

blush

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Blush

Colour applied to the cheeks to restore the flush that foundation removes. Blush is the cheapest correction in makeup and the most consistently underused — a matched foundation flattens the face's natural colour variation, and blush is what puts the variation back.

The formats

Format	Base	Wears best on	Notes
Powder	Talc, mica, silica + pigment	Oily and combination skin	Easiest to control; sits on top of powder
Cream	Emollients, waxes + pigment	Dry and normal skin	Melts into the base; a natural finish
Liquid / tint	Water or silicone + dye or pigment	All, with practice	Strongest colour, least forgiving — works fast
Stick	Wax + pigment	Dry skin, travel	Convenient; can drag over a liquid base
Gel / stain	Water + dye	Bare skin	Stains the skin itself; near-permanent through a day

Layer order matters. Cream and liquid go on before powder; powder blush goes on after. Powder blush over an unset cream base grabs and blotches.

Placement, and why the "rules" keep changing

The apples of the cheeks, the top of the cheekbone, the temples, across the nose, high and lifted, low and diffused — the fashionable placement has moved every decade and each version is presented as correct.

The stable observations underneath:

- **Higher and further back** reads as lift; lower and rounder reads as youthful and soft.
- **Colour draws the eye**, so blush placement determines where a face is read from.
- **Blending outward and upward** avoids a stripe; a hard edge is the only genuine mistake in the category.
- **Less than you think, built up.** Powder blush in particular deposits far more on the first touch than expected — tap the brush out first.

Choosing a shade

Not by skin tone alone, but by **what the skin does when it flushes**. The colour a face goes after exercise or in cold air is the shade that will look native on it.

Depth matters more than hue on deeper skin tones: pale pastel blushes disappear or go ashy, while saturated berries, brick reds, warm oranges and deep corals read correctly. This is another category where mainstream shade ranges were built for a narrow band and have only recently widened.

Where it sits in the rules

Cosmetic in the US — FDA primary category (08), makeup preparations (not eye).

Colour additives are the operative constraint and blush is a pigment-heavy product: each additive must be **approved by FDA for the intended use**, and certified colours must come from **FDA-certified batches**.

Two ingredient notes worth carrying:

- **Carmine (CI 75470)** — cochineal-derived red, common in blush. FDA requires it to be **declared by name** rather than hidden under a general colour listing, because of documented hypersensitivity reactions. It is also the ingredient that makes a blush non-vegan.
- **Lead** — FDA's December 2022 final guidance recommends a maximum of **10 ppm** in externally applied cosmetics. Guidance, not regulation, and the figure industry works to.

Blush is not an eye-area product, so eye-area colour restrictions do not apply — but using a blush as eyeshadow, which is common, moves it into a use its colour additives may not be approved for.

Shelf life

Powder blush: **18–24 months** after opening, limited in practice by the brush returning sebum to the pan and forming a hard glaze. Cream and liquid: **12 months**, and pots dipped into with fingers less. Wash brushes. A cream blush that has separated or gone crumbly has failed.

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- [Makeup](#) — the shelf this sits on, and the rest of it.
- [Cosmetics](#) — what the label is legally allowed to say, and the full catalogue.
- The rest of *Colour and contour* — [Bronzer](#) · [Contour](#) · [Highlighter](#) · [Face Paint](#) · [Body Paint](#) · [Leg Makeup](#).
- Regulatory statements here follow the FDA and EU sources listed on [Cosmetics](#), read 16 August 2026.