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MAKEUP FACE FOUNDATIONS & PRIMERS

We Found the 9 Best Full-Coverage Foundations After Testing More Than 30

For complete coverage that gives you confidence in your skin

written by ALYSSA KAPLAN UPDATED ON 08/30/23 02:55PM

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BYRDIE / KEVIN LIANG

There's no denying that [skin tints](#) and sheer foundations have captured the hearts of makeup lovers over the last few years. But while such complexion formulas dominate the trends, let's not forget how valuable a solid full-coverage foundation can be. Whether you have acne, redness, or [hyperpigmentation](#) that you like to conceal, or a full-glam look is more aligned with your aesthetic, a foundation that offers more coverage can be more favorable.

"Full coverage foundation offers a heavier finish and is often used to conceal blemishes or discoloration in the skin," says [Misha Shahzada](#), celebrity makeup artist. "Some people just like the way a heavier foundation looks regardless of their skin underneath."

But unlike sheer options, which are typically more forgiving if the color, finish, or texture isn't a spot-on match, finding your perfect full-coverage

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foundations to the test in our lab in NYC. We evaluated them based on coverage, texture, wear, finish, and transfer resistance—and ahead, we're sharing which ones outperformed their competition.

Our Top Picks

BEST OVERALL:

[Charlotte Tilbury Airbrush Flawless Foundation at Amazon \(\\$37\)](#)

[↓ Jump to Review](#)

BEST LUXE:

[Chantecaille Future Skin Cushion Skincare Foundation at Nordstrom \(\\$139\)](#)

[↓ Jump to Review](#)

BEST DRUGSTORE:

[NYX Total Control Pro Drop Foundation at Amazon \(\\$12\)](#)

[↓ Jump to Review](#)

BEST LONG-WEARING:

[Lancôme Teint Idole Ultra 24H Long Wear Matte Foundation at Amazon \(\\$57\)](#)

[↓ Jump to Review](#)

BEST SHADE RANGE:

[Pat McGrath Labs Skin Fetish Sublime Perfection Foundation at Amazon \(\\$109\)](#)

[↓ Jump to Review](#)

BEST LIGHTWEIGHT:

[Estée Lauder Double Wear Powder Foundation at Amazon \(\\$43\)](#)

[↓ Jump to Review](#)

BEST FOR OILY SKIN:

[Fenty Beauty Pro Filt'r Soft Matte Foundation at Amazon \(\\$39\)](#)

[↓ Jump to Review](#)

BEST FOR DRY SKIN:

[KVD Beauty Good Apple Skin-Perfecting Hydrating Foundation Balm at Sephora \(\\$43\)](#)

[↓ Jump to Review](#)

BEST WITH SPF:

[Kosas Revealer Skin-Improving Foundation SPF 25 \(See Price\)](#)

[↓ Jump to Review](#)

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Best Overall: Charlotte Tilbury Airbrush Flawless Foundation

★★★★★ 4.8



Sephora

- VIEW ON AMAZON \$37
- VIEW ON NORDSTROM \$49
- VIEW ON SEPHORA \$49

Our Ratings

Coverage 5/5 Feel 4/5 Wear 3.5/5 Finish 3/5
Transfer Resistance 4.5/5

What We Like	What We Don't Like
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Great blendability• Comfortable, balanced feel on skin• Strong transfer resistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can emphasize dry patches slightly

This is, without a doubt, one of the most popular full-coverage foundations on the market, and for good reason. Despite having a pretty thick texture which often [makes for a cakey finish](#), it blends out beautifully on the face and

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smooth, full-coverage result that appears skin-like and most importantly, lasts.

