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SKIN CARE

# Need a mess-free sunscreen this summer? Here's why experts recommend sunscreen sticks

Sunscreen sticks are the easiest way to protect your skin from UVA/UVB rays.

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## Stay ahead of the trends

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Regardless of the sunscreen stick you choose, dermatologists recommend four passes to ensure your sunscreen provides sufficient protection. [Ulta](#); [Amazon](#); [Sephora](#)

### In this article

## Our top picks

The best sunscreen sticks in 2026

How I picked the best sunscreen sticks

How to shop for sunscreen sticks

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Applying [sunscreen](#) is a crucial step in your [skin care routine](#), whether it's a [spray](#), [serum](#), lotion or stick. Without it, you risk damaging your skin from exposure to UV rays, experts say. If you're looking for a quick, mess-free and convenient option, sunscreen sticks are the way to go.

To help you find the best sunscreen stick for you, I spoke to seven dermatologists about how to shop for one and everything you need to know, including how much you need to apply for it to actually be effective.

## Selected. Our top picks



Best overall

**Shiseido Clear Sunscreen Stick SPF 50**

**\$33.00**

[TARGET](#)

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Best for active lifestyles

**Colorescience Sunforgettable Total Protection Sport Stick  
SPF 50**

**\$39.00**

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Best for kids

**Blue Lizard Kids Mineral Sunscreen**

**\$8.77**

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Best budget pick

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# The best sunscreen sticks in 2026

## Best overall

### Shiseido Clear Sunscreen Stick SPF 50



\$33.00 at Target

\$33.00 at Ulta

\$33.00 at Bloomingdales

## What to know



This stick sunscreen comes recommended by Yang and board-certified dermatologist [Dr. Morgan Rabach](#) because it's easy to apply and glides over makeup. It's also very lightweight and hydrating without leaving behind a residue, says Yang. Aside from its active ingredients to protect your skin from unwanted damage, it combines negative ions and positive ions (from sweat and water) to create an additional layer of protection to make it more effective. At the same time, external heat strengthens your skin barrier, according to the brand.

## Best for sensitive skin

### CeraVe Mineral Sunscreen Stick SPF 50



**\$7.49** ~~\$9.99~~ at Amazon  
Now 25% off

## What to know



This sunscreen is a favorite of board-certified dermatologist [Dr. Marnie Nussbaum](#) for those with [sensitive skin](#). It's also a great option for multiple skin tones since it has microfine zinc oxide, which means it'll dry clear and won't leave a white cast, according to the brand. Reviewers say the sunscreen is easy to blend into the skin.

## Best for dry skin

### Coola Refreshing Water Stick SPF 50

\$30.00 at Amazon

\$30.00 at Coola

What to know



This sunscreen has [hyaluronic acid](#), aloe and coconut water, which make it especially great for those with [dry skin](#), says Yang. The non-greasy and fast-absorbing sunscreen also has antioxidants for added protection from environmental stressors, she says. (Those skin-damaging stressors include blue light, infrared and pollution.)

## Best budget

### Cetaphil Sheer Mineral Sunscreen Stick for Face & Body

**\$6.99** ~~\$7.99~~ at Amazon  
Now 13% off

**What to know**



If you have [dry](#) or [sensitive skin](#), consider this mineral option from Cetaphil, which board-certified dermatologist [Dr. Ellen Marmur](#) recommends due to its hypoallergenic ingredients, including zinc oxide, beeswax and [vitamin E](#). However, it can produce a white cast on the skin, she says. To help offset this, you can use your fingertips to work the product in since it blends quickly.

## **Best for oily skin**

## **Dr. Jart+ Every Sun Day Invisible Korean Sunscreen Stick SPF 40**

\$30.00 at Sephora

\$30.00 at Kohl's

\$30.00 at Dr. Jart+

**What to know**



This Dr. Jart+ option is one of our favorite [Korean sunscreens](#) because it hydrates skin and blurs pores, which makes it great to apply underneath makeup. I love using this sunscreen because it doesn't leave a white cast on my medium-tan complexion and, since it's a stick, it's easy to apply and reapply throughout the day. It's also travel-friendly.

## Best splurge

### Skinbetter Science Sunbetter Sheer SPF 56 Sunscreen Stick

\$55.00 at Skinbetter Science

**What to know**



According to [Dr. Deanne Mraz](#), a board-certified dermatologist, this sheer stick is easy to apply and feels weightless on skin. When you first apply it, it has a silky smooth texture but then leaves your skin with a matte finish. You can apply it on your face, neck and chest as a base layer, but it's especially good for tricky spots like your ears.

