

how to contour face makeup

Mastering the Art: A Comprehensive Guide on How to Contour Face Makeup

how to contour face makeup is an essential technique for anyone looking to enhance their natural features and create dimension. This transformative makeup method utilizes light and shadow to sculpt the face, defining bone structure and adding a polished, professional finish. Whether you're aiming for subtle definition or a more dramatic effect, understanding the principles of contouring is key. This comprehensive guide will demystify the process, covering everything from selecting the right products and tools to mastering application techniques for various face shapes. We'll delve into the science of light and shadow, explore common contouring mistakes to avoid, and provide step-by-step instructions to help you achieve a flawlessly sculpted look every time.

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Understanding the Basics of Face Contouring

Face contouring is a makeup technique that uses darker shades to create shadows and lighter shades to bring areas forward, thereby altering the perceived shape and structure of the face. The fundamental principle behind contouring is the manipulation of light and shadow, mimicking how light naturally falls on the face. Darker shades recede, making areas appear smaller or more defined, while lighter shades (often called highlight) emphasize and bring areas forward.

The goal of contouring is not to drastically change your face shape, but rather to enhance your existing bone structure. This means understanding where natural shadows fall on a well-defined face and accentuating those areas. For instance, the hollows of the cheeks, the sides of the nose, and the jawline naturally have shadows, and contouring aims to deepen these for a more sculpted appearance.

Choosing the Right Contour Products

Selecting the appropriate contour products is paramount for achieving a natural-looking and effective contour. The shade of your contour product is crucial; it should be one to two shades darker than your natural skin tone and possess a cool undertone. Warm undertones can look orange and muddy, defeating the purpose of creating a shadow. Consider your skintone: fair skin tones might benefit from taupe or light brown shades, while deeper skin tones can opt for richer, darker browns.

Contour products come in various formulations, each offering different finishes and application experiences. The choice depends on your skin type and desired outcome.

- **Cream Contour:** These are ideal for dry to normal skin types. Cream contours blend seamlessly into the skin, offering a natural, skin-like finish. They can be applied with a brush, sponge, or even your fingers.
- **Powder Contour:** Suitable for oily to combination skin types, powder contours are easy to blend and offer a matte finish. They are often easier for beginners to work with as they are less prone to creating harsh lines.
- **Liquid Contour:** Liquid formulas offer buildable coverage and can provide a more intense sculpted effect. They require careful blending to avoid patchiness.
- **Contour Sticks:** These are convenient for on-the-go application and offer a creamy texture that can be easily blended.

Essential Tools for Contouring

Having the right tools can make a significant difference in the application and blending of your contour products. Using appropriate brushes and sponges ensures that your contour seamlessly integrates with your foundation and concealer, creating a flawless, airbrushed effect rather than distinct lines.

Here are some essential tools that will elevate your contouring game:

- **Angled Contour Brush:** This type of brush is specifically designed to fit into the hollows of the cheeks and along the jawline, allowing for precise application of contour shades. The angled bristles help to deposit product precisely where you want it.
- **Fluffy Blending Brush:** A dense but soft brush is crucial for blending out harsh lines and diffusing the contour shade for a natural, diffused finish.
- **Makeup Sponge (Damp):** A damp beauty sponge is excellent for blending cream and liquid contour products. The dampness helps to sheer out the product for a more natural, diffused look and prevents the sponge from absorbing too much product.
- **Smaller Blending Brush (for nose contour):** A smaller, more precise brush is ideal for contouring the sides of the nose, allowing for greater control and accuracy.
- **Highlighter Brush:** While not directly for contouring, a small, precise brush or a fan brush is useful for applying highlight to the high points of the face after contouring.

Preparing Your Face for Contouring

Proper skin preparation is a crucial step that often gets overlooked when discussing contouring. Starting with a well-prepped canvas ensures that your makeup applies smoothly, blends beautifully, and lasts throughout the day. Without proper preparation, contour products can cling to dry patches, create streaks, or slide off throughout the day.

