothing attachments. Overall, there weren't any major differences in the final results across the devices — both delivered a straight, sleek look.

Round brush



Sophie Shaw/CNN

To add volume to your 'do, the Flexstyle offers a large-barreled oval brush, while the Airwrap has a round volumizing brush. The Flexstyle's volumizing attachment more closely resembles the fan-favorite [Revlon One-Step Volumizer](#), whereas the Airwrap's barrel is closer to a traditional round brush.

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Again, I tested these on 80% dry hair. I found that the Dyson's smaller barrel gave more defined curls, making my hair appear fuller and bouncier. The Shark's

barrel added some volume and a bit of bend to the ends of my hair, but not any super-defined style. Since I have thick hair, I imagine the Flexstyle would make more of a noticeable difference on fine hair.



Left side: Styled with Shark Flexstyle. Right side: Styled with Dyson Airwrap. Sophie Shaw/CNN

For me, the Dyson definitely won this round. The round brush was easy to use and gave a polished blowout with minimal effort — I truly love the results every time. In the past, I had tried maneuvering a round brush with a traditional hair dryer and it was always a struggle. My hair would get caught in the brush and I would ultimately give up and just go with straight hair. The Airwrap's round drying brush combines the two steps, and my hair pulls through easily. I never thought I'd be able to give myself a blowout in under 15 minutes, but here we are!

Curlers



Sophie Shaw/CNN

The Coanda effect curlers are what make these hair tools magic. Both the Shark and Dyson feature this technology, which automatically wraps the hair around the barrel of the curler as the airflow dries and sets the hair. Unlike the wand curlers of my youth (the ones that came with a glove to protect your hand as you hold your hair to the 400-degree tool), there's no worry of burning any digits with

these. The Flexstyle has two 1.25-inch barrels, which direct the curls clockwise or counterclockwise. The previous model of the Airwrap also had separate barrels to switch the direction of the curls, but the current version is able to switch the direction of how the hair is wrapped in a single barrel (a knob at the top can be twisted to choose the direction). Now, the Airwrap comes with two sizes of barrels, a 1.2-inch and 1.6-inch, both with this rotating tip. Dyson also offers two lengths of curling barrels, with one made specifically for long hair. For this story, I tested the Airwrap's 1.2-inch barrel against the Flexstyle's curling barrel, since they are closest in size.

As with the other attachments, the Flexstyle and Airwrap essentially provided the same function with the curlers. However, I found that the Dyson handled my thick hair much better than the Shark. I was able to style my hair with the Airwrap at medium speed, high heat, working in 1-inch sections and it created voluminous, loose curls. For the Flexstyle, I started out with the same settings — medium speed, high heat, 1-inch sections — but had to switch it to high speed because it was struggling to wrap my hair. Even then, the curls weren't as defined as with the Airwrap.



Left photo: Left side - Styled with Shark Flexstyle. Right side - Styled with Dyson Airwrap. Right photo: 6 hours after styling. Sophie Shaw/CNN

By the end of the day, the side styled with the Airwrap had relaxed into waves, while the side styled with the Flexstyle looked virtually straight.

Bottom line

While the Flexstyle's hair drying features top that of the Airwrap, Dyson's device outperformed it overall. The Airwrap's ability to create next-to-professional-level styles that last — in under 20 minutes — is truly impressive.

Taking hair type into consideration, I could see that the Flexstyle would work with finer, lighter hair. Since I have thick, heavy hair — and a lot of it — it usually takes more time and power to get styles to set.

Of course, budget comes into play. With the Airwrap at twice the price of the Flexstyle, I would still recommend Shark's option for those looking for a more budget-friendly multi-styling tool.



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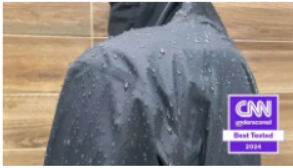
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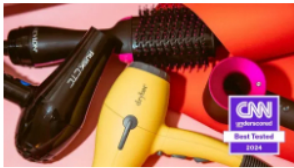
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