

VOL. 01 · FROM AESTHETIQUE



# The Slow Beauty Starter Kit

*A 7-day reset for a calmer routine,  
and better skin.*

Curated by [Aesthetique](https://aesthetique.style) · [aesthetique.style](https://aesthetique.style)

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# Why slow beauty.

There's a quiet shift happening on bathroom shelves. The ten-step routine, once the badge of a serious skincare habit, has started to look like a lot of work for not much in return. In its place, something gentler is taking hold — what beauty editors and dermatologists have begun calling *skinimalism*.

The case for it is not aesthetic. It's clinical. The American Academy of Dermatology now recommends a three-step approach — cleanse, moisturize, protect — as the foundation of nearly every healthy routine, on the grounds that fewer products are easier to tolerate and easier to stick with<sup>1</sup>. Wirecutter's beauty team, after years of testing, arrived at the same conclusion: "Simple is good. There is no miracle cream. The magic is in the routine"<sup>2</sup>. The New York Times has reported on a generation of skincare obsessives whose breakouts cleared only after they stripped their routines back to a cleanser and a moisturizer<sup>3</sup>.

Most routines fail not because they are wrong but because they ask too much. Slow beauty asks for less, more consistently. It assumes the skin knows what to do if it is given room to do it. The next seven days are structured around that assumption.

*"Skin doesn't need more steps. It needs more time."*

1. American Academy of Dermatology, *Skin care basics & budget routine*. [aad.org](http://aad.org)

2. The New York Times Wirecutter, *Take Better Care of Your Skin*, March 2025. [nytimes.com/wirecutter](https://www.nytimes.com/wirecutter)

3. The New York Times, *How to Simplify Your Skin Care Routine to Avoid Breakouts*, December 2023. [nytimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com)

THE METHOD

# The 7-Day Reset.

Seven mornings. Seven evenings. One small addition every other day, so the skin has time to register what's been added before anything else is. Read it as a guideline, not a contract — if a step doesn't suit your skin, leave it out and keep going.



*One product, doing one thing, well.*

# Strip back. Then add, slowly.

## DAY 01

### Strip Back.

#### MORNING

Splash of cool water. A gentle cleanser, only if the skin feels it needs one. A plain moisturizer. SPF 30 or higher before anything else touches the face.

#### EVENING

The same gentle cleanser. The same moisturizer. Nothing else.

*Today's skin will look bored. Tomorrow's will look rested.*

## DAY 02

### A Quiet Layer.

#### MORNING

Cleanser. A hydrating toner or essence pressed in with the palms — the single new addition. Moisturizer. SPF.

#### EVENING

Cleanser. Toner or essence. Moisturizer. Lights out earlier than usual.

*Hydration is the one step almost no skin objects to.*

## DAY 03

### An Antioxidant.

#### MORNING

Cleanser. Toner or essence. A few drops of vitamin C serum on damp skin. Moisturizer. SPF — which is what makes vitamin C worth using in the first place.

#### EVENING

Cleanser. Toner. Moisturizer. (Save the actives for morning.)

*Vitamin C is a slow worker. Give it weeks, not days, to read its results.*

# Rest. Then a treatment.

## DAY 04

### Rest Day.

#### MORNING

Repeat day three exactly. No new product. No swap. Watch how the skin responds when nothing changes.

#### EVENING

Same as day three. Drink an extra glass of water before bed.

*Repetition is the part of skincare nobody photographs. It is also the part that works.*

## DAY 05

### A Treatment, in Small Doses.

#### MORNING

Cleanser. Toner. Vitamin C. Moisturizer. SPF.

#### EVENING

Cleanser. Toner. A pea-sized amount of retinol — or a peptide serum, if retinol is too much for your skin — on dry skin. Moisturizer over the top to soften it.

*Start every other night for the first month. Skin learns retinol the way a body learns a new exercise: slowly, or not at all.*



# Rest. Then assess.

## DAY 06

### Rest Day.

#### MORNING

Cleanser. Toner. Vitamin C. Moisturizer. SPF.

#### EVENING

Cleanser. Toner. Moisturizer. (No retinol tonight.)

*If the skin feels at all sensitive, this is when you'll notice. That's useful information.*

## DAY 07

### Your Calm Five.

#### MORNING

Cleanser. Toner or essence. Vitamin C. Moisturizer. SPF.

