

What really works: Gradual tanners

If you dread self-tans turning you orange and patchy, then a gradual tanner could be the way to a believable, mood-boosting glow. Our panel blind-tested 20 bronzing formulas. Here are their favourites



BEST FOR ANTI-AGEING

Pro-ferm Afterglow £75 (www.pro-ferm.com)

'I loved the light, moisturising texture of this cream, which visibly hydrated my skin making it appear smoother and less crêpey. I was really amazed at how well it enhanced and blended with my existing suntan.'

Debbie Scrivener, 56



BEST FOR QUICK COLOUR

Palmer's Cocoa Butter Formula Natural Bronze,

£4.99 (available nationwide) 'This product was so fantastic on every level that I couldn't wait to find out what I had been using. The natural colour and subtle cocoa butter scent meant no one knew I'd been faking it.'

Rachel Laurie, 23



BEST FOR DRY SKIN

Origins Let It Show, £15 (www.origins.co.uk)

'This is the best gradual tanner I've ever tried – and I've tried a lot. It doesn't streak, go patchy or blotchy and gives the perfect golden-goddess tan. I plan on using it constantly because in my opinion it's faultless.'

Sophie Roberts-Brown, 34



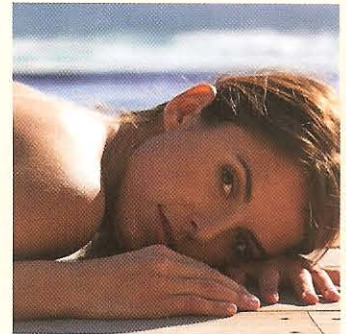
BEST FOR FAIR SKIN

St Tropez Everyday, £12.95 (www.st-tropez.co.uk)

'My skin developed a natural, honey tan within four days, which flattered my complexion and led friends to remark on how well I looked. For the first time since winter I felt confident enough to go out without tights.'

Ann O'Neill, 44

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Celebrity tanning expert Abigail Olek reveals her top tips for choosing a gradual tanner

- 1 Gradual tanners contain DHA, which makes skin cells produce a brown colour. 'Light' products contain one to two per cent, and 'dark' three to four. If you're unsure, use a lighter product and build up slowly.
- 2 Choose a separate face tanner, as they use lower levels of DHA, and contain moisturising ingredients such as hyaluronic acid, ensuring subtle, nourished colour.
- 3 Prep skin with an exfoliator but avoid oil-based scrubs, which can act as a barrier to fake tan. Try Beaubronz Exfoliese Body Polish, £24.95 (www.beaubronz.co.uk).
- 4 Spray formulas are great for hard-to-reach places, but often contain alcohol, which can dehydrate skin. Use products containing moisturising vitamin E, aloe vera and shea butter.

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