Begin by cleansing your face thoroughly to remove any impurities or excess oil. Follow up with a toner to balance your skin's pH and then apply your preferred moisturizer. Allowing your moisturizer to fully absorb before applying makeup is essential. If you have oily skin, a mattifying primer can help control shine, while a hydrating primer can benefit drier skin types. For an extra smooth application, apply your foundation and concealer as you normally would before you begin the contouring process.

The Art of Placement: Where to Apply Contour

Understanding where to place your contour shades is the most critical aspect of mastering this makeup technique. The placement will vary slightly depending on your individual face shape, but there are universal areas where contouring is most effective in creating definition.

The primary areas to focus on for contouring are:

- **Under the Cheekbones:** This is arguably the most important area for contouring. Suck in your cheeks to find the hollows, and apply your contour shade just below your cheekbones, blending upwards towards your hairline. This creates the illusion of higher, more prominent cheekbones.
- **Jawline:** Apply contour along the underside of your jawbone to create a sharper, more defined jawline and to minimize the appearance of a double chin. Blend downwards onto the neck to avoid a harsh line.
- **Temples and Forehead:** For those with a larger forehead, applying contour along the hairline can make the forehead appear smaller and more balanced. Blend into the hairline to avoid a visible line.
- **Sides of the Nose:** To make the nose appear slimmer and more defined, apply a thin line of contour on each side of the bridge of the nose. Ensure these lines are straight and connect them subtly to the crease of the eyelid.
- **Under the Lower Lip:** A small amount of contour applied directly beneath the center of your lower lip can create the illusion of a fuller pout.

Blending Techniques for a Seamless Finish

Blending is the secret to a natural-looking contour. Harsh lines are the biggest giveaway that your contour is not well-executed. The goal is to seamlessly melt the contour shades into your foundation and skin, creating a believable shadow effect.

The blending technique will depend on the type of product you are using:

- **Cream and Liquid Contour:** Use a damp makeup sponge or a dense synthetic brush. Apply the product in small amounts and gently bounce or stipple the sponge over the area to blend. Alternatively, use a brush in a circular or tapping motion to diffuse the product. Always blend upwards and outwards, following the natural contours of your face.
- **Powder Contour:** Use a fluffy, soft brush. Apply the powder in light layers and use gentle sweeping or circular motions to blend. Start with a light hand and build up intensity gradually. Focus on softening the edges to ensure there are no distinct lines.

Remember to continuously check your blending in good lighting. Step back from the mirror periodically to assess the overall effect. It's often better to build up the intensity of your contour gradually rather than applying too much product at once and struggling to blend it out.

Contouring for Different Face Shapes

While the general principles of contouring remain the same, the exact placement can be adjusted to flatter different face shapes. Understanding your unique facial structure is key to maximizing the benefits of contouring.

Oval Face Shape

Considered the most balanced face shape, oval faces typically require minimal contouring. Focus on enhancing the natural bone structure. Lightly contour under the cheekbones to add definition and along the hairline of the forehead if desired.

Round Face Shape

The goal for a round face is to create the illusion of length and angles. Apply contour significantly under the cheekbones, extending from the ear towards the corner of the mouth, but stopping about two fingers' width away from the mouth. Contour along the sides of the jawline and temples to create sharper angles.

Square Face Shape

To soften a strong jawline and forehead, apply contour to the corners of the forehead and along the jawline, blending inwards. This helps to round out the angles. You can also contour under the cheekbones to add dimension.

Heart-Shaped Face

For a heart-shaped face, the aim is to balance the wider forehead with the narrower chin. Contour along the temples and hairline to reduce the width of the forehead. You can also apply a touch of contour under the cheekbones to add definition.

Long or Rectangular Face Shape

To make a long face appear shorter and wider, focus on adding width. Apply contour horizontally across the cheekbones and along the jawline. Contouring

the forehead and chin can also help to break up the length.

Common Contouring Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

Even with the best intentions, beginners (and sometimes experienced users) can fall into common contouring traps. Recognizing these mistakes is the first step to correcting them and achieving a flawless finish.