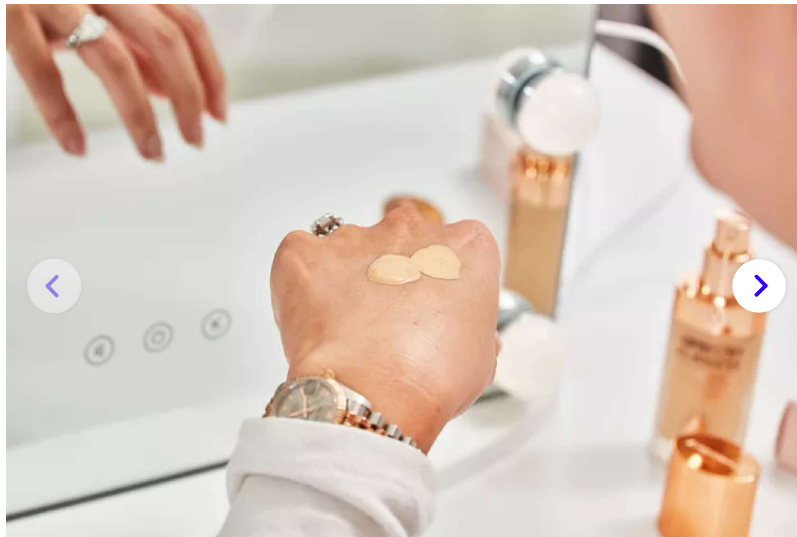
In addition to revering its **long-wearing ability**, we appreciated that it **passed the transfer test with perfect scores**—this is especially important if you have oily skin and struggle with your foundation migrating or breaking apart. It also comes in a pretty **extensive shade range** that's well dispersed across the skin tones, which is especially important for foundations that offer lots of coverage and won't be forgiving if your shade doesn't match your skin color.

Who It's For

If you're looking for a **matte, full-coverage foundation** that will **last all day** and night without creasing or fading, we can't recommend this one enough. Though we think it's ideal for those with oily or balanced skin, it's also a good choice for those with dry or combination skin, so long as you properly exfoliate and moisturize prior to application. Essentially, it's for people who want coverage, longevity, and perhaps a little slice of luxury—we can't ignore how gorgeous the bottle is.

Price at time of publish: \$49

Finish: Matte | **Number of shades:** 40 | **Cruelty-Free:** Yes



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Best Luxe: Chantecaille Future Skin Cushion Skincare Foundation

★★★★★ 4.8



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Bluemercury

[VIEW ON NORDSTROM](#) \$139

[VIEW ON DERMSTORE](#) \$139

[VIEW ON WALMART](#)

Our Ratings

Coverage 5/5 **Feel** 5/5 **Wear** 5/5 **Finish** 5/5
Transfer Resistance 4/5

What We Like

- Lightweight texture
- Buildable coverage
- Natural, glowing finish
- Comfortable feel on skin

What We Don't Like

- Transfers just slightly
- Shade range needs work

It's not often that cushion foundations provide significant coverage, but this one can be layered and built up to go from fairly light coverage to offering enough coverage to completely even out your complexion. Aside from experiencing a bit of transfer, our experience with this foundation was overwhelmingly positive. We loved the **natural, glowy finish**, how easily it blended into the skin, and how weightless and comfortable it felt when applied. It **completely covered redness while maintaining a skin-like appearance** and didn't settle into pores or fine lines.

One thing we're not impressed by is the shade range—it's very limited. While the colors are fairly flexible because it doesn't offer full-on coverage right off the bat, we would still like to see the brand expand the range significantly.

Who It's For

If you're sensitive to the feeling of makeup sitting on your skin but you still want to wear a product that you can build up for total coverage, this is a fantastic option for you. It's **great for people who crave versatility out of**

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Price at time of publish: \$130

Finish: Natural | Number of shades: 6 | Cruelty-Free: Yes



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Best Drugstore: NYX Total Control Pro Drop Foundation

★★★★☆ 4.6



Amazon

[VIEW ON AMAZON](#) \$12

[VIEW ON ULTA](#)

[VIEW ON TARGET](#)

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- consistency
- Great blendability
- Natural finish on the skin
- Could offer even more coverage

This unique formula has a **true liquid consistency** that makes it easy to blend and lightweight on the skin. We love that it comes in a wide range of shades—especially for the drugstore—and can be used to create a light coverage look or something more perfected when built up with additional layers. While it didn't completely cover all blemishes, we could build it up to yield medium-to-full coverage that looked incredibly smooth and natural on the skin. The **finish is demi-matte**, meaning it looks skin-like, and we didn't find it to be particularly hydrating or drying, making it a nice choice for a variety of skin types.

