

how to contour your face

Mastering the Art: How to Contour Your Face Like a Pro

how to contour your face is a fundamental makeup technique that can dramatically enhance your features, adding dimension, definition, and a sculpted appearance. Whether you're aiming for subtle subtlety or a more pronounced effect, understanding the principles of light and shadow is key to achieving a flawless finish. This comprehensive guide will demystify the process, from understanding your face shape to selecting the right products and mastering application techniques for stunning results. We'll delve into the core concepts of contouring, explain how to identify your natural bone structure, and break down the steps for various facial features, ensuring you can confidently sculpt and define your way to a more polished look.

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Understanding the Basics of Contouring

Contouring is an art form that relies on the principle of creating illusions with makeup. By strategically applying darker shades to recede areas and lighter shades (highlighting) to bring areas forward, you can effectively alter the perception of your facial structure. The goal is not to draw harsh lines but to blend seamlessly, mimicking natural shadows and light. This technique is essential for adding depth

and dimension, making features appear more prominent or refined.

The fundamental idea behind contouring is to work with your natural bone structure. Areas that naturally fall into shadow are where you'll apply your contour shade, and areas that catch light are where you'll apply highlight. This creates a sculpted effect that enhances your existing features rather than masking them. It's about understanding where the sun would naturally hit your face and where it would create subtle shadows, then replicating that with makeup.

Identifying Your Face Shape for Optimal Contouring

Before you begin contouring, it's crucial to understand your unique face shape. This knowledge will guide where you apply your contour and highlight shades for the most flattering results. Common face shapes include oval, round, square, heart, and long. Each shape benefits from slightly different contouring strategies to emphasize its best features and create balance.

Oval Face Shape

Considered the most balanced shape, an oval face typically requires minimal contouring. The primary goal is to add gentle definition rather than significant reshaping. Focus on subtly contouring the hollows of your cheeks to add structure and a touch of contour along the hairline to balance the forehead.

Round Face Shape

For round faces, the aim is to create the illusion of more angles and length. Contour heavily along the hollows of your cheeks, extending from the top of your ear down towards the corner of your mouth, but

stopping before you reach your lips. Apply contour to the temples and jawline to create sharp angles and draw the eye downwards, elongating the face.

Square Face Shape

Square face shapes benefit from softening the prominent angles of the jawline and forehead. Contour along the jawline to minimize its sharpness and blend upwards into the neck. Apply contour to the temples and sides of the forehead to break up the width and create a more rounded appearance. Emphasize the cheekbones by contouring just below them.

Heart Face Shape

Heart-shaped faces often have a wider forehead and a narrower chin. The objective here is to balance the wider upper face and add fullness to the lower part of the face. Contour the sides of your forehead and temples to narrow the appearance of the upper face. A touch of contour under the cheekbones can add definition without making them appear too sharp.

Long Face Shape

To make a long face appear shorter and wider, focus on adding width. Apply contour horizontally across the forehead, just above the temples, and along the jawline. This visually shortens the face. Avoid contouring too deeply along the cheekbones as this can further elongate the face.

Choosing the Right Contour Products

Selecting the correct contour products is paramount to achieving a natural-looking sculpted face. The shade of your contour product should be two to three shades darker than your natural skin tone. It's also important to consider the undertones: cool-toned shades are generally best for creating shadows, mimicking natural skin tones, while warmer tones can sometimes look too orangey or bronzed for true contouring. Think of it as a natural shadow, not a tan.

Cream vs. Powder Contour

Both cream and powder contour products have their advantages. Cream contours offer a more intense, blendable color payoff and are ideal for dry to normal skin types, providing a seamless, skin-like finish. They are excellent for building intensity gradually. Powder contours are generally easier to use for beginners, blend more sheerly, and are perfect for oily to combination skin types. They can be layered for more definition without looking heavy.

