

Basic Cosmetic Chemistry Vocabulary List

Anhydrous - Describes products that do not contain any water.
Antioxidants - Substances that inhibit oxidation or reactions promoted by oxygen or peroxides.
Aromatherapy (Essential) Oils - Highly concentrated plant oils that possess properties that have various effects on the skin; also called essential oils.
Beta-Glucan - Ingredients used in anti aging cosmetics that help reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles by stimulating the formation of collagen.
Carbomer - Ingredients used to thicken creams, frequently used in gel products.
Certified Colors - Inorganic color agents also known as metal salts; listed on ingredient labels as D&C (drug and cosmetic).
Coenzyme Q-10 - Powerful antioxidant that protects and revitalizes skin.
Comedogenicity - Tendency of any topical substance to cause or to worsen a buildup of dead cells in the follicle leading to the development of a comedone.
Cosmeceuticals - Products intended to improve the skin's health and appearance.
Cosmetics - As defined by the FDA, "articles that are intended to be rubbed, poured, sprinkled or otherwise applied to the human body or any part thereof for cleansing, beautifying, promoting attractiveness or altering the appearance".
Delivery Systems - Chemical techniques using vehicles to make products work.
Detergent - Main type of surfactant used in skin care products.
Emollients - Cosmetic ingredients that are almost always fatty agents; can act as either vehicles or performance ingredients.
Emulsifier - Surfactant that keeps oil and water blended in a product.
Fatty Acids - Lubricant ingredients derived from plant oils or animal fats.
Fatty Alcohols - Fatty acids that have been exposed to hydrogen.
Fatty Esters - Emollients produced from fatty acids and alcohols.
Functional Ingredients - Ingredients in cosmetic products that allow the product to spread give them body and texture and give them a specific form such as lotion cream or gel.
Glycoproteins - Yeast cell derivatives that enhance cellular metabolism which boost oxygen uptake in the cell.
Hydrators - Ingredients that attract water to the skin's surface; also known as humectants or hydrophilic agents.
Lakes - The common term for certified colors.
Liposomes - Vehicles that transfer important ingredients such as hydrators, antioxidants, or Alpha hydroxy acids to the skin by slowly dissolving them over time.
Non-Certified Colors - Organic color agents.
Non-Setting Masks - Primary moisturizing and soothing masks that do not harden or dry.
Occlusion - Technique of moisturizing by placing a layer of emollient over the skin in order to keep the natural moisture from escaping from the epidermis.
Oil Soluble - Compatible with oil.
Performance Ingredients - Ingredients in cosmetic products that cause actual changes in the appearance of skin.



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Polyglucan - Ingredients derived from yeast cells that help strengthen the immune system and stimulate the metabolism they are also hydrophilic and help preserve and protect collagen and elastin.
Polymers - Advanced vehicles that release substances onto the skin's surface at a microscopically controlled rate.
Serums - User friendly versions of ampoules, intended for a specific corrective treatment used day and night for 30 to 60 days or more.
Setting Masks - Masks that harden and dry after a few minutes of exposure to air; used for cleansing, removing dead skin cells and absorbing sebum.
Silicones - Mineral-based substances used in cosmetics as lightweight emollients of vehicles.
Tissue Respiratory Factor (TRF) - Ingredients derived from yeast cells that function as an anti-inflammatory and moisturizing ingredient.
Water Soluble - Mixable with water.