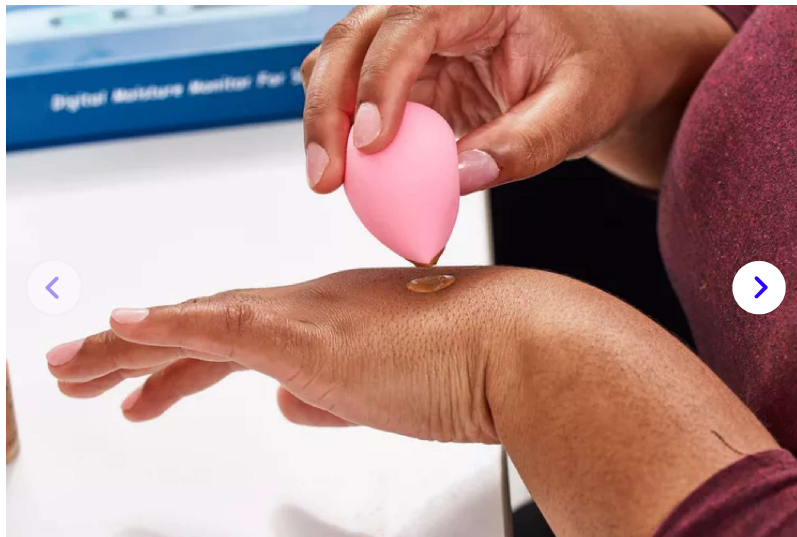
One thing to note is that this formula did transfer a bit onto the blotting paper during the transfer test, so if that's a concern for you, we recommend setting it with mattifying powder or long-wearing setting spray.

Who It's For

If you're on the hunt for a great full-coverage foundation from the drugstore, consider this one. Though there are options on the market that offer even more coverage, we like that **this one is buildable**, making it fitting for everyday wear and more full-glam looks. We also think that the lightweight texture and demi-matte finish make it **suitable for a wide range of skin types**.

Price at time of publish: \$14

Finish: Demi-matte | **Number of shades:** 26 | **Cruelty-Free:** Yes



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Best Long-Wearing, Full-Coverage Foundation: Lancôme Teint Idole Ultra Wear Matte Foundation

★★★★★ 4.7



Sephora

[VIEW ON AMAZON \\$57](#)[VIEW ON NORDSTROM](#)[VIEW ON SEPHORA](#)

What We Like

- Budge-proof once applied
- Sets down quickly
- Looks pretty natural on the skin
- Lightweight

What We Don't Like

- Transfers just slightly

Another incredibly popular full-coverage foundation, this one stands out for its **long-wearing capabilities**. Once applied to the skin, it's not going anywhere. So, it's no surprise that it performed beautifully in our transfer test and **resisted creasing and fading** as we wore it.

As for coverage and finish, the coverage is full and can be built up or sheered out depending on your preferences, and the **finish is matte but not flat**. Though it can cover pretty much anything, it manages to maintain a true skin-like appearance. We also love that it layers nicely with the makeup you apply on top of it. And if you've tried this foundation in the past and found it to be a bit heavy, we recommend giving it another go—it was recently reformulated and now offers the same coverage and longevity with a much more **lightweight and breathable texture**.

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Evening, we think you'll really enjoy this one. Though it has a matte finish and is great for oily and balanced skin, it also works beautifully on [dry skin](#). Plus, it's **sweat-proof and water-proof**, so if you live in a hot or humid climate, it has your name written all over it.

