

NANDU NAI LEARNING

Makeup Artist

Salon textbook

English

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Prep and Undertone



Read the skin before you open a bottle

A makeup appointment begins before the first brush touches the face. Ask the client to arrive with clean skin if she can, then remove whatever is left with a gentle cleanser and a fresh cotton pad, working from the centre of the face outward and stopping at the lash line. Give the skin ten minutes to dry, because cleansed skin looks different once the water has gone. Ask what she uses at home: a retinoid, an acid, benzoyl peroxide, or a new serum can leave the surface flaky and reactive. Ask about allergies, recent waxing, threading, facials, and any product that has reacted badly before. A short consultation protects the client and saves you from rebuilding a base halfway through the appointment.

Look at the skin in daylight before you choose a single product. Dry patches on the cheeks, oil down the centre, texture across the nose, and redness around the nostrils each change the plan. A face that is dry everywhere needs a richer cream and a thin, flexible base; a face that is oily down the middle needs a light gel and powder only where the shine appears. Look at the eyelids and under the eyes too, because the skin there is thin, creases first, and shows every heavy layer. Note what you see on the client card rather than trusting memory, and photograph the bare face if the client agrees, so that the finished look can be compared with the skin you started from.

Ask what has changed in the last month, not only what the client usually does. A new facial, a course of acne medication, a holiday in the sun, hard water after a move, poor sleep before a wedding, and the week before a period all change how skin behaves without changing its basic type. A client who says her skin is oily may arrive dehydrated from a foaming wash used three times a day. Write down both the type and the current condition. The condition decides the preparation today; the type decides what you keep in the kit for her next visit.

End the consultation with a plan said out loud. Name the finish you are aiming for, the coverage, the areas you will correct, and the parts of the face you will leave alone. Ask whether the client has a photograph of a look she likes, then say plainly what will suit her skin and her event and what will not. If she asks for a shape her face does not have, explain now rather than after an hour of work. Agreement at the start prevents a disagreement at the mirror, and it gives you a reason to refuse a request that would damage the skin.

- 1. Wash your hands, then sanitise them in front of the client.
- 2. Lay fresh paper and put out only the products this look needs.
- 3. Remove the day's makeup with a gentle cleanser and fresh pads.

- 4. Wait ten minutes for the skin to dry and settle before judging it.
- 5. Check the skin in daylight and name what you see: dryness, oil, redness, texture.
- 6. Ask about retinoids, acids, allergies, waxing, threading and recent facials.
- 7. Patch test anything new on the inner forearm and wait before using it.
- 8. Write the answers and the agreed plan on the client card.

Salon example

Nisha, thirty-one, booked a party makeup for her sister's engagement in Delhi. She arrived straight from work with sunscreen, a tired foundation, and a flaking nose. She described her skin as oily, which was only half true: her forehead and nose were shiny, but her cheeks and the sides of her mouth were dry and rough. She had used a retinoid twice that week and had a facial four days earlier. I removed the makeup with a mild cleanser, waited ten minutes, and wrote the details on her card. We used a light gel on the centre of her face and a richer cream on the cheeks, waiting four minutes between them. The base went on without catching on the flakes. I skipped the silicone primer on the dry patches and used it only on her nose. Her makeup held through six hours of photographs and dinner, and she has since stopped using the retinoid on the day of an event. The lesson was not about the products she owned but about the order in which she used them, and that order cost nothing to change.

CAUTION

Never scrub, exfoliate, or apply a strong acid during a makeup appointment, and do not work over broken, weeping, or inflamed skin; refer the client instead.

Warm, cool, neutral and olive

Undertone is the colour beneath the surface of the skin, and it does not change with a tan, a late night, or a bad week. Many artists still test the veins at the wrist, but veins are an unreliable signal: they can look blue, green, or purple on the same arm depending on the light and the depth of the skin above them. The jewellery test fails for the same reason, because metal reflects the room as much as the skin. Look instead at the neck, the chest, and the edge of the jaw in daylight, and compare what you see with three foundation stripes placed side by side.

Warm skin has a golden, yellow, or peachy depth, and it usually tans rather than burns. Cool skin has pink, red, or bluish depth, and it often burns first in strong sun. Neutral skin holds a balance of the two, so neither gold nor pink dominates, and many foundations look acceptable on it for a few minutes before the error shows. None of these labels is a compliment or an insult; they are directions for choosing colour. On South Asian skin the range is wide, and a client can be warm in summer light and olive in winter without her undertone changing at all.

Olive is the label most often missed. Olive skin carries a green or grey-green cast that sits over a warm or cool base, and it can read golden in one room and grey in another. A foundation with a pink base turns olive skin ashy within minutes, and a foundation with too much yellow turns it brassy. The right shade looks slightly muted in the bottle and disappears on the jaw. Keep two or three olive-friendly

depths in the kit, especially in the medium and deep ranges, and test them on the jaw rather than on the forehead, which is often a shade deeper from sun.

Light changes the reading more than most artists admit. Tungsten bulbs add gold, fluorescent tubes add green, and the white light of a phone ring light flattens every difference. A match made under warm salon light often looks pink outdoors, and a match made beside a window can look grey at a night event. Read the undertone in daylight, confirm it on the neck, then look again under the light of the event. If the client has been matched before and the result turned orange, ask which product she used; the answer tells you more than a wrist ever will.

- 1. Ask the client to sit facing a window before you open any bottle.
- 2. Look at the neck and chest, not at the wrist or the back of the hand.
- 3. Compare the jaw with three stripes: warm, neutral, and olive-friendly.
- 4. Identify whether gold, pink, or neither dominates the skin.
- 5. Check an olive shade whenever the skin looks golden but turns ashy in pink.
- 6. Ask how the skin behaves in sun: tanning, burning, or both.
- 7. Note the shade name and batch on the card once it matches.
- 8. Look again under the light the event will use before you commit.

Salon example

Sneha, twenty-seven, came for a reception makeup carrying three foundations that all turned pink on her. In the salon she looked warm and golden, so the mistake would have been easy to repeat. I took her to the window and drew three stripes along her jaw: a golden medium, a neutral medium, and an olive medium. The golden stripe looked close at first, the neutral looked flat, and the olive stripe seemed to vanish into her neck. After ten minutes the golden stripe had turned slightly peachy while the olive stripe stayed true. Her previous purchases were all pink-based, bought on a shop assistant's advice under a warm bulb. We wrote the shade name, the batch number, and the word olive on a card she keeps in her bag. She has not bought the wrong foundation since, and she now asks for a sample before she pays. The counter had not been dishonest; it had simply tested her in the wrong light and on the wrong part of her body. She now asks for three stripes and a walk to the window, and she says no shop has refused.

CAUTION

Do not confirm an undertone under warm salon bulbs, a ring light, or a phone screen; each adds a colour that is not in the skin.

Match the jaw and neck, not the hand

The hand is almost never the right reference. It is usually darker, redder, and more weathered than the face, and it sits at the end of an arm that has seen more sun than the jaw. A foundation that matches the hand will usually sit too dark and too warm on the face, and the client will blame the product rather than the test. Test on the jaw instead: place three stripes from the cheek down to the jawline,

blend the lower edge into the neck, and compare the result with the skin below it. Then walk the client to a window and look again, because a shade that is invisible in one light can leave a border in another.

The correct shade should vanish along the jaw and continue the neck without a visible edge. If the neck is lighter than the face, match the neck, because a dark face floating above a pale neck is the first error anyone notices in a photograph. If the neck is deeper than the face, which happens after a holiday, match the face and even the body with a body product if the client wants an even look. Never darken a fair face to match a tanned chest, and never lighten a deeper face to match a pale neck; both produce a mask that reads badly in daylight and worse in flash.

Foundation also changes after it meets the skin. Most liquid formulas oxidise, some by half a shade, a few by a full shade, and the change is fastest on oily skin in heat. Apply the test stripes, wait ten minutes, and look again before you decide. Do not test on skin that is still flushed from threading, waxing, or a facial, because redness pushes both the client and the artist toward pink shades that will look wrong an hour later. If the client has a tan line at the neck, match the lighter area unless the whole chest will be covered by the outfit.

Matching is a measurement, and it should be treated like one. Write the shade, the batch, and the mixing ratio if you adjust it, so that the next appointment starts from a known point. Photograph the finished jaw and neck in daylight and with flash, then show the client both images. A client who has seen the match on her own neck is far less likely to ask for a lighter shade at the last minute, which is often the request that ruins an otherwise good base. When she asks to look fairer, explain what the camera will do with a lighter face and a deeper neck, then let her choose with that knowledge.

- 1. Clean the jaw so no old base sits under the test stripes.
- 2. Draw three stripes from the cheek down to the jawline.
- 3. Blend the lower edge into the neck with a clean sponge.
- 4. Walk to daylight and look at the border, not the centre.
- 5. Wait ten minutes for oxidation before choosing a shade.
- 6. Compare the face with the neck and pick the closer of the two.
- 7. Blend the chosen shade down the throat and past the jaw.
- 8. Record the shade, batch, and any adjustment on the client card.

Salon example

Priya, twenty-nine, was a bridesmaid at a wedding in Jaipur and had been matched to her hand at a counter the week before. She arrived with a face two shades too dark and a hard line at the jaw that her friends had already noticed in the mehndi photographs. We removed the base and started again. Her hand was deep golden, her face medium golden, and her neck lighter still, because her blouse would leave the neck and collarbone visible. I tested three shades along the jaw, waited ten minutes, and chose the one closest to her neck, then blended the last of it down her throat and over the tops of her shoulders with a damp sponge. In the photographs she looks like herself, and the line that everyone had seen is gone. She told me afterwards that she had never known a foundation could be tested anywhere but the hand. I sent her the daylight photograph that evening, and she replied that it was the first picture from that week in which her face and neck were the same colour.

CAUTION

Do not match a client while the face is flushed from threading or waxing; wait for the redness to settle, or you will choose a shade that is too pink.

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Thin Base, Long Wear



Thin layers, small amounts

A good base is built in thin layers, not in one thick coat. Start with a small amount, about one pump for a full face, on the back of your hand rather than on the client's skin. Pick it up with a brush or a damp sponge and press it into the face in short, tapping motions, working from the centre outward. Most faces need coverage in a few places, not everywhere. One sheer layer over the whole face keeps the skin looking alive, and a second thin layer on the cheeks and chin handles the rest. When the first layer is still wet, stop; wet product moves, and anything piled on top of it streaks.

Thin layers dry faster, sit closer to the skin, and crease less. They also leave room for concealer and powder without turning the face into a mask. If the client asks for full coverage, explain that full coverage is an effect, not a thickness. Build it in three thin passes with drying time between them, and use a small brush to place extra product only on the marks that need it. A thick layer hides texture for ten minutes, then settles into every pore and fine line. Thin layers look better at hour six, which is when the photographs are usually taken and when the client is most tired.

The order of work matters as much as the amount. Do the forehead first, then the nose and the inner cheeks, and finish with the jaw, the ears, and the neck, because those last areas need the least product and the most blending. Keep a clean tissue beside you and wipe the brush handle, not the bristles, when it becomes tacky. If the base starts to drag rather than glide, the skin underneath is either too dry or the layer above is too wet. Stop, press the area with a clean damp sponge, and let it settle before adding anything. Most base problems are solved by waiting and pressing rather than by adding another product.

Judge the result from a step back, not from ten centimetres away. The skin should still look like skin, with the natural shadows of the face visible and the edges of the base invisible at the hairline, the nostrils, and the ears. Ask the client to turn her head slowly while you watch the jaw and the neck. If the base looks heavy, the answer is less product, not more powder. If it looks patchy, the answer is better preparation, not a different foundation. If it looks flat, the answer is a little light on the high points, not a lighter shade all over. Every correction has a cause, and almost none of them is solved by adding more of the thing that failed.

- 1. Shake or stir the foundation and place one pump on the back of your hand.
- 2. Pick up a small amount with a damp sponge or a stippling brush.
- 3. Press from the centre of the face outward, using tapping rather than dragging.
- 4. Stop when the first layer is still slightly wet and let it set.

- 5. Add a second thin layer only where the skin still shows through.
- 6. Use a small brush with concealer on individual marks, not on whole areas.
- 7. Blend the edges into the hairline, the ears, and down the neck.
- 8. Step back and check in daylight before you powder.

Salon example

Ayesha, twenty-eight, came for an engagement makeup with acne marks on both cheeks and a firm belief that only a heavy base would cover them. Her last artist had used a full-coverage foundation in one thick layer, and by the time the photographs were taken it had settled into the marks and made them look deeper. I asked her to trust a different method for one appointment. We used one thin layer over the whole face, then a small brush with a slightly firmer concealer on each mark, and pressed powder only on those spots. The skin still looked like skin, the marks were quieter, and she could hug her cousins without the base moving. At the end she asked me to teach her the method for her own wedding. The explanation took less time than removing a thick base would have, and she practised it twice before the trial. On the wedding day she did her own base in the morning and carried a small brush and concealer for the marks, which is exactly what the method was for.

CAUTION

A thick base cracks when the face moves and creases under the eyes; more product is not the same as more coverage.

Cream first, then powder

Cream products bond with each other, so cream base, cream blush, cream contour, and cream highlight belong together in one stage. Powder then locks the surface and controls shine. The order matters: powder over wet cream turns patchy, and cream over powder lifts the powder underneath and leaves a small ball of product on the skin. Work through the face in zones, finishing one zone before moving to the next, and give each cream product a minute to settle. If you can still see a wet edge, the powder will find it and the whole area will look uneven in daylight.

Set only where the skin actually becomes oily, usually the centre of the forehead, the sides of the nose, the chin, and the inner cheeks. Leaving the outer cheeks and the jaw unset keeps a little light in the skin, which photographs better than a fully matte face. Press the powder with a puff instead of sweeping it with a fluffy brush. Pressing pushes powder into the base and makes it hold; sweeping moves it across the surface and lifts the product underneath. Tap off the excess before every press, and use a small amount rather than a visible cloud.

Long wear comes from thin layers plus targeted powder, not from a thick mask. At the end of the appointment, finish with a setting spray held an arm away from the face, and let it dry without touching the skin. In humid weather a light dusting of powder over the T-zone just before the client leaves is worth more than a heavy setting layer at the start. If the client will be outdoors, keep the

spray light and avoid a dewy finish that turns shiny within an hour. The aim is a base that still looks like skin at the end of the evening, not one that looks like a photograph at the beginning.

Watch for the two common failures of the cream-then-powder rule. The first is pilling, when a water-based product is applied over a silicone-based one before the first has set, or the other way around; the base rolls into small flakes under the brush. The second is separation, when oil or sweat lifts the base from the skin in patches, usually around the nose and the mouth. Pilling is fixed by removing the area and starting again with fewer layers. Separation is fixed by blotting, pressing with a clean sponge, and re-powdering only that spot. Neither is fixed by adding more foundation over the top, which is the most common and least successful repair.

- 1. Finish every cream product before you open the powder.
- 2. Let each cream layer set for about a minute before the next.
- 3. Press powder with a puff on the T-zone and the sides of the nose.
- 4. Leave the outer cheeks and the jaw unset unless they shine.
- 5. Tap the puff or brush before it touches the face.
- 6. Press the powder in rather than sweeping it across the skin.
- 7. Spray setting mist from an arm away and let it dry untouched.
- 8. Blot before any touch-up powder during the event.