- **Using the Wrong Shade:** As mentioned earlier, contour shades that are too warm can look orange, and shades that are too dark can appear muddy and unnatural. Always opt for a cool-toned shade that is one to two shades darker than your skin.
- **Over-Application:** Applying too much product at once makes blending significantly harder and can lead to harsh, obvious lines. It's always best to start with a small amount and build up the intensity gradually.
- **Poor Blending:** This is the most common mistake. Unblended contour looks like stripes on the face. Spend ample time blending until the product seamlessly melts into your skin.
- **Contouring in the Wrong Areas:** Applying contour too low on the cheeks can drag the face down. Ensure you are following the natural hollows and blending upwards.
- **Not Considering Lighting:** What looks good in a dimly lit room can look drastic in bright daylight. Always check your contour in natural light if possible.
- **Forgetting to Blend Down the Neck:** If you contour your jawline, ensure you blend down onto your neck to avoid a visible line between your face and neck.

Finishing Touches and Setting Your Contour

Once your contour is perfectly applied and blended, it's time for the finishing touches. Applying a highlighter to the high points of your face will further enhance the sculpted effect. Apply highlighter to the tops of your cheekbones, the bridge of your nose, your brow bone, and the cupid's bow.

To ensure your hard work stays in place all day, setting your contour is essential. A translucent setting powder can be lightly dusted over the contoured areas to mattify and lock the product in. For a more long-lasting hold, a setting spray is highly recommended. Hold the can about arm's length away and mist your face in an "X" and "T" motion. This will fuse all the layers of your makeup together, giving you a natural, radiant finish that lasts.

Q: What is the difference between contour and bronzer?

A: While both contour and bronzer are used to add dimension to the face, they serve different purposes. Contour products are typically cool-toned and used to create shadows, mimicking natural shadows under the cheekbones, jawline, and temples to sculpt the face. Bronzers, on the other hand, are usually warmer-toned and are used to add warmth and a sun-kissed glow to the skin, typically applied where the sun would naturally hit the face, such as the forehead, cheeks, and décolletage.

Q: Can I contour with concealer?

A: Yes, you can contour with concealer, but it's best to use a concealer that is two shades darker than your skin tone and has a cool undertone. Creamy concealers are generally easier to blend for contouring purposes than liquid formulas. However, dedicated contour products are formulated specifically for this purpose and often provide a more natural and effective result.

Q: How do I contour my nose without it looking obvious?

A: To contour your nose subtly, use a small, precise brush and a cool-toned contour shade. Apply thin, straight lines on each side of the bridge of your nose, starting from the inner corner of your eyebrow and extending down towards the tip. Blend these lines outwards gently using a small blending brush or your fingertip. The key is to keep the lines thin and well-blended to create a subtle shadow rather than a harsh line.

Q: What is the best way to blend cream contour?

A: For cream contour, a damp makeup sponge or a dense, synthetic brush is recommended. After applying the cream contour product, gently bounce or stipple the damp sponge over the area to blend. If using a brush, use light, circular motions or a tapping motion to diffuse the product. Always blend upwards and outwards towards the hairline to avoid dragging the face down.

Q: How do I choose the right contour shade for my skin tone?

A: The most important factor in choosing a contour shade is its undertone and depth. Opt for shades that are one to two shades darker than your natural skin tone. The undertone should be cool, like a natural shadow, rather than warm or orange. For fair skin tones, taupe or light brown shades work well. Medium skin tones can use medium brown shades, and deep skin tones can opt for richer, dark brown shades.

Q: Can I contour oily skin?

A: Yes, you can contour oily skin. It is recommended to use powder contour products for oily skin, as they tend to set better and control shine. Ensure your skin is properly prepped with a mattifying primer and foundation before applying powder contour. Setting your contour with a translucent setting

powder will also help to keep it in place and manage oiliness.

Q: Should I contour before or after foundation?

A: It is generally recommended to contour after applying your foundation and concealer. This creates a seamless base for your contour application, allowing the product to blend more smoothly into your skin. Applying contour before foundation can make it difficult to blend properly and may result in a patchy finish.

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