

Broken Nail Repair

Shucks, I just broke my nail and I have to perform in 2 weeks. What the heck am I going to do, I hate wearing acrylic nails they feel very bulky and unnatural to me.

Here is a simple method of repairing a broken nail using a Ping Pong Ball (ppb) and super glue to make an enforcing bridge. I noticed that David Russell wears a ping pong ball under his Annular/A finger, and it gave me the idea of using one to repair broken nails. I believe it makes for a more natural feel while playing.

Items needed for repairing a broken nail are:

- white ping pong ball
- sharp fingernail scissors (curved work best)
- superglue
- round file (one for chain saws works great, you can find one at a hardware store)
- metal nail file
- pointed tweezers
- fine sand paper
- clear nail strengthener
- nail polish remover
- cotton balls



A ppb repair will work for many kinds of breaks. There has to be some nail that is attached to the finger to anchor the ppb to. Pictured (Fig a) is a nail that is broken but will not be an issue until it grows out a bit, in about 2 weeks. The break has a potential to catch on clothing and extend, so you must baby your fingernail until there is sufficient nail behind the tear to anchor to and a ppb can be applied. Superglue alone makes a mess and does not work.



Fig a

I find clothing is the greatest enemy to a break. Wearing a bandaid over the break, while not playing will help to prevent extending. As the nail grows there will be new nail behind the break to provide an area to which the ping pong repair can anchor to. The nail break pictured in (fig a), I leave it alone until it grows out further or the break extends. If the break extends a ppb can be applied sooner, it will provide some stability as the nail grows out. I would continue to wear a bandaid over it when i am not playing.

Here is the nail after a week; the break has extended (fig b). It has become very unstable and I am unable to play with it at this time. I will apply a ppb repair at this time to provide stability and strength. There's no nail behind the break to anchor to, but the fix will give stability and strength so you will be able to play.



Fig b

The ping pong ball is first cut and formed to the shape of your fingernail, it can resemble a fingernail moon (fig c & d). The ppb fits under the nail. It is somewhat hidden and will provide a tremendous amount of strength to the broken nail.



Fig c



Fig d

When you are cutting the ppb, you should make it shorter than the length of your nail so that contact with the string is still done with the nail and not the ping pong ball.

If needed you can also make the repair piece as long as the nail and file it down to contour the curvature of the nail. You can also file a bevel at the point of contact with the string if the repair is the entire nail length.

I place the repair piece under the nail to check for fit (Fig e). I want to ensure that the sides or tip does not extend beyond the nail. I check to see if there is enough nail exposed at the tip to make contact with. For a break that is more extensive you may need to have the ppb at the full length of the nail. This break I am able to leave the nail tip exposed.



Fig e

When I am comfortable with the fit of the ppb I will then use superglue to anchor it to the nail. Superglue works very quickly and you must be ready to do this quickly. There are only a few seconds to maneuver the ppb, but needs to be in place to get it to form to the nail and become a strong anchor.

When anchoring the repair piece I use the pointed tweezers, superglue, and a paper towel so as not to get anything on the table. You can also have a friend assist you if needed.

I hold onto the ppb with the tweezers while I place superglue on the top of the ppb. I use only one or two drops at most. Too much can make a mess and things can get sticky quick. I then place the repair piece under the nail, position it to where it will provide the most strength.

When the ppb is positioned where I want it I apply pressure with my thumb under the finger tip to get the piece to adhere to the nail. There will be oozing of superglue but there shouldn't be too much if you used only one or two drops.

The finger will stick to the oozing superglue. I have found that after about 60 seconds, I can separate the finger from the ppb.

The first time I used this kind of repair, it felt funny under the nail, but I very quickly got used to it and as the nail grows out, the ppb also moves away from the initial contact point of the finger under the nail. It was not uncomfortable but you are aware something is there for the first day or two.

In the initial repair, there was not enough nail behind the break to anchor too. The nail was stronger after the ppb, but it continued to be at risk for continued extension of the break. I continue to wear a bandaid when not playing.

After the superglue has dried and everything is stable, I file the nail and use sandpaper over the break itself to get rid of any rough edges or snags that may catch on clothing. I apply a couple of coats of clear nail strengthener over the repair to make it smooth. Here is the nail with the repair finished (fig f).



Fig f

Here is the same nail two weeks after the initial placing of the repair piece (fig g). There is now ample nail behind the break for the repair piece to anchor to. This now is a very stable repair and I have great confidence in my ability to play.



Fig g

Usually once a week the repair piece will become loose. I am able to use my nail file and separate the repair piece away from the nail and reapply it.

The ppb will have dried glue on it, I use the metal file to remove the dried glue and clean the surface of the ppb. I return the ppb to its original condition. I want the ppb to contact nail and ppb to dried glue, (fig h).



Fig h

I will need to reapply the repair piece several times before the nail grows out completely. After making few repairs I was able to refine my process and adapt the fix to most breaks. If you have a nail that is broken and you are contemplating cutting it off, you have nothing to lose but the nail. Try this method and adapt it to your individual need and I think you will find it to be a satisfactory fix to broken nails.

Happy Picking, Bill