Salon example

Tanya, thirty, had an outdoor mehendi lunch in April: four hours in the sun and another four under a tent, with humidity above eighty percent. We built the base in two thin layers, used a cream blush on the cheeks, and then set only her forehead, nose, and chin with a pressed powder. I pressed the powder with a small puff and left her cheeks bare so that some light stayed in the skin. At the end I sprayed a setting mist from an arm away and waited two minutes before she stood up. She sent a photograph at six in the evening. The centre of her face was still even, the cheeks had a little shine, and the base had not separated around her nose. The shine looked healthy rather than greasy, which is the difference between skin and sweat in a photograph. Her sister asked for the same method at her own wedding two months later. The only change we made the second time was a lighter powder on the nose, because the first photographs showed a little shine there that looked like powder rather than skin.

CAUTION

Do not powder the whole face out of habit; dry cheeks with powder on top look flat and dusty in daylight.

The phone flash check

Before the client leaves, check the makeup the way the world will see it. Take a photograph at arm's length with the phone flash on, then take another in daylight near a window. Look at the jawline, under the eyes, and the centre of the face. The flash shows white cast, patchy powder, unblended

edges, and the line between face and neck more clearly than any mirror. It also shows whether the base has settled into pores or into a line that the eye forgives in a warm room. Do this while the client is still in the chair, when you can still fix what you see. Two minutes of checking prevents an evening of photographs the client will dislike.

Ask the client to take her own photograph as well, because her phone and her settings are the ones that will record the event. If the flash reveals a problem, fix the cause instead of adding more product. White cast means too much powder or a product with mineral filters; remove the excess with a clean damp sponge or a tissue. Patchiness means the base went on over wet skincare; smooth it with a damp sponge and a tiny amount of base. A hard jawline needs blending, not a darker shade. A shiny forehead needs blotting, not another layer of powder. Then photograph again and show the client the difference, so that she learns what her own phone will do.

The distance of the photograph matters. A flash picture taken at thirty centimetres shows texture and powder in a way that a photograph from two metres does not, and a photograph from ten metres shows the face and neck as a shape rather than as skin. Take one of each if you can. The close picture is for you, to check the work; the far picture is for the client, to show how she will appear in a group photograph at the venue. Flash also exaggerates the difference between a warm face and a cool neck, which is why a base that looked perfect in the mirror can look like a mask in a phone picture taken by a cousin.

If a product continues to flash white after you have removed the excess, stop trying to fix it with powder and change the product. A different setting powder, a lighter application, or a switch to a finely milled powder closer to the skin colour will solve more than any amount of blending. Record which products flashed and which did not, because the same client will book you again and the same mistake is easy to repeat. Some clients will tell you that they never take flash photographs; believe them only for the event they have described, because weddings, receptions, and office parties almost always include at least one phone with the flash on.

- 1. Finish the makeup completely before you test it.
- 2. Take one photograph with flash at arm's length.
- 3. Take a second photograph in daylight near a window.
- 4. Check the centre of the face, under the eyes, and the jaw.
- 5. Compare the face with the neck in both photographs.
- 6. Fix the cause: blot, press, blend, or remove excess powder.
- 7. Photograph again and compare the two results with the client.
- 8. Note any product that flashed so you avoid it next time.

Salon example

Kavya, twenty-six, was going to an evening reception and wanted a flawless finish. In the salon mirror everything looked correct: even base, soft blush, and a jaw that matched her neck. I took a flash photograph at arm's length and the centre of her forehead went pale grey while her cheeks stayed warm. The cause was a translucent setting powder I had pressed on too generously. I removed the excess with a clean damp sponge, sprayed a little setting mist, and photographed again. The grey was gone, but the second picture showed that her jaw needed another two minutes of blending. We stepped outside and took a third photograph in daylight, which looked like her face rather than like makeup. She left with the three photographs on her phone and sent one to her mother from the car. That check took four minutes and saved the evening. The next client with the same powder got a lighter application from the start, and her photographs needed no correction at all. Kavya still uses the daylight picture as the reference for what her face should look like on a night out.

CAUTION

Do not rely on the salon mirror alone; warm bulbs and a short viewing distance hide white cast and hard lines until the photographs arrive.

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Flashback and Photographs



Why some products turn white

Flashback is the pale, chalky, or grey cast that appears on a face in a photograph when the camera flash bounces off particles sitting on the skin. The usual causes are silica powder, mica, and the mineral sunscreen filters titanium dioxide and zinc oxide. These ingredients are not faults in a product; they are useful for blurring texture or blocking ultraviolet light. Under a brief, intense flash, however, they reflect light straight back at the lens instead of letting it pass into the skin. The face then reads lighter than the neck, sometimes by two or three shades, and no amount of blending in the mirror will show it before the photograph is taken.

On deeper skin the effect is more obvious and less forgiving. A white cast that looks like a slight sheen on fair skin reads grey, ashy, or dusty on brown skin, especially on the forehead, the under-eye, and the tops of the cheeks. A high-SPF sunscreen under a full base makes the whole face paler than the chest in flash photographs. A heavy translucent powder pressed over the T-zone can leave a white patch that appears only in pictures taken by a phone at a metre and a half. The client will see the pictures before you do, usually at midnight, and will not know why the face she approved looks wrong.

The reason the mirror hides the problem is that a mirror reflects continuous room light, while a flash releases a very short burst of light from a small point close to the lens. The camera records the burst, not the room, so products that scatter light behave differently in a photograph than they do in a room. Distance changes the effect too: the closer the flash, the stronger the cast. That is why a selfie taken at arm's length can look acceptable while a group photograph taken across a hall looks wrong, or the other way around. A single test at one distance is not enough to judge a product.

It is also a mistake to blame one ingredient in isolation. Flashback usually comes from the combination of layers: a mineral sunscreen, a silicone primer, a powder with silica, and a setting spray applied heavily. Removing one product may reduce the effect without removing it, and adding another powder to fix the first one usually makes it worse. The practical approach is to test the whole stack on the client's jaw, look at the photograph, and change one layer at a time. That is slower than trusting a product name, but it is the only method that gives an answer for this face in this light.

- 1. Ask whether the event will include flash photography and at what distance.
- 2. Build the base exactly as you plan to send the client out.
- 3. Photograph the jaw and the centre of the face with flash.
- 4. Compare the face with the neck in the photograph, not in the mirror.
- 5. Note whether the cast sits on the powder, the base, or the sunscreen.

- 6. Remove or reduce the layer responsible and photograph again.
- 7. Test at two distances: arm's length and across a room.
- 8. Write down the products that passed for this client.

Salon example

Ishita, thirty-two, had a sangeet in a hotel ballroom with a photographer using a strong flash. She had deep skin and a favourite translucent powder that she used at home every day. We finished her base, and in the mirror it looked smooth and even. The first flash photograph showed a pale grey patch across her forehead and the tops of her cheekbones, exactly where I had pressed the powder. Her neck and jaw, which had less powder, looked correct. I removed the powder from those areas with a clean sponge, pressed a finely milled powder closer to her skin tone over the same spots, and photographed again. The grey was gone. We then took a photograph from across the room, where the cast was no longer visible at all. She carried the small coloured powder in her bag for touch-ups, and the photographs from that night show her face and neck as the same colour. The product was not bad; it was simply wrong for that light and that depth of skin. I now keep two powders in the kit for exactly this reason, and I ask about the photographer before I choose between them.

CAUTION

Do not use a white translucent powder as a large-area setting layer on deep skin before a flash event; test it on the jaw first or choose a powder closer to the skin.

Read the label, then test

Labels are a useful first filter, not a verdict. Look for titanium dioxide, zinc oxide, silica, mica, and any ingredient described as a mineral filter or a soft-focus powder. A product high on the list is more likely to scatter light than one where the same ingredient appears near the end. Sunscreens are a special case: in many countries they are regulated as drugs or as a separate cosmetic category, and the label must state the protection and the filters. The US Food and Drug Administration publishes guidance on cosmetic labelling and sunscreen claims at <https://www.fda.gov/cosmetics>, which is worth reading once so that you understand what a label can and cannot tell you.

A label cannot tell you how a product will behave on a particular face. Two powders with the same silica content can look different because of particle size, and a primer that flashes on one client may be invisible on another with drier skin. A sunscreen that leaves a white cast on the arm may be fine under a base on the face, or it may be the main cause. The only reliable test is on the skin that will be photographed, in the light that will be used, at the distance the photographer will stand. Anything else is a guess dressed up as expertise, and clients remember guesses that fail.

Test the stack in the order you will apply it, adding one layer at a time and photographing after each. Start with skincare and sunscreen, then primer, then base, then powder, then spray. The photograph after each step tells you exactly which layer introduced the cast, which is far more useful than removing everything and starting over. Keep the test on the jaw so that you can compare it directly

with the untreated neck. Write the result on the client card with the product name and the batch if it is visible. Six months later the same client will be glad you did, and so will you.

If a product does flash, you have three choices, in order of preference. Use less of it, which solves more cases than artists expect. Replace it with a version that has less of the offending ingredient. Or change the order so that the flashing layer sits under something that covers it, which works for a sunscreen but rarely for a powder. Do not add a second powder to hide the first, and do not spray a setting mist repeatedly in the hope that it will melt the cast away. A mist can reduce a powdery look, but it cannot make a reflective particle stop reflecting.

- 1. Read the ingredient list for mineral filters, silica, and mica.
- 2. Ask the client which sunscreen she uses and when she applied it.
- 3. Apply the skincare and sunscreen and photograph the jaw.
- 4. Add the primer, photograph again, and note any change.
- 5. Add the base and photograph the neck and jaw together.
- 6. Add the powder, then the spray, photographing after each layer.
- 7. Identify the layer that caused the cast and reduce or replace it.
- 8. Record the passing combination on the client card.

Salon example

Dev, thirty, was a groom for a winter wedding with an outdoor ceremony at four in the afternoon and a reception under flash at nine. He arrived with his own sunscreen, a high-protection cream he used for cricket, and asked us to use it because his skin burned easily. We tested it on his jaw: within a minute the jaw looked pale grey in a flash photograph while his neck stayed warm. The sunscreen was the cause, not the base. I suggested he use it on his neck and ears, where the sun would actually fall during the ceremony, and we used a lighter daytime sunscreen on his face under the base. We photographed again at arm's length and across the room, and the cast was gone in both. He kept the high-protection cream for the cricket season and used the lighter one for the wedding. The client learned something useful, and the photographs do not show a pale line at his jaw. He also stopped applying the heavy cream to his face on the morning of a function, which solved half the problem before we started.

CAUTION

Do not promise that a product will not flash based on its label alone; a label describes ingredients, not behaviour on this client's skin.

Night photos on deeper skin

Night events combine the worst conditions for a deep-skinned face: strong flash, warm ambient light, heat from a crowd, and photographs taken from every angle. The goal is a base that keeps the depth of the skin while controlling shine, because a face that has been lightened to look bright in a dark room will look grey and flat in the photographs. Start with a shade that matches the neck, then build

thin layers and set only where the skin becomes oily. If the client wants more brightness, add a soft highlight on the high points rather than a lighter foundation over the whole face. Light on the skin reads as brightness; a lighter shade reads as a mask.

Powder is the part that needs the most care. Choose a finely milled powder that is close to the client's skin tone, and press it with a small puff on the centre of the face only. Avoid a white translucent powder over large areas, and avoid the technique of baking, where a thick layer of powder is left under the eye for several minutes. Baking can look smooth in a bright salon and then photograph as a pale half-moon under the eye. On deep skin, a little warmth under the eye is natural; a bright, flat under-eye is the detail that makes a face look unlike itself in a photograph.

The under-eye area needs correction rather than brightness. Use a peach or orange corrector on the blue or purple shadow, then a concealer close to the skin tone, then a very small amount of powder. Do not take the concealer two shades lighter than the cheek, even if the client asks, because the flash will turn the difference into a pale patch. If the under-eye is dry, use less powder and press it only where the crease forms. A tiny amount of a cream product on the outer corner can keep the area from looking dusty. The aim is to look rested, not to look illuminated.

Finally, test the way the night will actually happen. Ask the client to stand under a warm bulb, then photograph with flash, then stand near a window or a doorway with cooler light and photograph again. Look at the face as a whole rather than at individual features, and compare it with the neck and the chest. If the face is one colour and the chest another, fix the base rather than the chest. If the forehead is paler than the cheeks, fix the powder. If the under-eye is grey, fix the corrector. Each of these is a five-minute correction now and an unfixable photograph later.

- 1. Match the base to the neck and keep the skin's depth.
- 2. Build two thin layers instead of one heavy layer.
- 3. Correct the under-eye with peach or orange before concealer.
- 4. Choose a finely milled powder close to the skin tone.
- 5. Press powder on the centre of the face only, never bake.
- 6. Add a warm highlight on the high points instead of a lighter base.
- 7. Photograph under a warm bulb, with flash, and in cool light.
- 8. Compare the face with the neck and chest in each photograph.

Salon example

Lakshmi, thirty-four, was attending her cousin's reception and had been told by a relative that she should look fairer for the photographs. She had deep skin with warm undertones, and she had bought a foundation two shades lighter than her neck. We talked about what the camera would do with a pale face above a deep neck, and she agreed to try the match I suggested. I used a base that matched her neck, corrected the under-eye with a peach corrector and a concealer close to her skin, and pressed a finely milled powder only on her forehead, nose, and chin. For brightness I added a warm gold highlight on the tops of her cheekbones and the inner corners of her eyes. The flash photograph showed a face that looked like hers, with depth in the skin and light where the cheekbone caught it. Her aunt asked which product had made her glow, and the answer was the highlight, not a lighter base. Lakshmi sent the picture to the relative who had advised her, and the reply was that she looked like herself, only rested.

CAUTION

Do not lighten the under-eye to a much lighter shade than the cheek; in flash photography it reads as a pale mask under the eye.

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Colour Correction



Correction is colour, not coverage

Correction is the practice of neutralising an unwanted colour on the skin before the base goes on. It works on the colour wheel: green cancels red, peach and orange cancel blue and purple, yellow softens brown and grey. The correcting layer is thin and strongly pigmented, and it is applied only to the area that needs it. This is the opposite of covering, where a thick layer of concealer is spread over a large area in the hope that it will hide what is underneath. Covered colour does not disappear; it turns grey under a pale product, and the grey is usually more visible than the original mark.

The most common correction mistake is using a concealer that is lighter than the skin to hide a dark circle. The light product sits on top of the dark colour, the two mix, and the result is a grey or mauve patch that photographs badly. A peach or orange corrector, applied thinly and set lightly, changes the colour underneath so that a concealer matching the skin can finish the job with very little product. The same principle applies to redness and pigmentation: correct the colour first, then match the skin, then cover only what still shows. The order is not a ritual; each step reduces the amount of product the next step needs.

Thin layers are essential. A corrector is concentrated, so a grain of rice is enough for both under-eyes, and a small brush is easier to control than a fingertip. Warm the product on the back of your hand, tap it into the area, and stop before it looks opaque. If the corrected area looks flat and grey, you have used too much. If it looks orange at the edges, you have used too little blending. Set the corrector with a tiny amount of powder before the base, especially under the eye, because a wet corrector will move when the foundation brush passes over it and the correction will be uneven.