#### EVENING

Cleanser. Toner. Eye serum. Treatment (every other night). Moisturizer.

*Five products, used consistently, will outperform twelve used sporadically. This is the routine you keep.*

By the end of the week, the routine should feel almost too short. That's the point. The skin you see in the mirror on day seven is the baseline — what your skin looks like when it's not being managed. Everything you add from here is in service of that face, not in spite of it.

# The Calm Five.

Five categories. One pick in each. The criteria are unfussy: a formula that does its job without overcomplicating, a price that doesn't insult the wearer, and a reputation built on use rather than marketing.

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## THE CLEANSER

### CeraVe · Hydrating Facial Cleanser

What works about this cleanser is what it doesn't do. It doesn't strip, doesn't foam aggressively, doesn't smell like perfume. It removes the day with ceramides and hyaluronic acid and stops there — which is, quietly, what dermatologists tend to recommend when asked.

\$17 · [cerave.com](https://www.cerave.com)

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## THE HYDRATOR

### The Ordinary · Hyaluronic Acid 2% + B5

There is no shortage of hyaluronic acid serums on the market and very little daylight between most of them. This one earns its place on price: it costs less than a coffee subscription and does, reliably, the one thing it claims to do — pull water into the upper layers of the skin before moisturizer locks it in.

\$10 · [theordinary.com](https://www.theordinary.com)

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# The Calm Five, continued.

## THE EYE SERUM

### Michael Todd Beauty · Wide Awake Lifting Eye Serum

The under-eye is the first place a tired week shows and the last place most routines treat well. What earns this serum a place is restraint — a lightweight, peptide-led formula that absorbs in seconds and layers cleanly under SPF. It is also, at this price, one of the few eye treatments that doesn't ask for a leap of faith.

\$29 · [shop via Aesthetique](#) →

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## THE MOISTURIZER

### CeraVe · Daily Moisturizing Lotion

A moisturizer should disappear into the skin and stay out of the way of everything else. This one does. It carries the same ceramide-and-hyaluronic-acid backbone the brand is known for, layers under sunscreen without pilling, and works as well at 25 as it does at 45.

\$16 · [cerave.com](#)

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## THE SPF

### EltaMD · UV Clear Broad-Spectrum SPF 46

The most-recommended sunscreen in dermatology offices for a reason. It is a chemical-mineral hybrid that doesn't leave a cast, sits well under makeup, and includes niacinamide — useful for skin that flushes or breaks out. It is the one product on this list worth being slightly religious about.

\$43 · [eltamd.com](#)

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# A note on routine.

Most of what skincare promises — radiance, evenness, the look of being well-rested — is delivered not by a single product but by the act of showing up to a small set of them every day. The science is unsexy. Consistent SPF outperforms almost any anti-aging serum. A moisturizer applied to damp skin twice a day outperforms one applied to dry skin once a week.

If there is a single line worth taping to a bathroom mirror, it is this: skin doesn't need more steps. It needs more time. Time for ingredients to do their slow work, time for the barrier to repair between treatments, time for the routine itself to become unthinking. The goal of a starter kit is not to begin a long career in skincare. It is to make the next morning easier than the last one.



*The most underrated step is the one before any product touches the skin.*

WHAT'S NEXT

# Stay close.

If this guide has earned a few minutes of your morning, there is more where it came from.

THE EDIT, EVERY OTHER SUNDAY

## The Aesthetique Edit.

A short, considered newsletter — beauty, but also the small things around it. One product worth knowing about, one essay worth reading, one ritual worth borrowing. Sunday mornings, every other week. Read more and subscribe at [aesthetique.style](https://aesthetique.style).

ONGOING EDITORIALS

## Beauty, slowly.

Longer-form reviews, single-product deep dives, and the occasional interview live at [aesthetique.style/beauty](https://aesthetique.style/beauty). Recently: notes on peptide eye serums, on what "clean" actually means on a label, and on the slow return of the cold cream.

COMING SOON

## The Bridal Skincare Ritual.

A longer companion guide — twelve weeks out, four weeks out, the morning of. Built on the same restraint-first principles, with the specifics of camera-ready skin. Newsletter subscribers get it first.

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*Thank you for reading. — Cameron*