Price at time of publish: \$57

Finish: Matte | Number of shades: 50 | Cruelty-Free: No



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RELATED: [These Are the 9 Best Foundations With SPF—And We've Tried So Many](#)

Best Shade Range: Pat McGrath Labs Skin Fetish Sublime Perfection Foundation

★★★★★ 4.7



Sephora

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VIEW ON BERGDORFGOODMAN.COM

Our Ratings

Coverage 4.6/5 Feel 5/5 Wear 4.5/5
Finish 4.8/5 Transfer Resistance 4.3/5

What We Like

- Lightweight texture
- Easy to blend
- Smooth, skin-like finish

What We Don't Like

- Creases a bit

Pat McGrath Labs [nailed the shade selection](#) of this foundation. In addition to creating shades that vary in depth, there's also a **vast range of undertones to cater to a large spectrum of skin tones**. Even better? The formula looks stunning on the skin and performs beautifully. While it's not marketed as a full-coverage foundation, it's **extremely buildable** and can be layered on to create a pretty full-coverage look. After applying just one coat, it worked beautifully to even out the complexion while maintaining a natural appearance that didn't lean overly matte or dewy.

While we did notice a bit of creasing in the smile lines, it wasn't significant and could likely be avoided by setting the area with powder. Considering the inclusive shade range, airbrushed finish on the skin, and long-wearing nature of this formula, we highly recommend checking it out.

Who It's For

If you struggle to find foundations that match your skin tone, give this pick with a great range a try. It's also an excellent choice for people who can't stand the feeling of heavy makeup on their skin. Though many full-coverage options can feel a bit heavy on the skin, this one is an exception—it feels **weightless without sacrificing coverage**.

Price at time of publish: \$68

Finish: Natural | **Number of shades:** 36 | **Cruelty-Free:** No



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Best Lightweight: Estée Lauder Double Wear Stay In Place Matte Powder Foundation

★★★★☆ 4.4



Sephora

[VIEW ON AMAZON](#) \$43

[VIEW ON SEPHORA](#) \$40

[VIEW ON DERMSTORE](#) \$49

Our Ratings

Coverage 4/5 Feel 5/5 Wear 5/5 Finish 5/5
Transfer Resistance 3/5

What We Like

- Feels lightweight on the skin
- Can be layered up for additional coverage
- Creates a natural matte finish

What We Don't Like

- Transfers quite a bit
- Could provide more coverage

One layer of this **full-coverage powder foundation** will provide light coverage, while additional layers will build up the pigmentation to offer much more covering ability. We loved the buildability and how well it

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first and then [apply the powder](#).

In terms of the finish on the skin, it looks **completely matte without appearing dry or cakey**. It layered nicely on top of moisturizer and didn't crease or fade as we wore it. Keep in mind that it did rub off quite a bit onto the blotting paper during the transfer test, so we recommend setting it in place with a setting spray.

Who It's For

Powder foundations are **excellent for people with oily skin or those who dislike the feeling of liquid products** on their face—and if you're looking for a powder formula with great coverage, this one is Byrdie-approved. It's also **ideal for anyone who wants additional coverage** on top of their liquid foundation.

Price at time of publish: \$48

Finish: Matte | Number of shades: 31 | Cruelty-Free: No



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Best for Oily Skin: Fenty Beauty Pro Filt'r Soft Matte Longwear Foundation

★★★★★ 4.9



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Sephora

VIEW ON AMAZON \$39

VIEW ON SEPHORA \$18

VIEW ON ULTA \$40

Our Ratings

Coverage 4/5 **Feel** 5/5 **Wear** 4.6/5 **Finish** 5/5
Transfer Resistance 4.9/5

What We Like

- Feels lightweight on the skin
- Blends into the skin effortlessly
- Stays in place once applied

What We Don't Like

- Could have more coverage

We'd be surprised if you're not already familiar with this iconic foundation from Fenty Beauty. Aside from helping to set the industry standard for shade range inclusivity, this one also has a loyal fan base who praise it for its formula. We can see why it's so well-loved, thanks to how blendable it is, how comfortable it is on the skin, and how it's **almost completely transfer-proof**. It didn't crease or fade and we loved how skin-like it looked.