Correction also has limits that the client should hear before you start. It can reduce the look of a dark circle, a patch of pigmentation, a beard shadow, or a bruise, but it cannot remove texture, deep scars, or the shadow cast by a hollow under the eye. It cannot hide a raised spot without looking like a raised spot with makeup on it. And it should never be used over broken skin, an active infection, or a cold sore. Saying this at the start is not discouraging; it is the difference between a client who trusts the result and one who expects a filter and blames you for reality.

- 1. Clean the area and let the skin dry completely.
- 2. Identify the colour you need to cancel: blue, red, brown, or grey.
- 3. Pick the corrector that sits opposite that colour on the wheel.
- 4. Take a grain of product and warm it on the back of your hand.
- 5. Tap it on with a small brush, only on the discoloured area.

- 6. Blend the edges until they disappear into the skin.
- 7. Set the corrector with a small amount of powder.
- 8. Apply a base that matches the skin, then conceal only what remains.

Salon example

Fatima, thirty-five, came for a party makeup with two concerns she had carried for years: dark circles under both eyes and a patch of pigmentation on her left cheek. Her previous artist had used a full-coverage concealer three shades too light and had spread it across the whole under-eye and most of the cheek. In the salon mirror it looked almost acceptable; in her cousin's photographs it looked like a pale band across her face. We removed it and started with colour. I used a small amount of peach corrector under the eyes and a slightly warmer peach on the pigmentation, set both with a light powder, and then applied a base that matched her neck. The under-eye looked like skin rather than like a covered bruise, and the cheek patch was quieter without being erased. She needed less than half the concealer she had been using. At the end she said the face in the mirror looked tired in a normal way, not painted, and that was exactly the result we wanted. She now uses the same two correctors at home and has stopped buying the pale concealer.

CAUTION

Never use a pale pink corrector on deep skin; it turns grey over blue or brown, and no amount of concealer will bring the colour back.

Peach or orange for dark circles

Dark circles are not one colour. Under fair and light-medium skin they are often blue or purple, because the skin is thin enough to show the vessels beneath. Under medium and deep skin they are more often brown, olive-brown, or a mixture of brown and blue, because pigment sits in the same area as the vessels. Peach corrects blue on light and medium skin, while orange corrects deeper blue and purple on deeper skin. A warm apricot sits between the two and works for many Indian clients, especially in the medium range. The right choice depends on what you see in daylight, not on a rule about skin colour.

Placement matters as much as colour. Look at the shape of the shadow rather than at the whole under-eye. Most people have a darker area close to the inner corner and a softer shadow toward the outer edge, and the darkest point is usually just below the lash line at the inner third. Apply the corrector there first, then blend outward, and leave the outer edge almost bare. A corrector spread across the entire under-eye, including the part that is not dark, adds colour where none is needed and creates the flat half-moon that looks artificial in photographs. Correct the shadow, not the area around it.

Creasing is the second enemy. The under-eye is thin, moves constantly, and folds. Use a light hand, press the product into the line with a small brush or a fingertip, and set immediately with a very small amount of finely milled powder. If the client has dry under-eyes, skip the powder in the outer area and

use a tiny amount only where the crease forms. If the client has deep lines, use less product and consider a cream corrector that stays flexible. Do not bake the under-eye with a thick layer of powder; on mature or deep skin it settles into every line and photographs as a pale, cracked surface.

The finish should look like rest, not like brightness. After correction and concealer, the under-eye should be within a shade of the cheek, slightly lighter at most. If the client asks for a brighter under-eye, explain that the camera will exaggerate it and offer a soft highlight on the cheekbone instead. For a bride who has not slept before the wedding, the honest aim is to look awake rather than to look eight hours rested, because the latter is not a makeup result. Correction reduces the shadow; it does not remove the cause, and it is worth telling a client with persistent dark circles that a dermatologist may have more to offer than a concealer.

- 1. Look at the under-eye in daylight with the client's face relaxed.
- 2. Decide whether the shadow is blue, purple, brown, or mixed.
- 3. Choose peach for blue, orange for deep purple, apricot for brown.
- 4. Apply a grain of corrector at the inner corner and darkest point.
- 5. Blend outward and stop before the outer edge of the eye.
- 6. Press the product into the crease with a small brush.
- 7. Set with a small amount of finely milled powder.
- 8. Conceal with a shade within one step of the cheek.

Salon example

Ananya, forty-one, booked a bridal trial and told me at the start that her dark circles were the one thing she hated in photographs. She had medium-deep skin with warm undertones and a brown shadow under both eyes that turned mauve whenever she used a light concealer. In daylight the shadow had a purple cast near the inner corners and a brown tone toward the outer edge. I used a warm apricot corrector on the inner third and a slightly deeper peach on the outer brown area, blending the two together. A tiny amount of powder went only into the crease. Her concealer matched her cheek within half a shade. In the trial photographs the under-eye looked rested and the cheekbone still caught the light. Her mother, who had been sceptical, said she looked like she had slept, and Ananya asked me to write the corrector shade on her card so she could buy it for herself. The makeup did not remove the circles; it stopped them from being the first thing anyone saw. At the wedding, three people told her she looked rested, and none of them mentioned her eyes.

CAUTION

Do not spread corrector across the whole under-eye when only the inner corner is dark; the flat, paler area it creates is visible in every photograph.

Redness, pigmentation and beard shadow

Redness is corrected with green, but the amount matters more than the colour. A green primer spread across the whole face gives a grey, sickly cast under a base, especially on medium and deep skin. Use a tiny amount of green corrector only on the red area: the sides of the nose, a healing spot, the centre of the cheeks, or the chin. Tap it on, blend the edge, and let it dry before the base. For widespread redness from rosacea or a recent peel, do not try to correct the whole face with green. Use a gentle base with the correct undertone and accept that some colour will show through, because a face with a little natural redness looks more human than a face covered in green and then in beige.

Pigmentation is corrected with peach or a warm apricot, then covered with a base that matches the surrounding skin. A patch of melasma or post-acne pigment is usually deeper than the rest of the face, and a concealer that matches the patch will look like a dark spot; a concealer lighter than the patch will look grey. The right approach is to warm the patch slightly with corrector, then even the whole area with base, then add a small amount of concealer only if the patch still shows. Do not promise to erase a large pigmented area. A soft, even tone is a realistic result; a perfectly uniform cheek is not, and pursuing it usually means a thick base that looks worse than the patch.

Beard shadow is a different problem, because it is not pigment on the surface but the dark hair beneath the skin. A peach or orange corrector under the base reduces the blue-grey tone of the shadow, and the base then covers the colour without needing to be thick. Apply the corrector to the beard area only, blend it well at the edges, and set it lightly before the base. On deeper skin, use a deeper orange or a warm terracotta rather than a pale peach. For a groom or a client who has just shaved, the skin may be irritated, so use a gentle product and avoid alcohol-heavy aftershave under makeup. If the skin is broken or razor-burned, do not apply base over it; work around it and refer.

Bruises and tattoos can be corrected in principle by layering the opposite colour, but the result is limited and the promise should be modest. A fresh bruise has several colours at once, including blue, purple, green, and yellow, and each needs a different correction; a tattoo has strong pigment that may need several thin layers before the base. Never promise full coverage, and never apply makeup over a bruise that is still painful, swollen, or broken. For a tattoo on the face or neck, ask whether the skin is fully healed and whether the client has had a reaction to makeup before. If the event is close and the skin is not settled, the honest answer is that makeup will soften it, not hide it.

- 1. Identify the colour to cancel before choosing the product.
- 2. Use green only on small red areas, never across the whole face.
- 3. Tap the green corrector on and blend its edges into the skin.
- 4. Warm a pigmented patch with peach, then even the area with base.
- 5. For beard shadow, use peach or orange on the beard area only.
- 6. Set each correction lightly before applying foundation.
- 7. Conceal only what still shows after the base.
- 8. Stop and refer if the skin is broken, painful, or infected.

Salon example

Sameer, thirty-three, was a groom for a December wedding and had a strong beard shadow that he wanted gone for the photographs. His skin was medium-deep and cool, and the shadow read blue-grey along the jaw and the upper lip. He had shaved that morning and had a little razor burn on the neck. We used a thin layer of orange corrector on the beard area only, blended it at the edges, and set it with a light powder. The base went on with a damp sponge, and the shadow was reduced enough that his jaw looked even without looking painted. I did not apply product to the razor burn, and I told him to use a mild moisturiser on it that night. In the photographs his beard area looks like skin with a faint shadow, which is what a man who shaved that morning looks like. He had asked to look clean-shaven; the honest result was a cleaner, even jaw, not a face without a beard. His bride said he looked like himself in the photographs, which is a better compliment than looking different.

CAUTION

Never cover a cold sore, an infected spot, or broken skin with corrector or base; refer the client and reschedule the makeup.

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Eyes: Hooded, Deep-Set, Round



Hooded eyes: depth where the crease really is

Read the eye with the eye open. Ask the client to look straight ahead, then look at the fold of skin above the lashes and at the space between the fold and the brow. On a hooded eye the skin from the brow area folds over the crease, so the crease you can see when the eye is closed is partly or completely hidden when the eye is open. The place to put depth is the fold that remains visible, slightly above the natural crease, not the crease you would draw on a different eye. Painting a cut crease on a hooded eye is the classic mistake: it looks dramatic in the mirror with the eye closed and disappears the moment the client looks at the camera.

Keep the lid light and place the depth at the outer corner and along the visible fold. A light shade on the inner two-thirds of the lid brings the eye forward, and a medium or deep shade in the outer third gives it shape without closing it. Avoid a heavy dark band across the whole lid, which makes the eye look smaller and the brow look lower. Blend upward with a small brush, then check with the eye open after every few strokes. If the depth disappears when the eye opens, it is in the wrong place; move it up a few millimetres rather than making it darker. The goal is a shadow that reads with the eye open, because that is how the client will be seen.

Liner needs the same restraint. A thin line close to the lashes, with a small upward flick at the outer corner, opens a hooded eye. A thick line eats the visible lid and makes the eye look heavy. If the hood is very low, skip the flick and tightline instead, which makes the lash line look fuller without taking space. Curl the lashes before mascara, and curl them properly at the root rather than at the tips. Lift at the lash line does more for a hooded eye than any shadow, because it opens the eye physically, while shadow only suggests depth. Mascara on the outer lashes adds to the lift, but keep the inner lashes light so the eye does not look crowded.

Hooded eyes also change with age, weight, and tiredness, so the same client may need a different placement at different appointments. Photograph the eye open and closed at the trial, and keep the photograph. If the client has a monolid or a very low brow, the visible space may be only a few millimetres, and the entire look has to be built in that band. Do not force a shape from a video tutorial onto an eye that does not have the space for it. The most useful skill with a hooded eye is knowing when to stop adding shadow and let the lashes and the liner do the work.

- 1. Ask the client to look straight ahead with the eye open.
- 2. Find the fold that stays visible when the eye is open.
- 3. Prime the lid and set it with a small amount of powder.

- 4. Place a light shade on the inner two-thirds of the lid.
- 5. Place the depth in the outer third and along the visible fold.
- 6. Blend upward and check with the eye open after every few strokes.
- 7. Tightline the upper lash line and add a thin upward flick if wanted.
- 8. Curl the lashes at the root and apply mascara to the outer lashes.

Salon example

Ritika, thirty-one, came for a sangeet makeup with a photograph on her phone of a cut crease she wanted. Her eyes were hooded, and the fold covered most of the lid when she looked straight ahead. I explained that the shape in the photograph would vanish when she opened her eyes, and she agreed to try a version built for her eye. We kept the lid light, placed a warm brown in the outer third and along the visible fold, and blended it upward with a small brush. I tightlined the upper lash line and added a short flick, then curled her lashes at the root. When she opened her eyes the depth was still visible, the lash line looked full, and the eye looked larger than it had with the darker shadow she usually wore. Her sister, who had the same eye shape, asked for the same placement at her own wedding. The photograph on Ritika's phone is still there, but she no longer wants that shape. At the trial for her own wedding she asked me to keep the light lid and the outer-corner depth, and to leave the rest alone.

CAUTION

Do not paint depth so high above the fold that it reads as a second brow when the eye is open; check the eye open, not closed, before you commit.

Deep-set and round eyes

A deep-set eye sits back under a brow bone that comes forward, so the socket already has shadow. The mistake is to add more darkness into that socket, which pushes the eye further back and makes the face look tired. Keep the lid lighter than the socket, bring the depth to the outer corner, and use a light shade on the brow bone and the inner corner. A small amount of light on the centre of the lid and just under the brow brings the eye forward without any shimmer that looks wet. If the client wants a smoky eye, keep the smoke at the outer corner and the lash line rather than filling the whole socket, and blend the edge softly so the natural shadow and the makeup merge.

A round eye is wide and open, and the aim is usually to lengthen it rather than to make it rounder. Extend the shadow and the liner slightly outward at the outer corner, keep the centre of the lid light, and place the deeper shade in the outer third. Do not draw a dark ring all around the eye, which emphasises the round shape and makes the eye look like a circle. A soft wing that follows the lower lash line outward gives length. Keep the lower lash line light in the inner half and slightly deeper in the outer half. If the client has round eyes and wants a dramatic look, length at the outer corner reads as drama; darkness above and below the centre reads as a panda.

Monolid eyes have no visible crease, so the colour has to be built in a gradient from the lash line upward. Work close to the lashes with the deepest shade, blend a medium shade above it, and keep

the highest point light. When the eye opens, the gradient is still visible as a soft band, which reads clearly in photographs. Keep the liner tight to the lashes or draw a short wing that follows the eye shape; a thick line across a monolid takes away the little space there is. Curl the lashes well, because they carry the look. With close-set eyes, keep the inner corner light and place the darker shade outward; with wide-set eyes, bring a little depth to the inner corner and keep the outer extension shorter.

Asymmetry is normal and should not be forced into symmetry. Most faces have one eye slightly larger, one brow higher, or one lid that folds a little more. Work with the client's own shape, then check both eyes in a mirror at arm's length and in a photograph. Small differences disappear in a photograph; heavy attempts to correct them make both eyes look wrong. If the client wears glasses, the frames change the visible space, so do the eye makeup with the glasses on for the final check. If the client has a mature eye with a hooded lid and a deep socket, use less powder, more cream, and a light hand under the brow, because heavy products settle into the crease and the fine lines around the eye.

- 1. Look at the eye from the front, the side, and with the glasses on.
- 2. Decide whether the socket is deep, the eye is round, or the lid is flat.
- 3. Keep the centre of the lid light for deep-set and round eyes.
- 4. Place the deeper shade in the outer third and blend outward.
- 5. For monolids, build a gradient upward from the lash line.
- 6. Tightline or use a short wing rather than a thick liner.
- 7. Curl the lashes at the root before mascara.
- 8. Check both eyes at arm's length and in a photograph before finishing.

Salon example

Ritu, twenty-seven, had round eyes and wanted a smoky eye for a friend's cocktail party. Her usual method was a dark shadow all around the eye, which made her look surprised in photographs and closed the eye in the middle. We kept the centre of her lid light, placed a soft charcoal in the outer third, and extended it slightly beyond the outer corner. I lined the upper lash line and added a short wing, and kept the lower lash line light in the inner half with a little definition outside. Her lashes were curled at the root and mascara went mostly on the outer lashes. The result was still a smoky eye, but it lengthened her eye instead of circling it. She sent a photograph from the party at midnight, and the eye makeup had held without smudging under the lower lash line. Her friend asked for the same look, and I used the same principle on a completely different eye shape. On the friend, who had a monolid, the same charcoal sat close to the lash line and faded upward, and the wing was shorter and straighter.

