

Skin Layering

Learn about the importance of the routine steps, how to tips and untruths revealed.

Section: Routine step stories

What is skin layering?

Layering is a K-beauty routine that starts with oil-based cleanser. Next is water-based cleanser, exfoliator, toner, essence, serum, sheet mask, eye cream, moisturiser and finally sunscreen. The idea is that the most potent products go on first, with richer formulas sealing everything else in.

Why does the order matter?

Everything in its place

Beauty pros have a protocol to follow when they do a facial, and if you're serious about skincare, you do too. It's all about getting the most from your products. Here's an example: if you use spot treatment after a serum, there's less chance of the spot-busting ingredients getting to where they're needed as they need to fight their way through the serum.

“You need to memorise the order of twelve products”

It's not an exam

If you're not sure where to fit a certain product, use the 'rule of texture' as a guide and always go from thin to thick. The exception is facial oils, which go last.

“There are no exceptions to the order of layering”

The prescription exception

Just like life, skincare is full of exceptions. Prescription products should always go on first, so their active ingredients can penetrate. Ignore the texture and let prescription products lead the way.

“Oily products always go on last”

Nearly, but not quite

Oil is occlusive, meaning nothing can get through it. So you want to apply it last generally. Sun protection in the morning however is the exception, since it acts as a shield. Put it on last before you head outside so you don't forget.

How long to wait between products

Now that you know which product goes on when, you might think it's a matter of racing through your routine. Hold up. For 30 seconds at least. This gives active ingredients time to absorb and stops them 'pilling' or binding together.