Finding Your Perfect Shade

The key to a successful contour is choosing a shade that is not too warm or too cool. A good rule of thumb is to select a shade that looks like a natural shadow on your skin. If you have a fair complexion, opt for a light taupe or a cool-toned brown. For medium complexions, a medium brown with a neutral or slightly cool undertone works well. Deeper complexions can utilize richer, cooler browns.

The Essential Tools for Contouring

Having the right tools can make all the difference in achieving a polished and blended contour. The type of brush or sponge you use will depend on the product you're working with and the desired effect.

- **Contour Brush:** Look for angled brushes or smaller, denser brushes that can precisely place product in the hollows of your cheeks and along your jawline.
- **Blending Brush:** A fluffy or slightly tapered blending brush is essential for softening any harsh lines and ensuring a seamless transition between your contour shade and your foundation.
- **Makeup Sponge:** A damp beauty sponge is excellent for blending cream contour products. It allows for buildable coverage and a very natural finish by stippling the product into the skin.
- **Smaller Brushes:** For detailed contouring, such as along the nose or cupid's bow, smaller, more precise brushes are invaluable.

Step-by-Step Guide: How to Contour Your Face

Contouring involves a series of strategic placements and diligent blending. Start with a clean, moisturized face and your base makeup applied.

Step 1: Apply Your Base Makeup

Ensure your foundation and concealer are applied and blended smoothly. This provides a blank canvas for contouring. Set your foundation with a light dusting of translucent powder, especially if you plan to use powder contour.

Step 2: Locate Your Cheekbone Hollows

The most common place to contour is the hollows of your cheeks. To find these, suck in your cheeks or make a "fish face." You'll see a natural indentation just below your cheekbone. Apply your contour shade directly into this hollow, starting from your hairline and moving downwards towards the corner of your mouth. Don't bring it too close to your mouth; stop about two finger-widths away.

Step 3: Blend Upwards

Using your chosen brush or sponge, begin blending the contour shade upwards towards your hairline and slightly into your cheekbone. This upward motion lifts the face and creates a more natural shadow that blends seamlessly with your foundation. Avoid blending downwards, as this can drag the face down.

Step 4: Contour Your Forehead and Jawline

Apply a small amount of contour product along your hairline and blend it into your roots to create a natural shadow, especially if you have a larger forehead. For the jawline, apply the contour shade just beneath your jawbone and blend downwards onto your neck. This helps to create a sharper, more defined jawline and minimize any appearance of a double chin.

Step 5: Contour Your Nose (Optional)

To slim or define your nose, use a small, precise brush. Apply a thin line of contour on each side of the bridge of your nose, starting from the inner corner of your eyebrow and extending down to the tip. Blend very carefully with a small blending brush or your finger, ensuring the lines are softened and

indistinguishable from natural shadows.

Step 6: Apply Highlight

After contouring, apply a highlight shade to the high points of your face. This includes the tops of your cheekbones (above where you contoured), down the bridge of your nose, your cupid's bow, and the center of your forehead and chin. This brings these areas forward and enhances the sculpted effect.

Step 7: Blend Everything Together

The final and most crucial step is to blend, blend, blend! Use a clean blending brush or sponge to gently go over all the applied contour and highlight lines. This ensures there are no harsh edges and everything looks seamless and natural, as if the light and shadow are truly a part of your skin.

Contouring Specific Facial Features

Beyond the general steps, contouring can be tailored to enhance or refine specific features on your face. The key is to observe where light naturally falls and where shadows would occur.

Defining the Eyes

While not strictly contouring in the same sense as the face, similar principles can be applied to the eye area. A matte brown or taupe eyeshadow, slightly deeper than your natural skin tone, can be blended into the crease of the eyelid to add depth and make the eyes appear larger and more almond-shaped. A touch of contour under the brow bone can also lift the brows.

Sculpting the Lips

For fuller-looking lips, apply a touch of contour just above your cupid's bow to create a shadow that makes the upper lip appear more pouty. You can also lightly contour the outer corners of your lower lip to make them appear more rounded. Use a lip liner that matches your chosen contour shade and blend it carefully.