CAUTION

Do not line all the way around a round eye with a dark pencil; the ring makes the eye look smaller and rounder than it is.

The waterline, glitter and contact lenses

Tightlining means placing colour between the upper lashes at the root, not inside the eye. It makes the lash line look denser and is safer than a pencil dragged along the lower waterline, which sits against the eye itself. The lower waterline is sensitive, and a pencil there can block the small glands along the lid margin or transfer bacteria if the pencil has been used before. Sharpen the pencil before each client and wipe the blade. If the client has sensitive eyes, dry eyes, or contact lenses, skip the lower waterline entirely. A little shadow pressed into the lower lash line gives definition without touching the eye, and it removes cleanly at the end of the night.

Loose glitter does not belong on the waterline or anywhere near the eye. The particles are small, sharp, and impossible to control once they are wet, and they can scratch the surface of the eye or get trapped under a lens. Pressed glitter, applied with a damp brush on the lid and kept away from the lash line, is a different product and a different risk. Even then, keep it on the lid and not in the inner corner, where it migrates. If a client asks for glitter tears or glitter liner along the lower lash line, offer a fine metallic shadow instead. The look can be close, and nobody will need to rinse an eye in a bathroom at midnight.

Mascara is the product most often shared and the one most likely to carry infection. Use a disposable wand for every client, and never re-dip a used wand into the tube. Do not pump the wand, which pushes air and bacteria into the product. Curl the lashes before mascara; curling after mascara can break the lashes and pull out clumps. Waterproof mascara is the right choice for tears, humidity, and long events, but it needs a proper removal plan, because rubbing a waterproof formula off the lashes at night is how people lose lashes. Tell the client which remover to use and how to let it sit before wiping. For contact lens wearers, the lenses go in before makeup, and no loose powder goes near the eye.

Eye cosmetics carry particular safety concerns because the eye is a delicate surface with its own tear film. The US Food and Drug Administration publishes guidance on cosmetics and eye-area products at <https://www.fda.gov/cosmetics>, including advice on not sharing eye products and on stopping use if irritation appears. In the salon, the practical rules are simple: sharpen pencils, use disposable wands, keep products closed, replace anything that smells or has changed texture, and never use a product on a client if it has been used on someone with an eye infection. If an eye waters continuously, swells, or turns red during the service, stop, remove the product with a gentle cleanser, and refer the client to a doctor.

- 1. Ask about contact lenses, sensitive eyes, and past reactions before starting.
- 2. Sharpen the eye pencil before the client and wipe the blade.
- 3. Tightline the upper lash line only, with a clean pencil or a fine brush.
- 4. Keep loose glitter away from the eye and never on the waterline.
- 5. Use a disposable mascara wand and never re-dip it.
- 6. Curl the lashes before applying mascara, not after.
- 7. Choose waterproof mascara for tears and humidity, and plan the removal.
- 8. Stop and refer if the eye waters, swells, or reddens during the service.

Salon example

Zoya, twenty-nine, wore contact lenses and had a wedding to attend in the evening. She wanted glitter along the lower lash line, a look she had seen online. I explained that loose glitter near a lens is a risk, and offered a fine metallic shadow pressed into the lower lash line instead, kept a few millimetres below the rim. She agreed. We put her lenses in before any eye makeup, used no loose powder near the eye, and tightlined the upper lash line with a clean pencil. The metallic shadow gave her the sparkle she wanted in photographs without any particles sitting on the eye. Halfway through the evening she sent a message saying her eyes felt fine, which is not a message I take for granted. At the end of the night she removed the eye makeup with a balm, let it sit for a minute, and wiped gently downward with a cotton pad. She kept the lenses in until the makeup was off, then removed them with clean hands. The sparkle in the photographs came from a pressed shadow, not from loose glitter, and nobody had to rinse an eye that night.

CAUTION

Never place loose glitter on the waterline or along the inner rim of the eye; it can scratch the eye and become trapped under a contact lens.

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Bridal Work in Heat and Long Hours



Waterproof where tears happen

A bridal face runs ten to fourteen hours through heat, photographs, food, and crying. Build for the hours, not for the first photograph. Book a trial and test the base, the flash, the lip, and the eye in the same kind of light as the event. Ask where the ceremony will be, whether it is outdoor or air-conditioned, how many people will be in the room, and at what time the photographs will be taken. A look that holds for a two-hour party is not the same look that holds through a morning of rituals and an evening of reception. The plan should include the touch-ups, not pretend they will not be needed.

Where tears are likely, use waterproof mascara and waterproof liner. Test both at the trial: put them on, let the client blink and talk for a few hours, then remove them and check that the lashes are still there. Waterproof products are harder to remove, so plan the removal before the wedding, not at midnight. Do not put a heavy shadow on the lower lash line where tears run, because that is the first thing to smear. Keep the inner corner light, since a dark inner corner smears first. A cream shadow set with a matching powder holds better than cream alone, and a small amount of powder at the outer corner keeps the shape intact when the eye waters.

Humidity is the second test. Skip a heavy dewy finish in high humidity, because it turns shiny within an hour and the shine reads as sweat in photographs. Set the T-zone and the sides of the nose, and leave the outer cheeks lighter than you would for a winter bride. Use a light hand with highlighter, because humidity plus highlighter looks wet rather than glowing. Hairspray near the face settles on the makeup and makes it feel tight, so shield the face with a tissue or a clean cloth while the hair is set, and keep the spray at a distance. If the ceremony is outdoors in the sun, add a small fan and a blotting paper to the kit rather than another layer of powder.

For the base, powder and setting spray are partners, not alternatives. Press powder on the areas that move and shine, then spray from an arm away and let it dry untouched. During the event, blot before you powder, because powder on top of oil makes paste. Avoid a heavy cream blush on a humid day; it slides before the ceremony and takes the base with it. Keep the cheeks and the outer face lighter so that the skin still looks like skin after eight hours. The bridal look that survives is the one built in thin layers with a clear touch-up plan, not the one that looks heaviest at the start.

- 1. Ask about the venue, the weather, the timings, and the photographer.
- 2. Book a trial in the same season and the same kind of light.
- 3. Test waterproof mascara and liner, then test the removal.
- 4. Keep the lower lash line light where tears will run.

- 5. Set the T-zone and the sides of the nose more than the cheeks.
- 6. Press powder, then spray setting mist and let it dry untouched.
- 7. Shield the face while hairspray is used.
- 8. Pack blotting papers and a small powder for the event.

Salon example

Pooja, twenty-eight, was married in Mumbai at the end of the monsoon, with an outdoor ceremony at eleven and a reception at eight. The trial was in the same humid weather, which was fortunate, because the first version of her base separated around the nose within two hours. We changed to a lighter moisturiser on the T-zone, pressed powder only on the centre of the face, and added a setting spray. For the eyes we used waterproof mascara and a waterproof liner, kept the lower lash line almost bare, and set a cream shadow with a matching powder. She cried during the vows and again during the family photographs. At the reception her sister blotted her nose, pressed a small amount of powder, and reapplied the lipstick from the kit. The eye makeup had not moved. The photographs show a bride who looks emotional rather than smudged, and Pooja said afterwards that the trial was the reason she could relax. Her mother, who had wanted a heavier base, agreed that the lighter version looked better in the pictures, and the two of them now plan the touch-up times before the event rather than during it.

CAUTION

Do not promise a bridal face that needs no touch-up; promise a face that touches up well, and pack the kit for it.

A stain under the lipstick

A long event eats lipstick. A stain under the lipstick leaves colour on the lip after the top layer has gone, so the client is never left with a pale outline and a bare centre. Line and fill the whole lip with a lip pencil before the lipstick goes on, then apply a stain or a long-wear lip colour, blot, and apply the lipstick again. The pencil gives an edge, the stain gives a base, and the lipstick gives the finish. If the client wants a gloss, use it only as a top layer and carry it for touch-ups, because a gloss on its own disappears in the first hour and takes the colour with it.

Prepare the lip before any colour. Dry, flaky lips hold nothing evenly, so ask the client to use a balm in the days before the wedding, and on the day remove any flakes gently with a damp cloth rather than scrubbing. A thin layer of balm, blotted, keeps the lip comfortable without making the colour slide. Choose a liner close to the natural lip, not a dark outline that looks drawn on. If the client wants a fuller look, take the liner slightly outside the natural line at the centre of the lower lip and blend it inward, so the edge looks soft rather than traced.

The blot-and-powder method is what makes a lip last. Apply the colour, press a tissue over the lips, and dust a small amount of powder through the tissue. Apply a second layer, blot again, and then add a small amount of balm or gloss only if the client wants shine. This builds colour in the lip rather than on it. Warn the client that a transfer on a glass or a napkin is normal and does not mean the lipstick

has failed. For photographs, a matte or satin finish reads more clearly than a high gloss, which can catch the flash and look like a white stripe on the lower lip.

Hygiene around the lip is not optional. Do not share a lip product from a jar, and do not double-dip an applicator that has touched a mouth. Take the product out with a clean spatula onto a mixing plate, or use a disposable applicator, and throw the applicator away afterwards. Sharpen the lip pencil before each client and wipe the blade. If the client has a cold sore, a cracked lip that is bleeding, or an infection at the corner of the mouth, do not apply lip colour over it. Refer and reschedule, because lipstick over a cold sore spreads the virus and delays healing, and no photograph is worth that.

- 1. Ask the client to use a lip balm for several days before the event.
- 2. Remove flakes gently with a damp cloth, never by scrubbing.
- 3. Line and fill the whole lip with a pencil close to the natural lip.
- 4. Apply a stain or long-wear colour as the base layer.
- 5. Blot with a tissue and dust a little powder through it.
- 6. Apply the lipstick again and blot once more.
- 7. Add gloss only as a top layer, and carry it for touch-ups.
- 8. Use a clean spatula or disposable applicator, never a shared jar.

Salon example

Meher, thirty, had a reception that began at seven and ended after midnight, with dinner served in the middle. She wanted a deep rose lip that would not vanish before the photographs. At the trial we lined and filled her whole lip with a pencil, applied a stain, blotted, powdered through a tissue, and then applied the lipstick. She ate a full meal at the trial to test it. The colour faded slightly in the centre but left an even stain, so her lip never looked half-done. On the wedding day she carried the same pencil, the same stain, and the same lipstick in a small pouch, and her sister touched up the centre once after dinner. In the photographs the lip is the same colour from the ceremony to the last picture. The gloss she had originally wanted stayed in the pouch, unused, because the satin finish photographed better. She has since used the same method for two family weddings, and she no longer buys lip gloss for long events. She also keeps a spare pencil in her bag, because a pencil lost at a venue is harder to replace than a lipstick.

CAUTION

Never apply lip colour over a cold sore or a cracked, bleeding lip; refer the client and reschedule rather than spread an infection.

The touch-up kit

The touch-up kit is part of the service, not an extra. Pack blotting papers, a small pressed powder and a puff, the lip colour and a lip balm, cotton buds, a small concealer, and a travel-size setting spray. Add a couple of disposable sponges and a clean mascara wand if the client might need them. The kit should fit in a small pouch that a sister or a friend can carry, and every item should be labelled with

the client's name if more than one bride is being prepared on the same day. Do not fill the kit with products the client has never seen; a touch-up is not the moment to introduce a new powder or a new shade.

Teach the touch-up in the chair before the client leaves. Show her the order: blot first, then powder, then lip. Explain that blotting paper removes oil, powder sets the base, and the lip goes on last so that she does not touch her face with coloured fingers. Show her how to press the powder with the puff rather than sweeping it, and how to use a cotton bud to lift a tear track without rubbing the eye. Ask her to practise once in front of you, because a demonstration she has done herself is remembered far better than one she has only watched.

Decide who holds the kit. The bride should not be carrying a bag and a powder at the same time, so give the pouch to one person and tell the others where it is. A sister or a close friend is usually the right choice, because she will be nearby and will not be busy with the ceremony. If the event has a planner, give the planner a second small pouch with blotting papers and cotton buds. Keep a separate artist kit for yourself if you are staying for the reception, and do not mix the two, because the client's kit will leave with her and yours will not.

Check the kit at the end of the appointment. Count the items, make sure the powder is closed, the lipstick is clean, and the spray is not leaking. Remove anything that has been used on another client. If you are not staying for the event, leave written instructions with the pouch: blot, press, lip, and call me if the eye runs. Add the artist's phone number to the card, because a message at hour five is easier to answer than a panic at hour eight. A kit without instructions is a bag of products; a kit with instructions is a plan. The client who knows what to do at hour six is the client who still looks composed at hour ten.

- 1. Pack blotting papers, a small powder, and a puff.
- 2. Add the exact lip pencil, stain, and lipstick used on the day.
- 3. Include cotton buds, a small concealer, and a travel setting spray.
- 4. Add two disposable sponges and a clean mascara wand.
- 5. Label the pouch and hand it to one named person.
- 6. Teach the order: blot, powder, lip, and nothing else.
- 7. Ask the client to practise one touch-up in the chair.
- 8. Check and close the kit before the client leaves.

Salon example

Aarti, thirty-two, was married in a hotel with a long gap between the ceremony and the reception. Her sister carried the pouch, and I spent five minutes teaching both of them how to use it. At four in the afternoon the sister blotted the bride's nose, pressed powder with the puff, and touched up the lip. She used a cotton bud to lift a small tear track at the outer corner of one eye without rubbing the skin. When I saw Aarti at the reception, the base was still even and the eye makeup was intact. The kit had done its work in a bathroom with poor light, because the instructions were simple enough to follow in poor light. The one thing the sister had not done was spray the setting mist, and she did not need to. The kit is not there to rebuild the face; it is there to keep the face from being rebuilt badly. Aarti still keeps the pouch in her cupboard, with the written card inside, and she has lent it to two cousins since.

CAUTION

Do not hand the client a shared lip applicator or a jar she will dip into; pack a disposable applicator or a spatula for her kit.

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Contour Is Light Direction



Shadow and light, not a template

Contour and highlight are light direction. They suggest a shadow where the face would naturally cast one and a highlight where it would naturally catch light. They do not change bone, and no product can. A contour can make a cheek look more defined in a photograph and can make a jaw look sharper from across a room, but it cannot create a cheekbone that is not there or narrow a face that is wide. Understanding this keeps the work honest and keeps the makeup looking like a face. The client who is promised a different bone structure will always be disappointed, while the client who is promised a more defined version of her own face will usually be pleased.

Place the contour where a shadow already falls. Under the cheekbone, along the jaw, at the sides of the nose if the client wants it, and around the hairline. Follow the natural hollow rather than a line drawn from a diagram, because the diagram was drawn on a different face. Blend upward and outward, not downward and inward, so the shadow melts into the cheek instead of sitting on it. Use a small amount of product and build slowly; a contour that looks too strong indoors is almost always too strong outdoors. If you can see where the product starts, you have not finished blending.

Bronzer and contour are not the same product, even though they are often sold together. Bronzer warms the high points where the sun would fall: the top of the cheek, the temple, the bridge of the nose. Contour deepens the hollows. A warm bronzer used as a contour looks orange, and a cool contour on warm skin looks dirty. Match the contour to the undertone of the skin, choosing a soft taupe on fair skin and a deeper, warm-neutral brown on medium and deep skin. If the skin is olive, avoid a contour with a pink or grey base, because it will read as a bruise rather than a shadow.