If we could change one thing about it, it would be the level of coverage. Despite being marketed as a full-coverage foundation, one tester struggled to get it to fully cover her [melasma](#). The good news is it builds well and can be layered with concealer, so this isn't a dealbreaker for us.

Who It's For

This is a great option for a wide range of foundation-wearers. It comes in a **very extensive shade range**, feels comfortable on the skin, builds up nicely, and offers a matte finish. It's suitable for everyday wear and for achieving a more perfect look, making it a versatile option to have in your makeup stash.

Price at time of publish: \$39

Finish: Matte | **Number of shades:** 59 | **Cruelty-Free:** Yes

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Best for Dry Skin: KVD Beauty Good Apple Skin-Perfecting Hydrating Foundation Balm

★★★★★ 4.8



Sephora

[VIEW ON SEPHORA](#) \$43[VIEW ON ULTA](#)[VIEW ON TARGET](#) \$43

Our Ratings

Coverage 5/5 Feel 4/5 Wear 4/5 Finish 4/5
Transfer Resistance 5/5

What We Like

- A little bit goes a long way

What We Don't Like

- Some people might find the texture to be a bit heavy on

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After going viral on TikTok a while back, we were curious to see if this foundation balm lives up to the hype—and it does. It provides **complete coverage in just one layer**, a little bit of product goes a very long way, and it can be [applied using your fingertips, a brush, or a sponge](#), without the mess that liquid and powder formulas can create. Despite having a matte finish, we found that our **skin looked and felt more hydrated after applying it**, and we appreciated that it set in place and didn't crease as we wore it.

While we didn't dislike texture, some online reviewers claim that it feels a bit thick and heavy on the skin. If you're sensitive to that, we recommend applying it in light layers using a damp sponge.

Who It's For

Liquid and powder foundations can be messy—raise your hand if you've ever been victimized by a major spill in your [makeup bag](#). We have! This option is **great for those who crave mess-free products** because the balm can't spill and it can be applied using whatever your desired application method is. It's also a good choice for anyone seeking a formula that provides ultra-full coverage that doesn't crease or fade.

Price at time of publish: \$41

Finish: Matte | **Number of shades:** 40 | **Cruelty-Free:** Yes



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Best with SPF: Kosas Reveal Skin-Improving Foundation SPF 25

★★★★★ 4.7

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Sephora

[VIEW ON KOSAS](#)[VIEW ON AMAZON](#) \$42[VIEW ON NORDSTROM](#) \$42

Our Ratings

Coverage 5/5 **Feel** 5/5 **Wear** 4.7/5 **Finish** 5/5
Transfer Resistance 4.3/5

What We Like

- Gorgeous, natural finish on the skin
- Easy to blend
- Doesn't settle into lines or pores

What We Don't Like

- Transfers a bit

Finding a great full-coverage foundation that includes SPF can be tricky, but this one is fantastic. It's formulated with zinc oxide as well as [niacinamide](#) and [squalane](#) for hydration benefits. The texture is lightweight, creamy, and easy to blend, and the finish on the skin is absolutely stunning. It's the perfect midpoint between matte and dewy, and it creates a gorgeous veil of coverage on the face. During testing, we were impressed by how well it covered minor redness and discoloration, though we noticed that we would need additional concealer to fully cover under-eye circles. We also appreciated that it **didn't settle into fine lines or emphasize texture**. Though it did transfer a bit, we think this would be mitigated by lightly setting it with powder.

Who It's For

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niacinamide and SPF so you can get **skin benefits** in addition to the coverage you crave.

