

BACK TO



IF YOU WANT TO PREDICT WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOUR FAVORITE BEAUTY PRODUCTS, YOU'VE GOT TO TAKE A PEEK AT THE PAST. THESE FIVE STAPLES HAVE TRANSFORMED OVER THE LAST DECADE—AND THEY'RE NOT DONE YET. BY MAURA LYNCH

THE FUTURE

PROP STYLIST: MARIE-YAN MORVAN

LIP GLOSS

YESTERDAY

Gloss has been around since 1928—when Max Factor invented it to make lips glisten onscreen—but for the longest time it lacked luster. Sure, gloss was shiny, but it was also sticky as flypaper, says makeup artist Daniel Martin. It captured light and hairs in equal measure. The formula hadn't changed much in decades, says cosmetic chemist Ni'Kita Wilson. The base, typically a blend of synthetic emollients like polyisobutene and isobutene, was "the thickest honey you could imagine that doesn't want to pour," says Wilson.

TODAY

Nostalgia for the '90s kick-started a gloss comeback—and just in time beauty brands found a way to make it less, well, tacky. Taking cues from skin care and clean beauty, Wilson says "companies started blending in natural oils within the last five to eight years," ushering in a slew of hybrid formulas. For example, Dior Addict Stellar Gloss, a favorite of Martin's, is infused with cushiony aloe vera, beeswax, and cranberry and jojoba oils to help offset the overt stickiness of the base emollients.

TOMORROW

It remains to be seen if wearing fabric face coverings becomes the norm for the long haul, but it's a reality that brands are preparing for nonetheless—particularly because some experts say the transfer of makeup onto masks can lead to decreased air filtration. We should expect to see more long-wearing formulas, predicts Michael Nolte, creative director of the trend forecasting agency Beautystreams. The challenge? "You can't really have traditional lip gloss that doesn't transfer," says cosmetic chemist Ginger King. She points to Wonderskin's Wonderblading Lip Color—a peel-off, two-step lip stain that lasts up to 10 hours—as an example of how color could evolve to be mind-bendingly budge-proof. The trick will be fine-tuning a sealant that's both shiny and comfy. "Imagine using something like a clear nail polish topcoat," says King. It'll stay put, "but your lips aren't going to feel good."

FOUNDATION

YESTERDAY

The first modern foundation, created by the ever-industrious Max Factor in

1935, was defined by its cakiness (in fact, it was called Pan-Cake). Around seven decades on, formulas started to look (and feel) less like foundation and more like skin with the addition of new coated pigments and flexible film formers, says Wilson. But that meant very little if you couldn't find your shade, which was especially true for women with darker skin tones. Part of the problem was that pigments, regulated by the FDA, were very limited. "Traditionally, only four colorants were used to compose a foundation shade: white, yellow, black, and red," notes Balanda Atis, director of the face and multicultural beauty lab at L'Oréal. Blended together in carefully calibrated ratios, these four pigments created complexion-mimicking hues, but such a meager palette disproportionately shortchanged women with darker tones, says Atis.

TODAY

Foundation ranges are finally starting to reflect a fuller spectrum of skin tones. In 2008, Atis stabilized the pigment ultramarine blue in foundation. This allowed her team to reformulate the L'Oréal Paris True Match collection, achieving deeper hues and undertones without sacrificing texture, she says. Then, of course, came Rihanna's Fenty Beauty frenzy, in September

2017. The wild success of Fenty's truly comprehensive foundation line created more demand (and therefore more shelf space) for other wide-ranging collections, like Uoma Beauty, which launched in April 2019. The brand's Say What?! Foundation—with 51 shades—is divided into six color groups, each with a unique set of ingredients that meets skin needs specific to that group. For example, deeper hues are made with ingredients for curbing hyperpigmentation and fair shades have ones for calming redness.

TOMORROW

One surefire way to find a foundation that suits your skin: Get it custom-made. Brands like Lancôme and BareMinerals are already blending tailored foundations (Le Teint Particulier and Made-2-Fit, respectively) using skin scans, then feeding the results through color-matching algorithms. And more companies will start creating personalized shades that cater to nuances in your skin, like how undertones change with the season, says makeup artist Fiona Stiles. They could also accommodate for age, says Nolte. "Globally, the number of people age 65 and over is growing at around twice the rate of the overall population and a regular foundation will not do them justice." He predicts a spike in





formulas that will do right by skin of a certain age, like glowing finishes to offset dullness. King foresees a shift away from powder-laden blends that “settle into wrinkles and make them look more prominent.” There are formulas on the market now that fit the bill (Stiles likes Make Up For Ever’s Water Blend), but finding them can feel a bit like rummaging through a thrift store hoping for Phoebe Philo-era Celine.

FLATIRON

YESTERDAY

When your flatiron was actually in use—and not just plaguing you with anxiety over whether you had unplugged it before you left the house—it could still wreak a little havoc. Yes, it had come a long way from the crude model invented in 1909, comprised of two irons hinged together like garden shears (yes, really). Now there were ceramic-coated plates to smooth frizz. There were mini versions for bangs. But until a decade ago, they were still destructive to the hair shaft. “You’d pass through a section, heat would get transferred to the hair, and [the iron’s temperature would drop] at least 10 to 15 degrees,” says Harry Josh, hairstylist and founder of Harry Josh Pro Tools. Meaning: “You’d have to pass through the same section of

hair multiple times to get it smooth,” says hairstylist Rubi Jones. The result? A whole lotta damage.