Highlight is the other half of the same idea. Place a little on the top of the cheekbone, the brow bone, the inner corner of the eye, and the cupid's bow. Keep it small: a stripe of highlighter across the cheek reads as shine, not as light, and in humidity it reads as sweat. On deep skin, choose a warm gold or a soft champagne, because a pale silver highlight looks ashy. On fair skin, a soft pearl is enough. If the client has texture on the cheeks, keep the highlight off the textured area and place it on the bone, where the skin is smoother. The aim is a face that looks lit from within, not a face with a line of metal on it.

- 1. Look at the face in daylight and find the natural hollow under the cheekbone.
- 2. Choose a contour shade close to the skin's undertone, not a grey.
- 3. Load a small brush and tap off the excess before touching the face.
- 4. Apply the contour under the cheekbone and along the jaw.

- 5. Blend upward and outward until the edge disappears.
- 6. Add bronzer on the high points where the sun would fall.
- 7. Place a small highlight on the cheekbone, brow bone, and inner corner.
- 8. Step back and check both sides of the face in daylight.

Salon example

Ira, thirty-three, came for a party makeup and asked for cheekbones like a film actor she admired. Her face was round and soft, and she had never worn contour before. I explained that I could not give her a different bone structure, but I could make the cheek she had read more clearly in photographs. We used a cream contour a shade deeper than her base, placed it in the hollow under the cheekbone and blended it upward with a damp sponge. A warm bronzer went across the top of her cheek and her temple, and a small amount of champagne highlight sat on the bone. In the mirror the change was subtle; in the photograph it was clear. She said it looked like her face on a good day, which is the best result contour can offer. Her friend asked for the same, and we used a lighter hand because her skin was fairer and the same product would have looked grey. The friend, who had a longer face, needed the contour lower and the highlight shorter, which is why a diagram would have failed her.

CAUTION

Do not promise that contour will change the shape of the face; it changes how light falls on the face, and nothing more.

Soft in daylight

Daylight is the most honest light a face will meet. It comes from a wide source, it fills shadows, and it shows every hard edge. A contour that looks subtle under salon bulbs can look like a brown stripe on the cheek at a daytime mehendi. The correction is not to use a darker product but to use less of it and to blend further. Work in thin layers, check the face at a window after each layer, and stop one layer earlier than you think you should. The client can always add a little more at the venue, but she cannot remove a stripe in a bathroom with poor light.

Cream contour is easier to blend into skin and looks more natural in daylight, while powder contour gives more definition and holds better on oily skin. Either can work, but the undertone has to be right. A grey contour on warm skin looks like dirt, and a warm orange contour on cool skin looks like a stain. For a daytime event, choose a product one shade deeper than the base rather than two, and place it only in the hollow, not across the whole cheek. For an evening event, the same placement can be a little stronger, but the edge still has to disappear.

Blend until you cannot see where the product starts, then blend a little more. Use a clean brush or a damp sponge, and work in small circles rather than long sweeps. Check both sides of the face, because most people contour the side they can see more easily and leave the other side lighter. Sit the client in front of a mirror and ask her to turn her head slowly while you look at the transition from the

cheek to the jaw. If one side is stronger, remove a little from that side rather than adding to the other, because adding usually makes both sides heavier.

Sometimes the right decision is not to contour at all. A fresh, even base with a little blush and a soft highlight is often the better look for a young face, a very textured face, or a client who has never worn makeup and will feel strange with a carved cheek. On mature skin, heavy contour settles into the hollows and emphasises them, which is the opposite of the intention. On a face with active acne or rosacea, contouring draws attention to the texture. Offer the option, explain the effect, and let the client choose a softer version. Makeup is a service, not a template applied to every face that sits in the chair.

- 1. Ask whether the event is indoors, outdoors, or both.
- 2. Choose a contour one shade deeper than the base for daytime.
- 3. Apply with a small brush and tap off the excess.
- 4. Place the product only in the natural hollow.
- 5. Blend with a clean brush or a damp sponge in small circles.
- 6. Check the face at a window after each thin layer.
- 7. Compare both sides and remove from the stronger side.
- 8. Stop one layer earlier than feels finished.

Salon example

Mira, forty, booked an office event makeup for a lunch award ceremony with daylight coming through a glass wall. She wanted definition and had bought a contour palette from a video she had watched. In the salon, under warm bulbs, the application looked good. When we stepped to the window, the contour sat as two brown bands on her cheeks, and the one on the right was stronger than the left. We removed most of it with a damp sponge, kept a trace in the hollow, and blended the rest into her bronzer. Her blush went slightly higher, and the highlight was reduced to a small touch on the bone. In the daylight photograph her face looked defined but not drawn, and her skin still looked like skin. She told me that she had been using three times too much product and had never seen it in daylight. The palette went home with a note on how to use less. At her next event she sent me a picture taken by the window before she left the house, and the contour was barely visible, which meant it was right.

CAUTION

Do not use a grey or ashy contour on warm or olive skin; it reads as dirt in daylight and as a bruise in photographs.

Camera versus real life

A camera flattens a face. It turns a three-dimensional head into a two-dimensional image, and it reduces the shadows that give the face its shape. This is why stage and camera makeup uses stronger contour than daylight makeup. The mistake is to carry the stage strength into a close conversation or

a daylight reception, where the face is seen at arm's length and the contour is read as a line rather than as a shadow. Ask what the photographs are for: a stage performance, a fashion shoot, a wedding album, or a phone picture taken by a cousin. Each needs a different strength, and the strongest version is rarely the right one for a wedding.

Test the contour with flash before the client leaves. Flash can flatten the contour further, and it can also show the edges more clearly than the eye does. A contour that looks smooth in the mirror can photograph as a grey band if the undertone is wrong, and a highlight that looks subtle can photograph as a white stripe if it is too pale for the skin. Take one picture at arm's length and one from across the room, and compare the face with the neck. If the contour disappears in the far picture, that is usually fine; if it becomes a stripe, reduce it before the client goes to the event.

The lighting at the event will change during the evening. A ceremony in daylight becomes a reception under warm bulbs, and a stage performance moves to a dinner with phone flashes. A contour that works in one may be too strong or too weak in the other. The practical answer is to build for the strongest light the client will be photographed in and to keep the daylight version soft enough for conversation. If the client is performing on stage and then attending a reception, do the stage version for the performance and keep a kit to soften the cheek before the reception. That is a two-minute adjustment and it makes both sets of photographs better.

Honesty about the camera is part of the service. Makeup for a photograph is not the same as makeup for a face, and a client who understands this will make better decisions. Explain that the camera adds contrast, that flash can flatten or exaggerate a contour, and that a phone camera at close range is less forgiving than a professional lens at a distance. Then choose a middle ground that looks good in the room and in the pictures. The best compliment a client can give is not that the contour is visible but that she looks like herself, only more defined, in every photograph from the event.

- 1. Ask what the photographs are for and who will take them.
- 2. Build the contour for the strongest light of the event.
- 3. Keep the daylight version soft enough for close conversation.
- 4. Photograph with flash at arm's length and across the room.
- 5. Compare the contour with the neck and the chest.
- 6. Reduce the contour before the event rather than after.
- 7. Keep a kit to soften stage makeup before a reception.
- 8. Explain the difference between camera makeup and daylight makeup.

Salon example

Tara, twenty-six, was performing a dance at a college function and then attending the dinner afterwards. She asked for strong stage contour because the stage lights would wash her out. We built a defined cheek and jaw for the performance, tested it under a bright lamp and with flash, and photographed it from the back of the hall. It read well at that distance. Before the dinner we removed some of the contour with a damp sponge, softened the highlight, and added a little blush. The same face then looked normal at a table. Without the adjustment she would have walked into the dinner with stage makeup, and the photographs at the table would have shown a brown stripe on each cheek. She kept the sponge and a small powder in her bag, and she now understands why the two versions exist. Her mother, who saw both sets of photographs, said the dinner pictures looked more like her daughter, and Tara agreed. The sponge stayed in her bag for the rest of the season, and she has since taught two friends the same two-minute change.

CAUTION

Do not carry stage-strength contour into a daylight reception or a close conversation; the line that reads at ten metres reads as dirt at one.

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Hygiene and Honest Limits



No double dipping

Double dipping is putting a used brush, sponge, or finger back into a product container. It transfers skin cells, oil, and whatever was on the skin into the product, and from there to the next client. A cream foundation that has been dipped into with a used sponge is no longer a clean product, even if it looks fine. A lip gloss that has touched a mouth is not safe for another mouth. The rule is simple: scrape or pump product onto a clean mixing plate, and work from the plate. If you need more, use a clean spatula, not the brush that has already touched a face.

Brushes should be washed after every client or set aside in a closed bin and washed before the next use. Deep-clean the face brushes weekly with a gentle soap, rinse until the water runs clear, and dry them flat with the bristles over the edge of a surface so water does not sit in the ferrule. A damp brush grows bacteria, so never put a brush away wet. Sponges are one per client, or a washable sponge that goes into a laundry bag immediately after use. Mascara wands are disposable, one per client, and never re-dipped. Eye and lip pencils are sharpened before each client, and the blade is wiped with an alcohol wipe.

Palettes and jars need the same discipline. Scrape powder onto a clean plate with a spatula, or use a clean brush that has not touched the face. For lip colour in a jar, take out what you need with a spatula and apply it with a disposable applicator. Do not let a client put her finger into a jar, and do not use the same applicator on two clients. Keep lids closed when a product is not in use, and keep the station free of open containers that collect dust and spray. If a product looks separated, smells different, or has changed texture, throw it away; cosmetics do have a shelf life after opening, and a product that has been in a warm kit for a year is not the same product.

Hygiene is also visible behaviour, and clients notice it. Wash your hands, then sanitise them in front of the client. Keep your hair tied back, your nails short, and your phone away from the face. Cover a cough or a sneeze away from the client and sanitise again. Do not touch your own face, hair, or phone during the service. Lay fresh paper on the station and put out only the products for this look. A crowded station collects contamination and makes it harder to keep track of what has been used. The client who sees you clean a brush and open a fresh wand relaxes, and that relaxation is part of the service.

- 1. Wash your hands and sanitise them in front of the client.
- 2. Lay fresh paper and put out only the products for this look.
- 3. Scrape cream and powder onto a clean mixing plate.

- 4. Use a clean spatula for jars and a disposable applicator for lips.
- 5. Use one sponge per client and a fresh mascara wand every time.
- 6. Sharpen pencils before each client and wipe the blade.
- 7. Set used brushes aside in a closed bin for washing.
- 8. Keep lids closed and discard anything that has changed smell or texture.

Salon example

Shreya, twenty-four, booked a party makeup and told me she had stopped going to a nearby salon because she had developed a sty after a makeup appointment there. She did not know what had caused it, and I did not speculate about the other salon. I showed her what we would do differently: fresh paper on the station, a clean brush for each product, a new sponge, a disposable mascara wand, and a lip colour taken out with a spatula onto a plate. She watched me sanitise my hands and sharpen the pencil. Halfway through, she said she had never seen an artist work this way and asked why the other salon had not. I explained that hygiene costs time and that some places cut it. The makeup took twenty minutes longer than usual, and she said it was the first appointment where she had felt safe. She has come back three times since, and she now asks every artist the same questions. The sty never returned, and she brings her own mascara wand to salons that do not offer one.

CAUTION

Never re-dip a mascara wand or a lip applicator that has touched a client; a fresh wand is not optional, and a shared one can spread infection.

Do not cover an infection

Some skin is not safe to cover. An active eye infection with redness, discharge, or a sty; conjunctivitis; a cold sore; broken skin; an open cut; a weepy rash; a fresh peel with raw skin; and any contagious skin condition are all reasons to stop. Makeup over an infection traps bacteria and moisture, delays healing, and can spread the infection to the other eye, the other lip, or the next client. It also looks worse than the infection itself once the product settles into the inflamed skin. The correct response is to explain, refer the client to a doctor, and reschedule. That conversation is uncomfortable for a minute; the alternative is a much longer problem.

An allergic reaction is a different situation and needs a different response. If the skin swells, develops hives, itches, or becomes hot and red during the service, remove the product with a gentle cleanser and cool water, do not scrub, and stop the service. Ask what the client has used before and whether she has had a reaction to a product. Do not diagnose the reaction or name a condition; say that this needs a doctor or a dermatologist. Write down the products used, the time they were applied, and what you saw, and give the client a copy. If the reaction is severe, or involves swelling around the mouth or throat, treat it as an emergency and call for medical help.

Contagious conditions need more than a stopped service. Isolate the tools that touched the skin, bag them, and clean them before they go back into the kit. Change the paper on the station, sanitise the

chair and any surface that was touched, and wash your hands thoroughly. Do not use the same brush or sponge on yourself or anyone else until it has been cleaned. Patch tests reduce the risk of an allergic reaction but do not guarantee that a product will never cause one, so ask about previous reactions every time and keep a record. The FDA publishes consumer information about cosmetic safety and allergic reactions at <https://www.fda.gov/cosmetics>, which is useful reading for any artist who wants to understand what the labels can and cannot promise.

Say it plainly and without judgement. A sentence such as this is enough: I can see that the skin is inflamed, and I am not going to put makeup over it because that could make it worse; I would like you to see a doctor and we will reschedule. Offer an alternative if it is safe, such as makeup on the rest of the face while leaving the affected area bare, or a different date. Do not let a client insist, and do not let a tip or a wedding deadline change the answer. If the client is a bride and the wedding is close, help her find a medical appointment and offer a trial for the parts of the face that are not affected. Refusing to cover an infection is part of the job, not a failure of customer service.

- 1. Look at the skin before you open any product.
- 2. Stop if you see redness, discharge, a sty, a cold sore, or broken skin.
- 3. Do not apply product to the affected area, even to test it.
- 4. Remove any product already applied with a gentle cleanser.
- 5. Bag the tools that touched the area and clean them before reuse.
- 6. Refer the client to a doctor without naming a diagnosis.
- 7. Record what you saw, what you used, and what you advised.
- 8. Reschedule and offer a safe alternative for the rest of the face.

Salon example

Naina, twenty-five, arrived for a birthday party with a sty on her left upper lid and asked me to cover it with shadow and liner because the photographs would be taken in an hour. The lid was swollen and red, and there was a small discharge at the lash line. I explained that I would not put anything on that eye because it could make the infection worse and could spread to the other eye. She was upset and said she would go to another artist. I offered to do the rest of her face, including the other eye, and to keep the look balanced so that the sty was not the first thing people noticed. She agreed. We did the skin, the brows, the right eye, and the lip, and left the left eye bare apart from a little mascara on the outer lashes of the lower lid, which was away from the sty. She sent me a photograph from the party and said nobody had mentioned the eye. The infection cleared in four days with the treatment her doctor prescribed.

CAUTION

Never cover a cold sore with lip colour or base, and never work over a sty or conjunctivitis; refer the client and reschedule.

Makeup does not change bone structure

Makeup can even the skin tone, cover what the client wants covered, define the eyes and brows, and help a face hold up under event light for the hours booked. It can make a nose look a little narrower from the front, a jaw look a little sharper in a photograph, and a cheek look a little more defined. It can match a look to an outfit, a piece of jewellery, and an occasion. These are real results and they are worth promising. What makeup cannot do is change bone, and every artist will be asked to do exactly that at some point, usually by a bride who wants a different face for her wedding photographs.

