

MAKEUP MATCHING: Skin of Color

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Skin is a complicated matter. It may appear one way on the surface and reveal an entirely different story underneath. Nonetheless, the beautiful thing about skin is that it comes in a wide spectrum of colors. An individual's complexion continuously evolves and changes throughout their lives in response to the aging process and sun exposure. When it comes to depicting skin of color and choosing appropriate makeup products that match, it really boils down to color science.

Skin color and its undertone characteristics is comprised of a mix of pigments (melanin) and the skin's resistance to ultraviolet light. The chromatics range from extremely pale to intensely dark, touching on every possible color in between. Other aspects to consider are the hue, brightness, saturation, tints, shades, and overall tone. Color theory is the art of mixing colors and creating new ones.

THE PERFECT MATCH

Much like skin, finding an impeccably matched foundation is a complicated work of art. If the foundation shade is off even by a little, it is painfully obvious – even to the untrained eye. However, makeup artists are trained to see color differently than the average person.

When glancing at someone's skin, one must analyze several factors to be able to make a perfect color match. Usually, that perfect color does not exist in a manufactured bottle. Professionals have to custom blend multiple shades of foundation together to get the most natural, effortless look. To make matters more convoluted, most clients are usually more than one shade of foundation at any given time.

Every single foundation shade is created by mixing the primary colors on the color wheel (yellow, red, and blue). An individual can create any foundation (or concealer) color by having just these colors at their disposal. The depth and tone of the color are adjusted with white or black for further customization.

The key to color matching skin with any product is first identifying the undertone. Much like a fingerprint, the skin's undertone never changes. The tone of the skin may change, but the undertone will remain the same.

UNDERTONES

Undertones are commonly categorized as cool, warm, or neutral. Cool undertones are correlated with pinks, blues, and purples where warm tones associate with green, yellow, and red. Neutral tones typically do not sway one way or the other. Instead, the undertones are remarkably like the actual skin color.

Generally speaking, foundation with a cool undertone looks pinkish in a container, warm undertones appear more yellow, and neutral colors give off peachy vibes. Choosing the wrong type will cause the skin to look more sallow, ashy gray, or even lifeless. Colors can be deceiving since the fairest of skin can be warm and the deepest complexions can be cool.

Once the undertone is depicted, classify the skin tone as fair, light, medium, tan, dark, or deep. Honing in on the range should narrow down the selection to about two to three shades that can be tested on the jawline to see if they are a match.

FOUNDATION FEATURES

Aside from the color shade, foundation formulas vary in texture, finish, and coverage. All of which are features that need to be considered when purchasing makeup products. One tip to consider is that oily or combination skin types tend to be more susceptible to oxidization. This is when the foundation color shifts throughout the day during normal wear. In that case, it is best to ask for product samples that should be worn outside to test the elements.

With billions of different variations of skin types and colors found throughout the world, it is impossible for any brand to retail that many stock keeping unit (SKU). Because of this, education on how to manipulate color is a critical component of being a successful artist. One never knows who will sit in their chair or what color their skin will be.

Makeup artists constantly work with a myriad of textures, shapes, tools, and products. Matching any skin color requires a full analysis and a few fundamentals with a keen sense of color theory, technique, and imagination. Becoming comfortable with all shades of skin is key. Without the concept of color, makeup simply would not exist. ▽