TODAY

Auto shutoff has blessedly subdued electrical-fire panic and, more impressively, flatironed hair is no longer the antithesis of healthy hair. And that’s because of two words: heat management. Larger heaters ensure “equal heat distribution from corner to corner of the plate,” says Josh, who installed them in his namesake flatiron, which launched in 2013. That, plus sensors that recoup plates’ lost heat in mere seconds, means you only need a single pass to get smooth hair. The Dyson Corrale, a wireless model that launched in March and holds a 30-minute charge, has flexing plates that give “consistent tension and heat transfer across all hair strands, allowing you to use a lower temperature,” says lead design engineer Sandra Lup. The T3 Lucea ID, which launched in August, takes a more tailored approach to temperature. “We found that 72 percent of consumers didn’t know what the right temperature was for their hair,” says Jade Simmons, director of brand and product marketing. So they designed an algorithm that accounts for length, color status, and texture to program heat specific to your strands.

TOMORROW

Limiting heat exposure isn’t the only way to keep hair healthy. There are “irons that, when you press your hair, an oil comes out of the plates to condition your hair,” explains Josh. The catch, he says, is that the results aren’t all that impressive—yet. “We’re on the right path to create devices that either have zero damage, or could even be reparative.” But will there continue to be innovation if people aren’t actually straightening their hair? “Long-term, we are seeing a shift away from straightening hair or dramatically altering one’s appearance, for that matter,” says Nolte. Jones foresees a compromise that could smooth natural texture without erasing it. “I would love to see a tool that’s a hybrid of steam- and oil-infused irons that could set curls into a looser wave and lengthen them,” she says. “That way, you wouldn’t have to set your hair overnight.”

AT-HOME HAIR COLOR

YESTERDAY

At-home hair color was often a real drip, literally. “In the early 2000s, [many] kits were messy and time-consuming,” says Wilson. Runny dyes could give uneven results: “When it’s a drippy formula, it doesn’t hug the hair,” says Josh, who is also a colorist. But there was one major bright spot: When Clairol Root Touch-Up launched in 2005, we had an innovative, consistent way to hide grays between salon appointments or at-home coloring sessions. Having the ability to dye just our roots—which are naturally darker than the ends—rather than all of our hair every single time we saw grays gave us more natural-looking results, says colorist James Corbett.

TODAY

Foam-dye formats, introduced in 2011 with John Frieda Precision Foam Colour, helped deal with the drip. But it’s the actual ingredients that have undergone the biggest makeover: Garnier Olia, launched in 2015, was among the first permanent dyes formulated without ammonia, which can damage the hair cuticle. In 2017, Clairol revamped its Nice’n Easy line with a molecule that replaces PPD and PTD, two common chemicals in hair dyes that have been linked to irritation and allergic reactions. This ingredient consciousness carried over to burgeoning direct-to-consumer options too: Madison

Reed's dyes ditch ammonia, PPD, and resorcinol (a common hair dye ingredient that has raised safety concerns) altogether.

TOMORROW

As with foundation, more customization is on the horizon. The pandemic has put many pro colorists, including Corbett, to work on at-home blends for clients, a service he sees continuing long-term. At the same time, says Nolte, chemists will continue their search for gentler ingredients. As one approach, researchers at Northwestern University published a study exploring synthetic melanin, designed to mimic the melanin found in hair. Previous attempts to work with this ingredient as a dye alternative required high levels of heavy metals, but the newest data suggest that a little heat and a small amount of ammonium hydroxide or hydrogen peroxide could do the trick. The conditions are said to be similar to or milder than conventional coloring processes.

But what if you could simply pop a pill? "There's been talk for years about a pill that would supplement an enzyme called catalase, which breaks apart hydrogen peroxide [in the body]," says Joshua Zeichner, an associate professor of dermatology at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City. "It is thought that high levels of hydrogen peroxide play a major role in the development of gray hair, so keeping levels low may help hair hold onto natural pigment."

RETINOL

YESTERDAY

Ever since prescription Retin-A was approved by the FDA in the '70s, retinoids have been "perhaps the holy grail of skin care," says Zeichner. These vitamin A derivatives—the most powerful over-the-counter family member is retinol—brighten spots, clear breakouts, and smooth lines. They may also irritate the heck out of your skin. But advances started making them gentler. Encapsulation, a protective barrier around the molecule, helps "release it slowly into skin," says Wilson. This technology was used in the late '90s with Retin-A Micro, and in the past 15 years it's trickled into nonprescription retinol formulas, she says.

TODAY

New formats (like oils) and "retinalts" (like bakuchiol, derived from

the antioxidant-rich seeds of the babchi plant) have expanded options and made the application process more appealing, says Mona Gohara, an associate clinical professor of dermatology at Yale School of Medicine. An even bigger deal? Retinol is no longer a loner. Because the molecule is so unstable, says Gohara, "it doesn't play well with others." But by leveraging technologies like encapsulation, chemists have been able to formulate it with other ingredients to pack a more powerful punch. Hence, the alpha hydroxy acid and retinol blend in SkinBetter AlphaRet Overnight Cream. A specialized emollient base in Neutrogena Rapid Tone Repair Correcting Cream makes it possible for retinol and vitamin C (perhaps the only other ingredient to rival retinol in its persnicketyness—and holy grail status) to coexist in one brightening, smoothing formula.

TOMORROW

So-called drone technologies will take encapsulation one step further by adding protein markers to the outside that make retinol and its prescription-level cousins more likely to attach to certain cells in the skin and get their job done. "You put on a cream sometimes and you pray that the interaction happens," says Gohara. "This would give that chemical reaction an insurance policy."

Tech that provides personalized, freshly blended (and therefore more potent) doses is another form of insurance, says Zeichner. That's the idea behind Shiseido's Optune, currently available only in Japan. The accompanying app snaps a shot of your face and dispenses formulas fit for your skin's present state and adjusted for factors like humidity and your menstrual cycle. If you've ever tried retinol and quit because of irritation, a device like this could act as a trainer by taking the guesswork out of upping your dosage.