It cannot change the shape of the face, the width of the nose, the height of the cheekbone, or the line of the jaw. It cannot remove texture, pores, or scars completely, and it cannot make a deep scar disappear in daylight. It cannot replace a skin treatment or a dermatologist's plan, and it cannot guarantee a photograph in every light. It cannot last through a full day of heat and tears without a touch-up. A face that has been promised these things will disappoint the client even when the makeup is excellent. The honest conversation at the trial is what protects both the artist and the client from that disappointment.

Say it in a way that is useful rather than blunt. Makeup can define the eyes and even the tone; it will not change the shape of the face. For the photograph this will read well; for ten hours we need the set and the touch-up kit. I can soften the redness, but I cannot treat it; a skin therapist or a doctor can look at that. These sentences are short, they are true, and they give the client a realistic picture without making her feel refused. Add what you can do in the same breath, so the conversation does not end on a no. A client who hears what is possible usually stops asking for what is not.

There is an ethical line here that is worth keeping clear. Do not retouch a client's photographs and present the result as your makeup. Do not use a filter on a before-and-after and call it a look. Do not tell a client that a product will change her face, and do not sell a treatment you are not qualified to provide. If a client wants a result that only a doctor can give, refer her. If she wants a shape she does not have, show her what you can do with her own shape and let her decide. The work is to make the face in front of you look like its best self, not to make it look like someone else.

- 1. Ask what the client wants to change and what she expects to see.
- 2. Separate what makeup can do from what only a doctor can do.
- 3. Say the limit in one clear sentence, then offer the alternative.
- 4. Show the effect on one side of the face before doing the other.
- 5. Photograph the trial so expectations are based on evidence.
- 6. Do not retouch or filter photographs and present them as makeup.
- 7. Refer skin concerns to a skin therapist or a doctor.
- 8. Write the agreed look and its limits on the client card.

Salon example

Rhea, thirty, came for a trial and asked me to make her nose narrower and her face longer for the wedding. She had brought a photograph of a model with a very different bone structure. I explained that makeup could not change the shape of her nose or the length of her face, but that I could make the bridge look a little narrower from the front and the cheek a little more defined. She was quiet for a moment and then asked what that would look like. I did one side of her face, turning her towards the window so she could see the difference in daylight, and then the other. The change was small and real. She said it was less than she had imagined and better than she had feared, because it still looked like her. We wrote the plan on the card, including the parts we would not do. On the wedding day she asked for the same version, and she did not mention the model's photograph again. Her mother later said she looked like the family, which was the point.

CAUTION

Do not retouch, filter, or edit a client's photographs and present the result as your makeup; it sells a face that makeup did not create.

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Skin Type and the Base



Dry skin: moisture before coverage

Dry skin lacks oil, and it often lacks water as well. It looks tight after cleansing, feels rough on the cheeks, and shows fine flakes around the nose and the mouth. Dry skin is not the same as dehydrated skin, which lacks water and can feel tight even when it is oily. The difference matters because the preparation is different: dry skin needs a richer cream to seal the surface, while dehydrated skin needs water-based hydration and a lighter seal. Ask how the skin feels an hour after washing, and look at it in daylight before you decide. Whatever the cause, a base applied over dry, flaky skin will catch on the flakes and look patchy within an hour.

Prepare with a gentle cleanser, not a foaming one, and give the skin a minute before the next layer. Use a hydrating serum if the skin is dehydrated, then a richer cream on the cheeks and the sides of the face, and a lighter lotion on the centre if that area is less dry. Wait three to five minutes, until the cream has sunk in and the surface is not wet. A base applied over wet cream will pill and slide. If the client has a flaking patch, do not scrub it; soften it with a little cream and press a damp cloth over it, then remove only what lifts easily. Scrubbing creates redness and makes the flake worse.

Choose a base with a soft, flexible finish rather than a matte one, and apply it with a damp sponge in thin layers. A matte foundation on dry skin emphasises every flake and looks flat in daylight. If the client wants more coverage, build it with a second thin layer on the areas that need it, and use a small amount of creamy concealer rather than a heavier foundation everywhere. Leave the cheeks and the outer face unset, or set them with the tiniest amount of powder. A cream blush sits better on dry skin than a powder blush, and a setting spray at the end can melt the powder into the skin so that the finish looks less dusty.

The common mistakes with dry skin are all forms of impatience. Exfoliating during the appointment, applying a strong acid, layering a smoothing primer over flakes, and powdering the whole face are the four that cause the most damage. A smoothing primer sits on top of the flakes and makes them more visible, not less. If the dryness is severe, if the skin is cracked, or if there is a rash, do not treat it with makeup. Refer the client to a skin therapist or a doctor and offer a look that works around the affected area. Dry skin is a condition to manage, not a fault to hide, and the client will trust you more if you say so.

- 1. Cleanse with a gentle, non-foaming product and pat the skin dry.
- 2. Ask how the skin feels an hour after washing.
- 3. Apply a hydrating serum if the skin feels tight and looks dull.

- 4. Use a richer cream on the dry areas and a lighter lotion elsewhere.
- 5. Wait three to five minutes for the cream to absorb.
- 6. Apply a hydrating base in thin layers with a damp sponge.
- 7. Leave the cheeks unset or use only a trace of powder.
- 8. Finish with a setting spray to soften the powder.

Salon example

Nandini, thirty-six, came for a winter wedding guest makeup in January. Her skin was dry and flaking around the nose, and she had used a foaming face wash that morning because she thought the flakes were dirt. She had also applied a smoothing primer, which had made the flakes more visible. We cleansed with a mild milk cleanser, pressed a damp cloth over the flaking area, and used a hydrating serum followed by a richer cream on the cheeks. I waited five minutes, then applied a hydrating base with a damp sponge in two thin layers. The cheeks were left unset, and only the sides of her nose got a trace of powder. Her blush was cream, and a setting spray finished the face. In the photographs her skin looked smooth and slightly luminous, and the flakes were not visible. She asked what she should change at home, and the answer was the cleanser, not a new foundation. She switched to a cream cleanser and a heavier night cream, and her next appointment needed half the preparation. At that appointment she said her skin no longer stung after washing, which mattered more to her than the makeup.

CAUTION

Do not scrub, exfoliate, or apply an acid to flaking skin during a makeup appointment; it makes the flakes worse and leaves the skin red under the base.

Oily and combination: shine where it belongs

Oily skin produces more sebum, usually on the forehead, nose, and chin. It is not a fault, and it ages more slowly than dry skin in many people. The problem for makeup is that oil lifts the base, especially in heat, and powder applied over oil turns into paste. The answer is not to strip the skin with harsh cleansers or alcohol toners, which often makes it produce more oil. Cleanse gently, use a light gel moisturiser, and let it absorb. A mattifying primer on the T-zone can help, but only on the areas that actually shine; the dry cheeks need something else, or the base will look chalky there.

Choose a light base with a natural or semi-matte finish and apply it in thin layers. Press powder only where the shine appears, and use a small puff rather than a large brush. Blotting papers are more useful than extra powder during the day, because they remove oil without adding product. If the client is going to be in a hot room, set the sides of the nose and the chin, which are the first places to break down, and leave the outer cheeks lighter. A setting spray can help the powder melt in, but it will not stop oil; only blotting and a light touch-up will do that.

Combination skin needs zones rather than a single routine. Use a light lotion everywhere, a richer cream only on the dry cheeks, a mattifying primer only on the T-zone, and a base that works for both areas. Powder the centre and leave the outer face alone. This sounds like more work, and it is, but it

produces a face that looks even rather than a face that is shiny in the middle and flaky at the edges. Do not apply two different foundations in thick layers and try to blend them in the middle; the seam will show. One base in thin layers, with preparation adjusted underneath, is easier to control.

Oil also affects the choice of blush, highlighter, and setting products. A heavy cream blush slides on oily skin, and a strong highlighter looks like sweat by the second hour. Use a powder blush on the oily areas and a cream blush only on dry cheeks, and keep the highlighter small. If the client has acne, avoid heavy silicone primers on active spots, keep the brushes clean, and do not pick or squeeze anything. Oily skin can carry a slightly dewy finish well, but the dew should sit on the cheekbone, not across the whole face. At the end of the appointment, check the T-zone in daylight and blot anything that already looks wet.

- 1. Cleanse gently and avoid alcohol-heavy toners.
- 2. Apply a light gel moisturiser and let it absorb fully.
- 3. Use a mattifying primer only on the T-zone.
- 4. Apply a light base in thin layers over the whole face.
- 5. Press powder on the forehead, nose, chin, and inner cheeks.
- 6. Leave the outer cheeks and jaw lighter or unset.
- 7. Choose powder blush on oily areas and cream blush on dry ones.
- 8. Pack blotting papers for the event, not another layer of powder.

Salon example

Karan, thirty, was a groom for a summer wedding with a long morning of rituals and an evening reception. His skin was oily on the forehead and nose and normal on the cheeks, and he had never worn makeup. He was worried about looking shiny in the photographs. We cleansed gently, used a light gel moisturiser, and applied a mattifying primer only on the centre of his face. The base went on in two thin layers with a damp sponge, and I pressed powder on his forehead, nose, and chin. His cheeks were left almost bare. At the reception, his brother blotted his forehead once and pressed a small amount of powder. In the photographs his skin looks even and healthy, with a little shine on the cheekbones where light should fall. He said he had expected to feel painted and instead felt like himself, only less tired. His bride asked me to use the same method on her brother, whose skin was oilier still, and it worked with a lighter powder. Karan kept the blotting papers in his pocket all evening and did not need them once.

CAUTION

Do not put a heavy mattifying primer or powder on the dry cheeks of a combination face; it turns the base chalky and shows every flake.

Primer is one product, and the SPF that flashes white

A primer is a preparation step for one concern, not a collection of bottles. A smoothing primer fills the look of large pores and texture, but only on the areas that need it. A mattifying primer controls oil on

the T-zone. A hydrating primer helps dry patches, and a green-tinted primer reduces redness when used sparingly. A light-reflecting primer adds brightness, but a glitter primer adds particles that show in photographs. Choose the one concern that matters most for this client and this event, and use it only where it is needed. If the skin is generally good, a primer may add nothing at all, and the base will sit better without it.

Do not mix three primers on one face. Silicone-based and water-based products can pill against each other, especially when one is applied before the other has set. If you must use two, keep them in separate zones and let each set for a minute before the next layer. If the base starts to roll into small flakes under the sponge, stop and remove the area rather than pressing harder. Pilling is a sign that the layers are incompatible, not that the base is bad. The same rule applies to a primer under a water-based foundation: check the texture on the jaw before you commit to the whole face.

Sunscreen is the product that causes the most trouble in photographs. It is essential outdoors and in daylight, and it is regulated in many countries because it makes a protective claim. Some filters, particularly the mineral ones, leave a visible white cast on deeper skin, and that cast becomes stronger under flash. If the event is at night with flash, test the sunscreen on the jaw before the base, and photograph it. If it flashes white, use less, choose a different product for the event, or keep the sunscreen for the neck and ears where the sun actually falls. Do not skip protection for an outdoor ceremony, and do not pretend that a product with a cast is invisible.

The combination of a heavy sunscreen and a heavy silica powder is the worst case for a night photograph on deep skin. Each product may be fine alone, but together they reflect a large amount of light back at the camera. Test the stack, not the individual products, and test it at the distance the photographs will be taken. If the face looks pale in the test, remove the powder first, then reduce the sunscreen if needed. A finely milled powder matched to the skin and a lighter sunscreen will usually solve it. The client should leave knowing which products were used, because she may be photographed again at another event with the same base.

- 1. Decide the one concern the primer needs to solve.
- 2. Apply a smoothing primer only on textured areas.
- 3. Use a mattifying primer only on the T-zone.
- 4. Let each primer set before applying the next layer.
- 5. Apply sunscreen to the face, neck, and ears for outdoor events.
- 6. Test the sunscreen on the jaw with a flash photograph.
- 7. Reduce or replace a sunscreen that flashes white.
- 8. Photograph the full stack before the client leaves.

Salon example

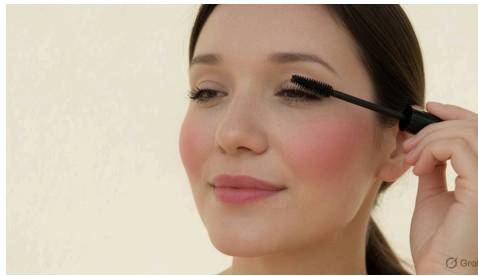
Ishaan, thirty-one, was attending a haldi ceremony outdoors at eleven in the morning and a dinner indoors at eight. He had fair-to-medium skin and used a high-protection mineral sunscreen every day. At the trial we applied the sunscreen and photographed his jaw with flash. The jaw went noticeably paler than his neck, and the difference was obvious in the picture. We tried a lighter chemical sunscreen for the face, kept the mineral one for his neck and ears where the sun would fall, and photographed again. The cast was gone. For the outdoor ceremony we added a hat and a light powder only on the nose. At the dinner the base matched his neck in every photograph. He said he had never understood why his face looked pale in wedding pictures, and now he tests a sunscreen before an event. The fix cost him one extra product, not a new routine. He now keeps the lighter sunscreen in his bag for evening functions and uses the mineral one for sport, where the white cast does not matter. He also keeps a small note of which sunscreen passed, because he buys the same one for every family wedding.

CAUTION

Do not layer a heavy sunscreen and a heavy silica powder on deep skin for a flash photograph without testing the combination on the jaw first.

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Cheeks, Lips and Lashes



Blush placement by face

Blush should sit where the client's own flush sits, which is usually the apple of the cheek, a little below the outer corner of the eye. From there, blend toward the temple, not toward the nose. Blending inward drags colour into the centre of the face and makes the nose look red, which is the opposite of the healthy look most clients want. The exact placement changes with the face: on a round face, place the blush slightly higher and sweep it outward to add length; on a long face, place it across the cheek rather than high on the bone; on an angular face, keep it soft and round to soften the line of the cheekbone.

On a mature face, keep the blush higher and lighter, because colour placed low on the cheek draws the eye downward and emphasises the jaw. On a deep-skinned face, a bright blush can look chalky if it is applied heavily, so build it in thin layers with a soft brush. A cream blush blends into dry skin and looks natural, while a powder blush holds better on oily skin and in humidity. If the client has texture on the cheeks, use a cream or a finely milled powder and avoid a shimmer that catches on the bumps. The aim is a flush that looks like it came from inside the skin, not a circle of colour sitting on top.

Amount is more important than shade. Load a soft brush, tap off the excess, and apply in small circles, checking after each pass. It is easier to add a second layer than to remove the first, and removing blush usually means removing the base underneath. If the blush is too strong, press a clean damp sponge over it to lift some colour, then set it lightly with powder. If the blush disappears in the photograph, do not double the amount; first check whether the lighting washed it out, because a stage light or a flash can take a soft blush away entirely. The correct fix may be a slightly deeper shade, not more product.

