

A white tube of skincare product lies diagonally across a grey surface. The surface is covered with numerous water droplets of various sizes, some of which are on the tube itself. The lighting creates soft shadows and highlights the texture of the tube and the wet surface.

The dos and don'ts of

# *layering skincare*

Get the best results from your skincare products  
by layering effectively with expert advice.

If we're spending a small fortune on our skincare products, it's important we apply them correctly. 'Applying skincare products in the correct order ensures you get the most out of ingredients and achieve the best results from the product,' says Dr Dean Rhobaye, founder of Sloane Clinic on Harley Street ([sloaneclinic.co.uk](http://sloaneclinic.co.uk)). With ingredients such as acids, retinol and SPF to consider, as well as a host of different formulas (creams, serums, oils), it can feel like a minefield for the uninitiated. But, if we understand a few basic principles (and the skincare science behind them), we can get the hang of it in no time. Here, we've asked the experts to weigh in on the dos and don'ts of layering our favourite products. ►



## DO: Start light and build up to thicker formulas

It's important to consider the consistency of a product when applying skincare, says cosmetic doctor, skin expert and co-founder of Victor & Garth, Dr Miriam Adebibe ([victorandgarth.co.uk](http://victorandgarth.co.uk)). 'As a general rule, when layering skincare products, start with the lightest in consistency and build up to the thickest and heaviest,' she says. 'This allows the thinner products to absorb effectively without being blocked by weightier formulations.' In practice, this looks like applying toners and serums first, followed by lightweight creams, then thicker creams and oils.

## DON'T: Blend actives willy nilly

We're blessed with a huge range of active ingredients in our skincare these days, from antioxidants to acids and vitamin A. Many pair beautifully together. 'Some active cosmetic ingredients that pair well together include retinoids and antioxidants (excluding vitamin C), as retinoids target signs of ageing like fine lines and wrinkles, while antioxidants provide long-term maintenance of healthy-looking skin,' explain The Ordinary lab team ([theordinary.com](http://theordinary.com)).

'Niacinamide used in combination with hyaluronic acid is another great ingredient combination,' they add. 'Niacinamide offers skin barrier support and improves skin radiance and luminosity, while hyaluronic acid provides hydration support, and can help target the appearance of wrinkles, resulting in smoother, plumper-looking skin.'

Other actives should not be applied in combination. 'Generally speaking, I recommend not using multiple acid-type products on the same day,' says David Delpont, REN Clean Skincare's global ambassador ([renskincare.com](http://renskincare.com)). 'This includes AHAs, retinols (and similar) and L-ascorbic acid (vitamin C).'

If we overwhelm the skin with these powerful ingredients, we're likely to encounter skin irritation and cancel out the benefits of individual ingredients (wasting both our money and the chance to nourish skin).

If we're not confident layering ingredients ourselves, it's best to pick a multi-ingredient product where actives have already been carefully combined by those in the know, as opposed to single-ingredient serums. 'Single-ingredient products can be a good addition to your routine or regimen, but I think products that have been expertly combined will have better performance overall,' says Kristal Bull, head of technical innovation at THG Labs.

## DO: Consider the time of day

While some ingredients are best worn during the day (making the most of their pollution-fighting properties), others - such as retinol - should only be worn at night. This is because it makes skin more sensitive to UV rays. For this reason, we must also pair our night-time retinol with a minimum of SPF30 the following day.

This is especially true during midlife. 'There are many skin and hair changes that occur during the menopause, including the skin becoming much more sun-sensitive,' says junior doctor, skincare expert and The INKEY List ([theinkeylist.com](http://theinkeylist.com)) ambassador Dr Kemi Fabusiwa.

## DON'T: Overcomplicate your routine

We don't need to use hundreds of products to take good care of our skin. 'Start by paring down to general products, rather than ingredients,' says CeraVe's consultant dermatologist, Dr Alexis Granite ([cerave.co.uk](http://cerave.co.uk)). 'A basic skincare routine should include a cleanser, moisturiser and sunscreen.'

'We recommend following a three-regimen step guide: prep, treat and seal,' adds The Ordinary lab team. 'The first step, prep, refers to products you would use to prepare the skin for your regimen. This includes cleansers and toners.'

'The second step, treat, refers to the stage of the regimen where you want to use serums to target your priority skin concerns. We recommend no more than three serums in a single regimen.'

And, finally, it's time to seal all our efforts in place. In the day, this might look like a lightweight moisturiser followed by an SPF. Yes, even in winter months! Come rain or shine, our skin still needs protection from UVA and UVB rays. At night, seal serums into place with a thick night cream and/or an oil to lock moisture into the skin. 