## Best mineral

### Neutrogena Mineral Ultra Sheer Stick SPF 50

**\$15.88** ~~\$18.99~~ at Amazon  
Now 16% off

What to know



If you're looking for a sunscreen stick that will make applying your sunscreen much faster, consider this Neutrogena option recommended by Nussbaum. The stick itself is bigger, which means it's easier to apply on larger areas of your face and body, she says. Reviewers say it holds up well throughout the day on both their bodies and faces.

## Best for active lifestyles

### Colorescience Sunforgettable Total Protection Sport Stick SPF 50

\$39.00 at Amazon

\$39.00 at ColoreScience

\$39.00 at Lovely Skin

**What to know**



This is a great water-resistant stick for swimming, sweating and active days outdoors all summer long, says Mraz. The stick provides all-mineral protection from UVA/UVB rays, pollution, blue light and infrared radiation, plus it has hydrating ingredients that softens skin, says Mraz. It goes on smoothly and is easy to blend without leaving behind a white cast, according to the brand.

## **Best matte finish**

### **Abib Airy Sunstick Smoothing Bar**

\$16.46 at Amazon

What to know



This lightweight sunscreen is quick and easy to apply since its ergonomic curved shape helps cover hard-to-reach and difficult areas. It's also great for those who want a hydrating sunscreen that leaves a matte finish. It sits nicely under and over makeup and does not leave a white cast or sticky residue, says board-certified dermatologist [Dr. Connie Yang](#).

**Best for all skin tones**

**Supergoop Unseen Sunscreen Stick SPF 40**

\$32.00 at Ulta

## What to know



This is great for those worried about their sunscreen leaving a white cast because it is very sheer while still protecting you from the sun, says Nussbaum. It's also a good choice to take with you throughout the day because it glides seamlessly over makeup, provides invisible coverage and reduces the appearance of oil and shine, says Mraz.

## Best for body

## Neutrogena Beach Defense Face & Body Sunscreen Stick SPF 50

**\$9.88** ~~\$13.19~~ at Amazon

Now 25% off

## What to know



This Neutrogena sunscreen is Rabach's favorite to use. Reviewers say it's especially great for travel since it's safe for the whole body. This makes it easy when packing since you don't need to bring multiple sunscreens with you. Its wide face covers a lot of surface area in one pass and glides smoothly on your face and body, according to the brand.

## Best dewy finish

## Kopari Beauty Sun Shield On-The-Glow Sheer Stick

**\$24.00** ~~\$30.00~~ at Ulta  
Now 20% off

**\$30.00** at Kopari Beauty

**\$30.00** at Nordstrom

**What to know**



This non-sticky, non-greasy, coconut milk-scented sunscreen is suitable for your face and body. It has an ingredient called mica, which is a silicate mineral that gives skin a glossy, dewy finish, according to Marmur. For the best results, swipe the sunscreen on your hand before applying it to your face and body, which will help distribute the mica evenly when you apply it.

### **Editor's pick**

## **Vertra Invisible Sunscreen Face Stick SPF 45**

\$24.00 at Vertra

What to know



“I hate getting sunscreen all over my hands because it makes them greasy, but this sunscreen stick solves that problem,” says NBC reporter [Zoe Malin](#). “It glides onto my skin smoothly and doesn’t leave a white cast behind, so it’s great for wearing under makeup.” The brand also has [five other variations](#), including [tinted options](#).

## Best for kids

### Blue Lizard Kids Mineral Sunscreen

\$8.77 at Amazon

\$10.37 at Target

\$8.77 at Walmart

**What to know**



This sunscreen is great for children because it's gentle and safe for all skin types. Its packaging is also a great way to have kids learn about the importance of protecting your skin from UV rays since the cap turns pink in harmful UV light, according to experts in our guide to the [best sunscreens for kids](#).

## **Best tinted**

### **MDSolarSciences Solar Stick SPF 40**

\$24.00 at Amazon

\$24.00 at Dermstore

\$24.00 at Bloomingdales

**What to know**



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If you want some coverage with your sunscreen, consider this one from MDSolarSciences. The mineral formula has SPF 40 and a matte finish. Because it's sheer, it works for several skin tones, though may not be best for those with [darker skin tones](#).

## How I picked the best sunscreen sticks

I spoke to board-certified dermatologists about sunscreen sticks and what factors to consider when shopping. Here's what they recommend looking for:

- **Type of sunscreen:** There are two types of sunscreen: [mineral](#) and chemical. Mineral sunscreen has filters like zinc oxide and titanium oxide that sit on top of your skin and reflect UV rays away from your skin. In contrast, chemical sunscreen has ingredients that absorb into your skin to provide protection, says Marmur.
- **SPF rating:** Stick sunscreens should be SPF 30 or higher, according to the [American Academy of Dermatology](#). "It can be hard to tell exactly how much product you're applying when using a stick sunscreen, and many people do not apply enough, so a higher SPF will help give you better coverage and protection," says Yang. SPF 30 blocks 97% of the sun's rays when you apply it to your skin, says Marmur. The higher the SPF, the more the product blocks the sun's rays. However, no sunscreen will block 100% of the sun's rays, according to Marmur.
- **Broad-spectrum protection:** You want to look for broad-spectrum coverage, regardless of the sunscreen formulation. Broad-spectrum coverage protects against UVA and UVB rays, which protects against fine lines and wrinkles, hyperpigmentation, sunburns and skin cancer, says Yang.

