

features

The latest trends, techniques, and insider secrets—revealed.

Complexion Perfection

Whatever your skin woes, finding the right products and knowing how to use them can make all the difference.

By Jennifer Genevieve Magid

Fine lines? Check. Acne? Uh-huh. Bags, broken capillaries, and brown spots? Yes, yes, and yes. Let's face it—most women have a little something to hide. That's why every day, a good number of us reach for the bottle...or tube, wand, or compact. In fact, according to a survey by Web Market Pro, foundation is one of the top products most women prefer not to go without. Even so, having all the cosmetics in the world lined up on your bathroom counter won't make a difference if they're not the right products for you. Thankfully, there are a few guidelines and some easy application tricks that will enable you to fake it, creating the illusion of a flawless complexion no matter what lies beneath.

The Skin You're In

Before you begin your search, take stock of your skin type, tone, and your lifestyle to determine the kind of coverage you need. Do you wake up looking like an oil slick? If so, cream foundation, even if it claims to be oil-free and non-comedogenic, probably isn't your best bet. Do you have olive skin? Chances are, you'll be better off with products that have pink undertones, rather than yellow, which tends to work better on paler complexions. Too short on time to deal with moisturizer, sunscreen, and foundation? Find a multitasking product that does all of the above. And most important, familiarize yourself with the major product categories in advance so you can pinpoint what's right for you:

Concealers: Apply concealer to camouflage imperfections such as blemishes and undereye circles (you may find it's all you need). For best results under eyes, choose a creamy yellow-based formula that's one or two shades lighter than your skin tone. For blemishes and scars, a firmer concealer is generally better, and a green-tinted version may be helpful for neutralizing redness.

Tinted Moisturizer: If you need a little coverage but find that foundations are too heavy, a tinted moisturizer may do the trick. They provide a supersheer finish, are easily to apply, and won't settle into fine lines or wrinkles. Plus, they often come with SPF protection—something you should look for in all your coverage products.

Primers: One of the hottest categories in the coverage arsenal, primers are specially formulated to fill in lines, minimize pores, and smooth out skin. Available in clear or tinted versions, they can be used alone or relied on give your base extra staying power and a photo-ready finish.

Foundations: The meat and potatoes of makeup, the right foundation can truly revamp the look of your skin. Begin by selecting a color that either matches your skin tone or is one shade lighter. Oil-based foundations glide easily and are often a good choice for dry skin; their heavier, matte coverage tends to be more suitable to mature complexions. Water-based formulas have more universal appeal, imparting a sheer, satiny finish to all most skin types. And powder foundations can be a great option those with oily skin or for anyone on hot, humid days.

Powder: Like the frosting on a cake, powder is the finishing touch to your coverage recipe. Translucent powders, which still contain some color, are often the most natural-looking option. Generally, loose powders are best applied in the morning, while pressed powders are more suitable for touch-ups throughout the day. In all cases, select a



Photo credit: Graca Victoria

Run for Cover

In your quest to master the art of faking flawless skin, check out these high-coverage product picks.

El Solutions Complexion Primer: This oil-free formula keeps foundation looking freshly applied for up to 12 hours.

Philosophy on a Clear Day Protection Cream: Ideal for those with acne-prone skin, it “keeps the good treatments in and the bad elements out,” according to the company.

Bourjois De Pinceau Liquid Concealer: Light reflecting and lightweight, it makes eye bags vanish into thin air.

Clinique Airbrush Concealer: A built-in concealer brush makes this formula perfect for covering tiny imperfections.

Stila Illuminating Powder Foundation: This multipurpose formula is perfect for acne-prone skin and can be used dry or damp.

Alison Rafaelle Mineral Powder Foundation: The high mineral content helps balance oil-slicked complexions and conceals flaws at the same time.

Sue Devitt Triple C Weed Whipped Foundation: Nourishes dry, winter-weary skin with chamomile oil and seaweed.