Price at time of publish: \$42

Finish: Natural | **Number of shades:** 36 | **Cruelty-Free:** Yes



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Where We Stand

Our top choice is the [Charlotte Tilbury Airbrush Flawless Longwear Foundation](#), thanks to its excellent coverage, budge-proof formula, and impressive longevity. If you're looking for something that provides great coverage as well as skincare benefits, we recommend the [Kosas Revealer Skin Improving SPF 25 Foundation](#). And if you often struggle to find a shade match, we highly suggest you check out the [Pat McGrath Sublime Perfection Foundation](#).

How We Tested

Each foundation was tested in our lab facility in New York City. Before application, we took a **moisture reading** of clean, moisturized skin to see how it compares to the moisture level after wearing the foundation. The foundation was then applied and analyzed for how well it covered and blended in. After application, we then wore the foundations and kept an eye out for smudging, fading, and creasing. Now was time for the last moisture reading where we evaluated how the foundation affected moisture levels in our skin. Lastly came the **transfer test**, where each of us gently pressed a blotting paper against the skin to determine whether or not the foundation was transfer-proof.

Attributes we evaluated each foundation on:

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- How well it wore on the skin without creasing, fading, or breaking up
- The finish and overall look on the skin
- Transfer-resistance

Testing Full Coverage Foundation for Shade Range and Finish



Other Options We Tested

IT Cosmetics CC+ Cream Full Coverage Color Correcting Foundation with SPF 50+

This fan-favorite pick is great for providing coverage and sun protection in one step, but it felt pretty heavy on the skin and transferred quite a bit during the transfer test.

Huda Beauty #FauxFilter Luminous Matte Foundation

We loved the coverage of this popular foundation, but it appeared to be sitting on top of the skin rather than fully blending in for a natural-looking finish.

Nars Soft Matte Complete Foundation

There's no denying that this ultra-matte foundation provides incredible coverage, but we noticed that it settled into fine lines and felt drying on the skin. However, if you have super oily skin, this might be worth trying.

EXA High Fidelity Foundation

While this clean foundation blended out nicely and created a beautiful, dewy finish, we found it difficult to build up the coverage in order to adequately cover redness and blemishes.

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What to Look for When Buying Full-Coverage Foundation

- **Shade Range:** We're probably stating the obvious here, but it's really important to seek out a foundation that comes in a wide range of shades so that you can get your best match. "I always suggest making sure the color is a perfect match because some foundations oxidize and this is far more noticeable on someone wearing a full coverage base," says Shahzada. "When matching a shade, apply it to a small area and step outside in natural light after 20 minutes or so, to make sure it's the right match." If you struggle to find options that match your skin tone and undertones, we recommend checking out the [Pat McGrath Sublime Perfection Foundation](#) as the shade range is extensive. The [Charlotte Tilbury Airbrush Flawless Longwear Foundation](#) also has an excellent shade offering.



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- **Ingredients:** Board-certified dermatologist, [Dr. Rachel Westbay](#), recommends opting for a formula with hydrating ingredients, like hyaluronic acid. In terms of what she recommends avoiding, that list is a bit more extensive. If you're prone to getting clogged pores, she says to stay away from foundations containing oils and silicones as they can be

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steer clear of sodium chloride, which is sometimes added to foundations as a thickening agent and can exacerbate and/or induce breakouts." Vargas agrees, saying "Look for formulas that are non-comedogenic, oil-free, and long-lasting." She also recommends avoiding formulas with potential irritants such as fragrances, especially if you have sensitive skin. If you're looking for an option that doesn't contain any synthetic fragrance, the [Kosas Revealer Skin Improving SPF 25 Foundation](#) is a great choice.