Blush also has to balance with the lip and the eye. A strong lip with a strong blush and a strong eye is three statements at once, and the face loses its focus. If the lip is deep, keep the blush soft and the eye simple. If the eye is smoky, keep the lip closer to the natural colour and the blush light. If the client wants a bright blush, keep the rest of the face quiet so that the cheek is the one thing the eye goes to. Check the finished face in daylight and in a photograph, because blush that looks subtle in the mirror can look like a fever in a phone picture, and blush that looks strong in the mirror can disappear under flash.

- 1. Ask the client to smile and find the apple of her cheek.
- 2. Load a soft brush and tap off the excess product.
- 3. Place the colour on the apple and sweep it toward the temple.

- 4. Keep the inner edge away from the nose.
- 5. Build in thin layers rather than one heavy pass.
- 6. Choose cream for dry skin and powder for oily skin.
- 7. Check the blush in daylight and in a flash photograph.
- 8. Balance the blush with the lip and the eye before finishing.

Salon example

Sonal, thirty-four, had a round face and a habit of applying blush low on her cheeks, close to her nose, because a friend had told her it made her look rosy. At her cousin's engagement she wanted a fresh look for photographs. I showed her the difference on one side: the low placement made her face look wider and her nose look red, while a placement slightly higher and swept toward the temple made her cheek lift and her face look longer. We used a soft peach powder blush, built it in two thin layers, and kept the inner edge well away from the nose. Her lip was a warm rose and her eye was simple, so the blush had room to be the main colour. In the photographs her face looks bright rather than flushed, and she asked me to draw the placement on a card so she could repeat it. She had been using the right product in the wrong place. Her friend, who had given the original advice, now places her blush the same way, and both of them say their faces look longer in photographs.

CAUTION

Do not place blush low and close to the nose; it makes the face look wider and the nose look red, and it is the hardest mistake to correct once the base is set.

Liner, stain and the lip you can trust

A lip that lasts starts with the pencil. Line the whole lip, not just the outline, and fill it in before the lipstick. The pencil gives a base for the colour, keeps the edge clean, and leaves a stain when the top layer wears away. Choose a liner close to the natural lip colour, or one shade deeper than the lipstick, and blend the inner edge so there is no hard line between pencil and lipstick. If the client wants a fuller shape, take the liner slightly outside the natural line at the centre of the lower lip and blend it inward, so that the edge looks soft rather than drawn on with a ruler.

Prep matters as much as product. Dry, flaky lips hold colour unevenly, so ask the client to use a balm for several days before the event. On the day, apply a thin layer of balm, let it sit for a minute, and blot it before the colour. Remove flakes with a damp cloth, never by picking. If the lips are very dry, a creamy lipstick is kinder than a matte one, and a stain underneath keeps the colour even if the cream wears off. A matte finish photographs well but shows every crack, so the condition of the lip decides the finish more than the trend does.

For long wear, build the colour in layers. Apply the lipstick, blot with a tissue, dust a little powder through the tissue, and apply again. This sets colour in the lip rather than on it. A gloss can go on top as a final layer, but it should be carried for touch-ups because it disappears first. Warn the client that a mark on a glass is normal and does not mean the lip has failed. If the event includes a meal, a stain

under the lipstick is the difference between a lip that fades evenly and a lip that leaves an outline with a bare centre. Choose a stain that matches the lipstick, because a stain in a different undertone will show through as the top layer wears.

Hygiene around the lip is not negotiable. Never share a lip product from a jar, and never double-dip an applicator that has touched a mouth. Take the product out with a clean spatula onto a plate, apply it with a disposable applicator, and throw the applicator away. Sharpen the pencil before each client and wipe the blade. If the client has a cold sore, a cracked lip that is bleeding, or an infection at the corner of the mouth, do not apply colour over it. Refer and reschedule. Lip colour over a cold sore spreads the virus, delays healing, and turns a small problem into a week of discomfort.

- 1. Apply a thin balm, wait a minute, and blot it before colour.
- 2. Remove flakes with a damp cloth, never by picking.
- 3. Line and fill the whole lip with a pencil close to the natural colour.
- 4. Blend the inner edge of the pencil into the lip.
- 5. Apply the lipstick or stain in a thin layer.
- 6. Blot, powder through a tissue, and apply a second layer.
- 7. Add gloss only on top, and pack it for touch-ups.
- 8. Use a clean spatula or disposable applicator, never a shared jar.

Salon example

Noor, twenty-nine, was hosting her sister's bridal shower and wanted a deep berry lip that would survive photographs, lunch, and a lot of talking. At the trial she admitted that her lipstick usually disappeared by the main course and left a dark outline. We lined and filled her whole lip with a berry pencil, applied a matching stain, blotted, powdered through a tissue, and then applied the lipstick. She ate a full meal and drank two cups of tea. The colour faded slightly in the centre but the stain kept the lip even, and the outline was still soft. She carried the pencil and lipstick in a small pouch and touched up once before the photographs. At the end of the day her lips looked stained rather than painted, which is what she had asked for. She said the pencil was the part she had never understood, and now she buys one with every lipstick. Her sister asked for the same method at her own shower, and the stain survived a three-course lunch. Noor now keeps a pencil in every bag she owns, and she has stopped buying gloss for evenings that last more than four hours.

CAUTION

Never use lip colour from a shared jar or double-dip an applicator that has touched a mouth; use a clean spatula and a disposable applicator.

Mascara hygiene and when to skip the lash

Mascara is the product most likely to carry infection from one client to another, because it sits on the eye and the wand goes back into the tube. Use a disposable wand for every client, and never re-dip a

used wand. Do not pump the wand in the tube, which pushes air and bacteria into the product and dries it out. Replace the tube regularly, and never add saliva or water to loosen a dried formula. If a client has an eye infection, do not use mascara on her at all, even with a fresh wand, because the product can pick up the infection from the lashes and the tube can become contaminated. Keep the tubes closed when not in use and store them away from heat.

Application is a small skill with a large effect. Curl the lashes before mascara, at the root, and hold for a few seconds. Wiggle the wand at the base of the lashes and sweep upward, rather than coating the tips only. Do the upper lashes first, then the lower lashes with the tip of the wand, and use less product on the lower lashes. If a lash clumps, separate it with a clean spoolie while the mascara is still wet. Do not apply a second coat over dried mascara, which creates flakes that fall onto the cheek. For a client with sparse lashes, a thin coat on the upper lashes and a tightline gives more definition than three coats of volume mascara.

Sometimes the right decision is to skip lashes altogether. Sensitive eyes, contact lenses, a recent stye, conjunctivitis, an eye that waters continuously, or a client who rubs her eyes are all reasons to keep the eye simple. Windy outdoor events and very humid weather can also make lashes uncomfortable or messy. Strip lashes need glue, and glue needs a patch test at least a day before the event. Do not apply a strip lash to an eye that is irritated, and do not use a lash glue that has been shared or has been open for months. Individual lashes are lighter but still need clean tweezers and a fresh glue dot for each client.

If you do use lashes, plan the removal as carefully as the application. Tell the client how to take them off, and give her a small amount of the remover if she is travelling. Never pull a strip lash off dry, because it takes natural lashes with it. For waterproof mascara, use a balm or an oil-based remover, let it sit for a minute, and wipe gently downward with a damp pad. Do not rub, and do not use a harsh soap on the eye area. A client who removes her eye makeup properly will have lashes for the next appointment; a client who pulls them off will not, and she will blame the mascara rather than the removal.

- 1. Use a fresh disposable mascara wand for every client.
- 2. Do not pump the wand or add water to a dry tube.
- 3. Curl the lashes at the root before mascara.
- 4. Wiggle the wand at the base and sweep upward.
- 5. Separate clumps with a clean spoolie while the mascara is wet.
- 6. Skip lashes if the eye is irritated, infected, or very sensitive.
- 7. Patch test lash glue a day before the event.
- 8. Remove waterproof mascara with a balm, not by rubbing.

Salon example

Priyanka, twenty-seven, wanted strip lashes for an outdoor evening party by a lake. She wore contact lenses and had sensitive eyes, and she had never used strip lashes before. At the trial I applied a strip lash to one eye with a fresh glue dot and waited ten minutes. Her eye watered and the lash lifted at the inner corner, so we removed it. Rather than forcing the lash, we curled her natural lashes, tightlined the upper lash line, and used a thin coat of mascara with a fresh wand. The result looked defined without anything sitting on the eye. At the party the wind was strong, and she told me later that she was glad she had no strip lash to worry about. She still wanted lashes for her sister's wedding, so we tested a different glue two weeks before, and that one worked. The first test saved the second event. She now keeps a small spoolie and her own mascara in her bag, and she asks for a fresh wand at every appointment. She also told her sister, who wears lenses, to do the same before her wedding.

CAUTION

Do not apply a strip lash or lash glue to an eye that is red, swollen, or watering; stop, remove the product, and refer the client.

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Colour Harmony



The outfit, the metal, the undertone

The outfit sets the temperature of the makeup before the first product is opened. A cool-toned outfit, such as a blue, grey, or silver saree, sits more comfortably with a cooler lip and a cooler blush, while a warm outfit, such as an orange, gold, or rust lehenga, sits with warmer tones. This is a direction, not a rule, and the skin's own undertone matters more than the fabric. The mistake is to match the makeup exactly to the outfit, which makes the face look like part of the dress. The aim is harmony: colours that belong to the same family without repeating each other word for word.

Jewellery gives a second clue. Gold jewellery usually flatters warm and olive skin, and silver usually flatters cool skin, but many Indian clients wear both and look well in both. Do not decide the undertone from the metal alone, because the metal may be a family piece rather than a choice. Instead, hold the jewellery near the face in daylight and see whether it makes the skin look clear or slightly grey. Then choose the highlight and the lip in the same direction. A warm gold highlight with silver jewellery can look out of place, and a silver highlight with heavy gold can look cold. The face is the centre; the jewellery should frame it, not fight it.

Deep colours need different treatment from pastels. A maroon, emerald, or navy outfit can carry a deeper lip and a stronger eye, because the colour of the clothes already gives the photograph weight. A pastel outfit usually looks better with a softer lip, a lighter blush, and a clean eye, because a strong face against a pale dress looks unbalanced. White and ivory are the most forgiving and the least interesting: they allow almost any makeup, but they also show every mark on the skin, so the base has to be even. Black is the opposite, because it flatters strong colour and makes a soft face look washed out.

The skin has to remain the reference point. A very fair client in a bright red outfit may look better with a softer red-brown lip than with a true red, while a deep-skinned client in the same outfit can carry a true red beautifully. A client with olive skin may find that a blue-based pink turns grey on her, while a warm rose looks natural. Test the lip and the blush against the fabric, not only against the face, because the photograph will show both together. If the combination looks like a costume, change the makeup rather than the outfit, since the outfit is usually the client's decision and the makeup is yours.

- 1. Ask to see the outfit, or a photograph of it, before choosing colours.
- 2. Note whether the outfit is warm, cool, or neutral in tone.
- 3. Look at the jewellery near the face in daylight.
- 4. Choose a lip and blush in the same temperature as the skin.

- 5. Keep deep outfits with deeper colour and pastels with softer colour.
- 6. Test the lip against the fabric as well as the face.
- 7. Avoid matching the makeup exactly to the outfit.
- 8. Photograph the finished face with the fabric in daylight.

Salon example

Aditi, twenty-eight, was a bridesmaid at a wedding where she would wear an emerald green saree with a gold border and gold jewellery. She had planned a blue-based pink lip because pink was her favourite, and she brought the saree to the trial. In daylight the pink turned slightly grey against the green, and the gold jewellery made it look colder still. We tried a warm rose and a soft terracotta instead. The rose looked pleasant, but the terracotta made her skin look clear and the green look richer. We kept the eye warm and simple with a bronze shadow and a small gold highlight on the cheekbone, and used a peach blush rather than pink. In the photographs the green is the main colour, the gold frames her face, and her makeup supports both without competing. She told me she would never have chosen terracotta in a shop, and now it is the shade she buys. At the wedding, two relatives asked for the name of the lipstick, and both were surprised that it was not pink. She now sends me a photograph of the outfit before every function, so that the colour conversation starts early.

CAUTION

Do not match a lipstick exactly to the outfit colour; an exact match flattens the face and makes the makeup look like part of the fabric.

One contrast, not five colours

A face reads best with one clear contrast. That contrast can be a deep lip against simple eyes, a strong eye against a nude lip, or a bright blush against a quiet face. When the eye, the lip, the blush, the highlight, and the outfit all compete, the viewer does not know where to look and the face loses its shape in the photograph. Choose the one feature that will carry the look, then keep the others in supporting roles. This is not a rule about restraint for its own sake; it is how the eye reads a face. One strong element is memorable, while five strong elements become noise.

Colour harmony gives you a few reliable structures. A monochrome look uses one colour family in different depths, such as a brown eye, a nude-brown lip, and a warm peach blush. An analogous look uses neighbouring colours, such as peach, coral, and warm rose. A complementary look uses opposite colours, such as a warm gold eye with a berry lip, or a green eye with a red lip, but in small amounts. These structures work because the colours relate to each other rather than competing. They also make it easier to choose a lip when the outfit is already strong, because the structure tells you what belongs and what does not.

Texture can carry variety without adding colour. A matte lip with a satin eye, a cream blush with a powder highlight, or a shimmery lid with a matte crease gives the face interest without introducing a new hue. Indian bridal makeup often uses gold as a texture rather than a colour: a gold shadow, a

gold highlight, and gold jewellery can all read as one idea rather than three. If the client wants more than one colour, keep the second colour small and close to the first, such as a touch of bronze in the outer corner of a copper eye. A single unexpected colour, used in one place, looks deliberate; several unexpected colours look accidental.

The outfit and the jewellery count as colours in the composition, even though they are not on the face. A red lehenga with heavy gold jewellery is already two strong elements, so the face usually needs one more, not four. A pastel outfit with delicate jewellery leaves room for a stronger lip or a stronger eye, but not both. Look at the client from a step back with the fabric visible and ask yourself what the eye goes to first. If the answer is the lip, the eye should be quiet. If the answer is the jewellery, the makeup should support it. If the answer is nothing, add one contrast and stop.

- 1. Look at the whole client, including the outfit, before choosing colours.
- 2. Decide which single feature will carry the look.
- 3. Choose a structure: monochrome, analogous, or complementary.
- 4. Keep the supporting features quieter than the main one.
- 5. Use texture for variety before adding another colour.
- 6. Limit the face to two or three colour families in total.
- 7. Check the balance with the jewellery in the mirror.
- 8. Photograph the face and ask what the eye goes to first.

Salon example

Meenal, thirty, was a bride in a red lehenga with heavy gold jewellery and a red dupatta. Her family had suggested a blue liner to match a detail on the blouse, a green shadow because green was auspicious, and a bright pink blush for photographs. She arrived at the trial with four colours in mind and a photograph of a look that used all of them. We looked at the photograph together and agreed that the face was busy and the bride was hard to find. I suggested one contrast: a warm bronze eye with a soft gold highlight, a classic red lip close to the lehenga but slightly deeper, and a peach blush. The jewellery did the rest. In the trial photographs the red outfit, the gold jewellery, and the red lip made one warm picture, and her face was the centre of it. Her mother, who had wanted the green, admitted that the simpler version looked more expensive. The blue liner stayed in the drawer. Meenal has since sent me two friends who wanted the same problem solved, and both arrived with too many colours and left with one.

CAUTION

Do not add a second strong eye colour and a strong lip and heavy jewellery at the same time; the face disappears behind the makeup and the outfit.