Sharpening the Jawline and Neck

To create a more chiseled jawline and a slender neck, apply your contour shade directly underneath the jawbone, blending down onto the neck. This creates a shadow that visually sharpens the angle of your jaw. Ensure the blending is seamless to avoid any noticeable lines.

Common Contouring Mistakes to Avoid

Even with the best intentions, contouring can sometimes go awry. Being aware of common pitfalls can help you achieve a more professional and natural outcome.

- **Over-application:** Using too much product is the most common mistake. Start with a small amount and build up gradually.
- **Harsh Lines:** Failing to blend properly results in obvious stripes on your face, which looks unnatural. Diligent blending is essential.
- **Wrong Shade:** Using a shade that is too warm, too cool, or too dark can create an unnatural or muddy appearance. Always swatch shades on your jawline in natural light.

- **Incorrect Placement:** Contouring in the wrong areas for your face shape can actually detract from your features instead of enhancing them.
- **Forgetting to Blend:** Skipping the final blending step is a sure way to have visible lines that disrupt the illusion.

Maintaining Your Contoured Look

Once you've achieved your perfectly contoured face, you'll want it to last. Setting your makeup properly is key to longevity.

If you used cream contour, a light dusting of translucent powder over the entire face, especially in the T-zone, can help set it. For powder contour, ensure it's well-blended into your foundation. A setting spray can further help meld all the products together and extend the wear time of your makeup, keeping your contour looking sharp and defined throughout the day.

FAQ

Q: What is the best way to choose a contour shade for my skin tone?

A: The best contour shade is two to three shades darker than your natural skin tone and should have a cool or neutral undertone, mimicking a natural shadow. Avoid shades that are too warm or orange, as they can look like bronzer rather than contour. Swatching shades on your jawline in natural light is the most effective way to find your perfect match.

Q: How do I contour a double chin?

A: To contour a double chin, apply your contour shade just under the natural crease of your chin and blend downwards onto your neck. This creates a shadow that visually lifts the chin area and makes it appear less prominent. Ensure thorough blending to avoid any visible lines.

Q: Can I contour with bronzer?

A: While bronzer and contour share some similarities, they serve different purposes. Bronzer is typically warmer and used to add a sun-kissed glow, while contour is cooler and used to create shadows and definition. You can use a matte bronzer as a contour if it has a suitable cool undertone and you apply it strategically in the areas where you'd normally contour, but dedicated contour products will often yield more precise and natural results.

Q: How do I blend cream contour without streaks?

A: Cream contour is best blended with a damp beauty sponge or a dense, synthetic brush. Apply the cream contour in small amounts and use a stippling or patting motion to blend it into the skin. Avoid harsh sweeping motions, which can cause streaking. Building up the product gradually and blending as you go is key.

Q: What's the difference between contouring and bronzing?

A: Contouring is about creating shadows to sculpt and define features, aiming for a cooler, more natural shadow effect. Bronzing, on the other hand, is about adding warmth and a sun-kissed glow to the skin, typically using warmer-toned products applied to areas where the sun would naturally hit. While some products can perform both functions, they are distinct techniques with different aesthetic goals.

Q: How do I contour my nose for a slimmer appearance?

A: To slim your nose, use a small, precise brush and a matte contour shade. Apply thin lines of contour down the sides of the bridge of your nose, starting from the inner corner of your brow and extending to the tip. Then, blend these lines carefully with a small blending brush or your fingertip, ensuring they are soft and natural-looking. Avoid making the lines too wide, as this will have the opposite effect.

Q: Should I contour before or after foundation?

A: Typically, contouring is done after foundation and concealer have been applied. This allows you to work on a smooth, even base and ensures your contour shades blend seamlessly with your skin tone. Cream contours are applied after foundation but before powder, while powder contours are applied after foundation and powder.

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