## How to shop for sunscreen sticks

Aside from the type of sunscreen, minimum SPF and broad-spectrum protection, there are a few other characteristics to note. Below are certain factors to consider when shopping for a sunscreen stick, including ingredients, skin type and aesthetics.

### Skin type

When shopping for a sunscreen stick, consider your skin type, which will determine the ingredients and formula you need. Below, board-certified dermatologist [Dr. Annabelle Garcia](#) breaks down a few things to factor in:

- **Dry skin:** Look for a moisturizing formula with ingredients like hyaluronic acid.
- **Oily skin:** Choose an oil-free, noncomedogenic formula to avoid clogging pores.
- **Sensitive skin:** Opt for a mineral sunscreen with zinc oxide or titanium dioxide. Since mineral sunscreens act as a shield on top of the skin, they're less likely to cause skin reactions, experts say.

## Ingredients

Aside from paying attention to the active ingredient(s) listed, it's important to look at the additional ingredients because there are some you want for skin care benefits and others you want to avoid to prevent irritation.

- If you want to hydrate your skin, consider ingredients like **hyaluronic acid and aloe vera**, according to Garcia.
- For those with **hyperpigmentation**, look for a **tinted sunscreen** that has **iron oxides** for added protection against visible light, says Yang
- If you have **sensitive skin** or just want a soothing sunscreen stick, look for ingredients like **niacinamide** (which helps retain water, improve skin tone and texture, and reduce inflammation and redness), according to Yang. Also, consider one that has **calamine**, says Garcia.
- For those concerned about fine lines and wrinkles, look for added antioxidants like **vitamin E** and **vitamin C**. Antioxidants will help protect your skin from free radical oxidative damage, says Yang.

There are a few irritating ingredients you should avoid; some common triggers include oxybenzone, added fragrances and alcohol.

## Aesthetics

Consider how you want to look after applying your sunscreen. This is important to pay attention to because some options will leave your skin looking dewy and glowing, while others will have a matte finish, according to Mraz.

## Water-resistance

While water resistance in sunscreen isn't a make-or-break factor, you definitely want to consider one that does have this if you plan on getting wet or anticipate sweating, according to Nussbaum.

"For day-to-day purposes, it's not necessary. However, water resistance does tend to help sunscreen last longer, especially if you are in a humid climate or engaging in activities that cause you to sweat," says

Yang.

Although water-resistant sunscreens tend to last longer than those without, Rabach says it's important to remember to reapply continuously throughout the day.

## Frequently asked questions

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[Are sunscreen sticks effective?](#)



[How do sunscreen sticks compare to other forms of sunscreen?](#)



[How many passes of stick sunscreen do you need?](#)



## Meet our experts

At NBC Select, we work with experts with specialized knowledge and authority based on relevant training and/or experience. We also ensure all expert advice and recommendations are made independently and without undisclosed financial conflicts of interest.

- [Dr. Connie Yang](#) is a board-certified dermatologist at [PFRANKMD](#) by [Dr. Paul Jarrod Frank](#) in New York City.
- [Dr. Marnie Nussbaum](#) is a board-certified dermatologist at her private practice in New York City and a clinical dermatology instructor at Weill Cornell Medical College.
- [Dr. Morgan Rabach](#) is a board-certified dermatologist at [LM Medical](#) in New York City and a clinical assistant dermatology professor at The Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Hospital.
- [Dr. Ellen Marmur](#) is a board-certified dermatologist at [Marmur Medical](#) in New York City and is the founder of [MMSkincare](#).
- [Dr. Annabelle Garcia](#) is a board-certified dermatologist at [Sonterra Dermatology](#) in San Antonio, Texas.
- [Dr. Deanne Mraz](#) is a board-certified dermatologist at [Modern Dermatology](#) in Westport, Connecticut, where she is also the president and co-founder. She is also a clinical assistant professor of dermatology at Yale New Haven Hospital.

- [Dr. Jordan Carqueville](#) is a board-certified dermatologist, dermatopathologist and dermatologic surgeon at [Derm Institute of Chicago](#).

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Bianca Alvarez is a former [associate reporter](#) for NBC Select. For this story, she interviewed seven dermatologists, shared their recommendations, and researched highly rated sunscreen sticks that met their guidance.

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**Bianca Alvarez**



Bianca Alvarez is an associate reporter at NBC Select, where she covers the latest product launches and all things relating to beauty and wellness.

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