- **Formula:** Makeup is highly personal—especially when it comes to foundation. What works for one person might not work for another. So, finding a formula that compliments your skin type, feels comfortable, and aligns with your preferences is key. [Maria Vargas](#), celebrity makeup artist, recommends looking for a foundation that's suitable for your skin type in order to ensure you get the most comfort and best wear out of it. You can find out what skin types a foundation is best for on the brand website of the product, but generally, if you have oily skin, matte options, like the [Lancôme Teint Idole Ultra 24H Long Wear Matte Foundation](#), will be fitting for you. If you have dry skin, more luminous picks, like the [Chantecaille Future Skin Cushion Skincare Foundation](#), will work for you. But remember, there are no rules when it comes to this, so always choose one that makes you feel the most confident.
- **Finish:** The finish of your foundation can completely alter the outcome of your makeup look. Oftentimes, full-coverage foundations are matte, but this isn't always the case. So if you love the look of dewy skin but you want a lot of coverage, there are absolutely options for you, too. Those who prefer matte skin will love the [Charlotte Tilbury Airbrush Flawless Longwear Foundation](#) or the [Lancôme Teint Idole Ultra 24H Long Wear Matte Foundation](#). If you're after a luminous look, try the [Chantecaille Future Skin Cushion Skincare Foundation](#). And if you prefer something in the middle, we recommend the [Kosas Revealer Skin Improving SPF 25 Foundation](#).

FAQ

How do I apply full-coverage foundation?

"I highly recommend prepping the skin very well beforehand (I.e. consistent exfoliating, moisturizing, etc.) as this will offer a smoother surface for a more flawless foundation finish," says Shahzada. "Apply the foundation in layers vs. a large amount from the start."

"Try focusing on the areas you'd like to conceal that require more coverage instead of an all-over application," adds Vargas.

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unwanted shine."

How do I make a full-coverage foundation look skin-like?

Full-coverage foundations are excellent for camouflaging redness, discoloration, and blemishes, but they can often look heavy and mask-like if not applied correctly. To avoid this and ensure you have the most natural-looking finish, be sure to prep your skin with moisturizer and apply your foundation in light layers. In addition to proper skin prep, Vargas says it's important to ensure you have a spot-on shade match and are choosing a formula that works well with your skin type.

How do I make full coverage last?

Making foundations last all day and night can be tricky, but there are a few things you can do to enhance their wear. Ensuring that your skin is properly prepped is important because when foundations cling to dryness or are applied on top of excess oil, they can fade and break down. Before applying your full-coverage foundation, be sure to exfoliate any dry patches and apply a light layer of moisturizer.

Once applied, locking your base in place with setting powder and a long-wearing setting spray can make all the difference. But don't overdo it—too much product can lead to heaviness and may make your makeup break down.

Who should wear full-coverage foundation?

"Full-coverage [foundation] can be for anyone, but I would suggest it for certain types of TV and for anyone who wants to hide their blemishes or discoloration completely," says Shahzada. "It benefits those with acne-prone skin, hyperpigmentation, or uneven skin texture, but it can be used by anyone who wants a high-coverage finish," adds Vargas.

If you have acne-prone skin and are concerned about applying makeup on breakouts, allow Dr. Westbay to ease your mind. "It is absolutely OK to use full-coverage foundation if you have acne-prone skin and many with acne elect to use this type of foundation because they feel more comfortable with the coverage it provides," she tells Byrdie. "The most important cardinal rule in choosing a foundation for acne-prone skin is to look for formulations that are non-comedogenic and don't have any ingredients that can clog pores or lead to breakouts"

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of formulas, including several on this list. She's also experienced a variety of skin concerns like acne, during which she experimented with tons of different foundations and foundation application techniques. She received a bachelor's degree from the Fashion Institute of Technology, where she studied marketing and product development in the cosmetics industry. Alyssa has been a commerce writer at Byrdie since 2022, where she covers all things beauty.

For this story, Alyssa interviewed three experts to gather more insights about what to keep in mind when buying a full-coverage foundation. Those experts include:

- [Dr. Rachel Westbay](#), a board-certified dermatologist at [Marmur Medical](#)
- [Misha Shahzada](#), a celebrity makeup artist who's worked on faces like Millie Bobby Brown, Emma Stone, Lola Tung, and more
- [Maria Vargas](#), a celebrity makeup artist who's worked with clients like Jessica Alba, Eva Mendes, Chanel Iman, and more

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