Daylight, stage, and the camera between them

Colour changes with light, and makeup changes with it. Tungsten bulbs add yellow and red, so a cool pink lip can look warmer and a blue eye can look grey. Fluorescent tubes add green, which is unkind to

olive skin and can make a warm blush look muddy. Modern LED lights vary enormously, from warm white to cool daylight, and a face that looks balanced under one can look orange under another. Daylight is the reference, but daylight also changes from morning to afternoon and from sun to cloud. The only reliable method is to look at the face in more than one light before the client leaves, and to photograph it in the light the event will use.

Stage light is stronger, more directional, and often coloured. A stage look needs more contrast than a daylight look because the light washes out subtle shading and the audience is far away. A lip that looks deep in the dressing room can look pale on stage, and a blush that looks strong can disappear. For stage, build the features with more definition and check from the back of the hall, not from the mirror. For a reception, the light is warmer and the distance is shorter, so the same strength looks heavy. If a client is performing and then attending a reception, plan two versions and keep the products to adjust between them.

The camera sits between the face and the viewer, and it changes colour again. A phone camera often boosts contrast and saturation, so a red lip can look brighter and a blush stronger than it did in the mirror. A professional camera with a flash can wash out colour and flatten the face, which is why a makeup that looks strong in person can look pale in a photograph. A camera in low light adds noise and shifts colour, especially on deep skin. Test with the device that will actually be used if you can, and if you cannot, test with a phone at the distance the photographs will be taken. Then choose a middle ground that works in the room and in the picture.

The practical routine is simple. Finish the makeup, look at the face in daylight, then under a warm bulb, then with a phone flash. Compare the lip with the outfit and the blush with the neck. If the face looks good in all three, it will usually look good at the event. If it looks good in one and wrong in another, the wrong one tells you which product to adjust. Do not judge colour under a ring light alone, because a ring light is designed to flatter and it hides the shifts that daylight and flash will reveal. The client will live in the event light, not in the salon, and the makeup should be built for where she is going.

- 1. Finish the makeup before judging any colour.
- 2. Look at the face in daylight near a window.
- 3. Look again under a warm bulb.
- 4. Photograph with a phone flash at the event distance.
- 5. Compare the lip with the outfit in each light.
- 6. Compare the blush with the neck in each light.
- 7. Adjust the one product that looks wrong, not the whole face.
- 8. Do not judge colour under a ring light alone.

Salon example

Sara, twenty-six, had a daytime wedding at noon and a reception at seven in the same hotel. She wanted one face for both, which is a common request and rarely the best plan. At the trial we finished the makeup at two in the afternoon and looked at it in daylight. The lip was a warm coral and the blush was soft, and both looked fresh. Under the warm bulbs of the reception hall the coral turned slightly orange and the blush almost disappeared, while her gold jewellery looked richer. With a phone flash the coral went bright and the blush came back. We decided to keep the daytime version for the ceremony and change only the lip for the evening, to a deeper rose that held its colour under warm light. The change took two minutes and one product. At the reception the photographs show a face that belongs with the jewellery and the lights, and the daytime pictures show a face that belongs with the sun. One product, two events. Sara kept the daytime lip in her bag and wore it the next morning, which is the simplest test of whether a colour belongs to a face.

CAUTION

Do not judge a colour under a ring light or a warm salon bulb alone; both flatter the face and hide the shifts that daylight and camera flash will show.

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Removal and Aftercare



Oil or balm first if it is long-wear

Long-wear makeup does not come off with water alone. Waterproof mascara, long-wear foundation, lip stain, and many sunscreens are designed to resist water and oil, and a foaming cleanser will not dissolve them. An oil or a balm dissolves the product so that it can be lifted without friction. Use it first, on dry skin, with dry hands. Massage it over the face for about a minute, keeping the eyes closed, then add a little water to emulsify it and remove everything with a soft damp cloth. The product should slide off; if you are rubbing, you are not using enough oil or you have not waited long enough.

The eye area needs its own care. Apply the balm with the eyes closed and let it sit for thirty seconds before you wipe. Wipe downward, in the direction the lashes grow, with a damp pad and a light hand. Do not drag the pad across the lid from side to side, and do not use a dry tissue, which pulls the lashes and the thin skin. For waterproof mascara, a second pass with a clean pad is better than pressing harder on the first. If a lash is stuck, apply a little more balm and wait; pulling a lash out takes weeks to grow back and hurts more than the client expects.

Not every makeup needs an oil. A light, non-waterproof face can come off with a gentle cleanser or micellar water on a fresh pad, followed by a second cleanse. The test is simple: if the product does not lift with light pressure, it needs oil, not more scrubbing. Sunscreen is the exception that surprises people, because many high-protection formulas are designed to stay on the skin and need an oil-based step even when the makeup is light. If the client has worn a long-wear lip, use a balm on the lips too, and let it sit before wiping, because a stain that has been on for ten hours will not come off with a tissue.

The common errors in removal are all forms of force. Rubbing the eyes with a tissue, using hot water that strips the skin, pulling a strip lash off dry, and scrubbing a stubborn mascara with soap are the four that cause the most damage. None of them is necessary, and all of them make the next appointment harder because the client arrives with irritated skin or fewer lashes. If the client is tired after a long event, the removal still cannot be rushed. A minute of oil and a minute of gentle wiping is faster than a week of irritation, and the skin that is treated well will hold makeup better at the next booking.

- 1. Wash your hands and tie back your hair before you start.
- 2. Apply an oil or balm to dry skin with dry hands.
- 3. Massage for about a minute, keeping the eyes closed.
- 4. Let the balm sit on the eyes for thirty seconds before wiping.

- 5. Add a little water to emulsify, then remove with a soft damp cloth.
- 6. Wipe the eyes downward with a clean pad and light pressure.
- 7. Use a second clean pad rather than pressing harder.
- 8. Follow with a gentle cleanser to remove the last of the oil.

Salon example

Divya, thirty-three, came back to the salon at one in the morning after her reception, still in her outfit and very tired. She asked me to take the makeup off quickly because she wanted to sleep. I explained that a quick removal with a wipe would leave the waterproof mascara and the long-wear base behind, and that her skin would feel tight in the morning. We used a balm on dry skin, left it on the eyes for half a minute, and wiped downward with a damp pad. The mascara came off in two passes without a single lash on the pad. The base lifted with a soft cloth, and a gentle cleanser removed the last of the oil. She said her face felt clean rather than stripped, and she was asleep within twenty minutes. The next morning she sent a message saying her skin was calm, which is not always the case after a wedding. She has since booked a removal-only appointment after every family wedding, and she says it is the best hour she spends all week. Her sister has started doing the same after late functions.

CAUTION

Do not scrub waterproof mascara off with soap and a tissue; it pulls out lashes and irritates the eye, and the product will still be there.

Cleanse, then moisturise

The second step is a gentle cleanse. An oil or balm removes makeup, but it leaves a film on the skin, and that film can clog pores if it stays. Use a mild gel or cream cleanser with lukewarm water, massage it for thirty seconds, and rinse thoroughly. Do not use a foaming cleanser with a high pH, a scrub with particles, or a strong acid toner straight after a long event, because the skin is tired and the barrier is already under stress. Pat the skin dry with a clean towel, and do not drag the towel across the face. The goal is clean skin, not squeaky skin, and a face that feels tight after cleansing has been stripped.

Moisturise while the skin is still slightly damp, because that is when a cream holds water in most effectively. Use a simple night cream or a barrier cream, and add a little more on the cheeks if they feel dry. The eye area needs a small amount of a product made for it, patted gently with the ring finger, not rubbed. The lips need a balm, especially if they have worn a stain or a matte lipstick for hours. If the client has oily skin, do not skip moisturiser; choose a light gel instead, because dehydrated oily skin produces more oil and breaks down makeup faster the next day.

The advice you give at the end of a service is part of the service. Tell the client to remove her makeup every night, to keep a balm and a cleanser for late nights, and to use a clean towel. Tell her not to sleep in makeup, not even after a wedding, because the product traps oil and bacteria and the skin has no chance to recover. If she travels, a small balm and a gentle cleanser are enough; she does not

need ten products. If she has a skin concern that persists after removal, such as redness, dryness, or a rash, tell her to see a skin therapist or a doctor rather than trying another product from a shop.

There are limits to what aftercare can fix, and it is honest to name them. A late night, a hot hall, and ten hours of makeup will leave most skin looking tired the next day, even with a perfect removal. A client who removes her makeup properly will recover faster than one who sleeps in it, but she will not look as if nothing happened. If the skin is irritated, stop using actives for a few days, keep the routine simple, and let the barrier recover. If the irritation is severe or does not settle, refer. The removal is not a treatment, and the client should not expect it to undo the event.

- 1. Use a mild gel or cream cleanser with lukewarm water.
- 2. Massage for thirty seconds and rinse thoroughly.
- 3. Do not use a scrub, a high-pH foam, or a strong acid toner.
- 4. Pat the skin dry with a clean towel.
- 5. Apply moisturiser while the skin is still slightly damp.
- 6. Add a small amount of eye cream with the ring finger.
- 7. Apply a lip balm after a stain or a matte lipstick.
- 8. Use a light gel moisturiser if the skin is oily.

Salon example

Anjali, thirty-eight, had been removing her makeup with facial wipes for years and could not understand why her skin felt tight and looked dull. She booked a makeup appointment and asked me to show her a better routine. After the event we removed the makeup with a balm, cleansed with a mild cream cleanser, and moisturised while her skin was still damp. She was surprised that her face did not feel tight afterwards. I explained that the wipes had been leaving a film and that the tight feeling she thought was clean was actually stripped skin. She changed her routine at home: a balm for the eyes, a cream cleanser, and a simple moisturiser. Three weeks later she sent me a photograph of her bare face and said it looked calmer. The makeup had not changed her skin; the removal had. She now keeps a balm beside her bed for the nights when she is too tired to stand at the basin, and she has stopped buying wipes in bulk. Her daughter, who is sixteen, uses the same routine after a party, which is a better lesson than any advertisement.

CAUTION

Do not finish a removal with a scrub or a strong toner; the skin is already stressed after a long event and the barrier needs calm, not another active.

Glitter, lashes, and the advice you give

Glitter needs patience rather than force. The particles are small and sharp, and scrubbing them across the eye can scratch the surface and leave fragments in the lashes. Use a balm or an oil, apply it generously over the glitter, and let it sit for a minute so that the adhesive softens. Then lift the glitter

with a damp pad in one direction, and use a damp cotton bud for the pieces near the lash line. Do not use a dry tissue, and do not use sticky tape near the eye, which can pull the skin and the lashes. If a piece remains in the lash, soften it with more balm and lift it with the bud, not with a fingernail.

Lash glue needs a proper remover. A strip lash should be loosened with a lash glue remover or an oil-based product, worked gently from the outer corner, and lifted without pulling the natural lashes. Never pull a lash off dry, and never pick at the glue along the lash line, because that is how a sty or a small infection starts. If the client had individual lashes, the removal is slower: soften the glue with a remover, and slide each lash off rather than pulling it. If the lash does not move, leave it and ask the client to return; a lash that stays for another day is better than a natural lash that comes out with it. Patch test any glue before use, and never share a lash applicator.

The advice you give the client should be the advice you follow yourself. Do not tell a client to remove her makeup every night while you sleep in yours, and do not recommend a product you have never used on your own skin. Keep the routine simple: remove, cleanse, moisturise. Do not make the client feel that she needs a ten-step routine to be clean, and do not sell her a product for a problem she does not have. If she asks whether she can use a makeup wipe on a late night, say that a wipe is better than nothing but not as good as a balm and a cleanser, and that it should not become the routine.

The last piece of advice is about the tools. Brushes that are used on a client should be washed before they touch another face, and the client's own brushes need washing regularly too. Pillowcases should be changed after a heavy makeup night, because product transfers to the fabric and then back to the skin. If the client wears makeup most days, tell her to give her skin a bare day now and then, not as a punishment but as a chance to check what is actually happening on her face. The removal is where the artist's care continues after the client leaves, and the advice is part of the work.

- 1. Apply a balm or oil over glitter and let it sit for a minute.
- 2. Lift the glitter with a damp pad in one direction.
- 3. Use a damp cotton bud for pieces near the lash line.
- 4. Never scrub glitter, and never use tape near the eye.
- 5. Soften lash glue with a remover before lifting the lash.
- 6. Slide individual lashes off rather than pulling them.
- 7. Tell the client what you actually do at home.
- 8. Wash brushes and change the pillowcase after a heavy makeup night.

Salon example

Preeti, twenty-four, came home from a party with glitter shadow on both lids and a strip lash on each eye. Her friend told her to scrub the glitter off with a face wash, which she tried, and her eyes were red and stinging when she called me. I asked her to stop and come over. We used a balm on dry skin, left it on the lids for a minute, and lifted the glitter with a damp pad. The strip lashes came off after a little remover at the outer corner, with no natural lashes on the pad. I rinsed her eyes with cool water, checked that nothing was left in the lash line, and used a simple moisturiser. The redness settled within an hour. She said she had no idea that glitter needed oil rather than soap, and she now keeps a small balm in her bathroom for party nights. The lesson cost her an hour, not an eye. She now messages me before a party to ask which remover to keep ready, and she has stopped borrowing other people's makeup at the end of the night.

CAUTION

Never scrub glitter off the eye or pull a lash off dry; soften the product first and lift it gently, or refer the client if the eye is irritated.

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Glossary

Undertone

The colour beneath the surface of the skin, usually described as warm, cool, neutral, or olive. It does not change with a tan.

Olive undertone

A green or grey cast under the skin that is common in South Asia. Pink-based foundations often turn it ashy.

Oxidation

The way a foundation darkens or changes colour after it meets air and skin oils, usually within ten to thirty minutes.

Flashback

A pale or chalky cast in photographs caused by particles on the skin reflecting camera flash back at the lens.

Colour correction

Neutralising an unwanted colour on the skin with its opposite on the colour wheel before applying base.

Corrector

A thin, strongly pigmented product, such as peach or green, used only on a discoloured area.

Setting powder

A powder used to lock cream and liquid products and control shine. It is pressed on, not swept.

Waterline

The inner rim of the lower eyelid, where the eyelid meets the eye. It needs eye-safe products only.

Tightline

Applying liner between the upper lashes at the root, which makes lashes look fuller without a visible line.

Hooded eye

An eye shape where skin from the brow area folds over the crease, hiding part of the lid when the eye is open.

Deep-set eye

An eye shape where the brow bone sits forward and the eye sits back, creating a natural shadow in the socket.

Lip stain

A thin lip product that dyes the lip surface and survives eating and drinking better than lipstick.

Double dipping

Putting a used brush or sponge back into a product container. It transfers skin bacteria into the product.

Patch test

Applying a small amount of product on the inner forearm or behind the ear and waiting to check for a reaction.

Primer

A preparation product applied before base to smooth texture, control oil, or add hydration. One concern per face is enough.

Setting spray

A fine mist applied at the end of makeup to soften powder and help the base settle into the skin.

Cleansing balm

A solid oil-based cleanser that melts long-wear makeup, sunscreen, and waterproof mascara so they lift without scrubbing.

Barrier

The outer layer of the skin that holds water in and irritants out. It weakens with harsh cleansing, scrubs, and strong actives.

Lash glue

An adhesive for strip or individual lashes. It needs a patch test, a fresh applicator, and a proper remover.

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