Cargo One Base: Perfect for parched spots, this tube with a wand contains essential oils like ultra-moisturizing avocado oil.

shade that matches your skin tone as closely as possible.

Blotting Papers: Easy to use and portable, blotting papers can be a godsend for anyone who struggles with shine. They come in both individual-sheet and roll versions, and some are even treated with a dusting of powder for extra shine protection.

Also keep in mind that what works for day won't necessarily provide the right coverage for night, and vice versa. "For daytime, you might want to use something light and tinted," says makeup artist Vivian Hildago of Miami's Primal Studio. "For night, try something with more coverage." (Two options Hidalgo loves for all skin types: Laura Mercier Tinted Moisturizer for day, and M.A.C. Face & Body Foundation mixed with M.A.C. Liquid Shimmer for evening.)

Ace That Base

Of course, finding the right products is only half of the equation. Preparation and application are also important to creating a naturally flawless look. Stacy Cox, owner of the Pampered People Spa in Los Angeles, says that convincing coverage starts with well-prepped skin. "Having freshly exfoliated and moisturized skin is key to making your products look soft and almost transparent," she says. "Foundation, for example, often flakes off and doesn't last throughout the day if it's being applied on dry, flaky dead cells." For a top-notch facial slougher, try Astara Daily Refining Scrub or Paula Dorf Simple Skin Gentle Bamboo Exfoliator.

When it comes to applying concealer, you can use a small finely tipped concealer brush, or if you prefer, use your fingers as tools; "just make sure your hands are very clean," Hidalgo says. After washing, "Warm up the makeup on your fingers," to make it more spreadable, she suggests. As Cox explains, "Your middle and ring fingers are the best to use when blending because they won't impart as much pressure, especially about the delicate eye area." For best results, gently dot the concealer along the area, bearing in mind that concealer can travel up toward the eye during the day, so it's best not to apply it too close to the lower lash line. Also remember to use it sparingly, giving the product a chance to absorb and then applying more if needed—a rule that also applies to primers and tinted moisturizers.

When you're ready to apply foundation, Hidalgo recommends investing in a great foundation brush formulated for both wet and dry application, such as Stila Perfecting Foundation Brush 27 or Smashbox Foundation Brush 13. For the most natural-looking finish, "Really brush it into the skin," she says. It's also fine to use your fingers or a lightly dampened sponge. When applying, work quickly and carefully, using a light hand and moving from the center of the face out to the sides, to prevent a hard line at the jaw and hairline. And if you want an even more undetectable finish, Cox suggests trying this technique beforehand: "Cut the makeup's intensity by adding a small amount of your moisturizer to it to thin it out," she says. "The result will be what I call a moisture-tint foundation."

Once your foundation is blended and set, blot your face lightly with a tissue, then finish by applying a fine dusting of powder with a large, good-quality brush. For best results, remove excess powder from the brush by lightly tapping it (never blow, as it can spread bacteria from your mouth to the product). And remember that, as with most things, the less-is-more rule applies—just a bit of sheen will give you a more natural look and, thus, more flawless results.

Clarins True Comfort Foundation: Reflects light for a luminous, not cakey, complexion.

Neutrogena Healthy Skin Enhancer: Simplifies your morning routine to one easy step by providing a healthy dose of retinol, SPF 20, and sheer tint all in one.

Fresh Face Luster: Can be used either as a light-coverage foundation or finishing powder, without the unwanted powdery look.

Lancôme Photôgenic Sheer Pressed Powder: A complex of 2D reflecting powders and 3D diffusing powders adjusts to promise perfect-looking skin from every angle.

Pixi Hydrotint Duo: This tinted moisturizer with SPF 20 and antioxidants also contains a lip and cheek tint in the cap—perfect for your weekend routine.

Perfect Beauty Skin Perfecting Gel: Absorbs excess oils, smoothes, disguises, and tones, leaving skin with an even, healthy-looking glow.

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