The Serum Cheat Sheet

Which serum fixes which skin problem, and when to use it.

Which one is your problem?

"My skin feels tight and flaky after I wash it"	"Fine lines, and my texture looks rough"	"Dark spots that just won't fade"	"Red, stingy, reacts to everything"
→ **Hyaluronic acid**	→ **Retinol**	→ **Vitamin C**	→ **Ceramides**

The big 4 FROM THE VIDEO

Hyaluronic acid

For: dry, tight, dehydrated skin

What it does: works like a sponge for water. It pulls moisture into the top layer of your skin, so it looks plumper and smoother.

When: AM PM on slightly damp skin.

Tip: follow with a moisturizer to lock the water in. Plays well with everything.

Retinol

For: fine lines, rough texture

What it does: speeds up skin cell turnover and helps your skin make more collagen, so lines and texture soften over time.

When: PM only light breaks it down. Start 2 to 3 nights a week with a pea-sized amount.

Heads-up: some dryness or peeling in the first weeks is common. Don't use it the same night as exfoliating acids while you start, wear SPF every morning, and skip it if you're pregnant or breastfeeding.

Vitamin C

For: dark spots, dullness, uneven tone

What it does: an antioxidant that helps slow down melanin (the pigment behind dark spots) and backs up your sunscreen against daily damage.

When: AM under your sunscreen.

Tip: it breaks down with light and air. If it turns dark orange or brown, it's time to replace it. A little tingle can be normal.

Ceramides

For: redness, sensitivity, a damaged barrier

What it does: they're the glue between your skin's "bricks". They seal the gaps in your barrier, so less water escapes and irritation calms down.

When: AM PM usually in your moisturizer.

Tip: a great partner for retinol and acids. They help calm the irritation those can cause.

Educational content, not medical advice. Patch test new products. If you have a skin condition, or you're pregnant or breastfeeding, talk to a dermatologist before starting any active. Sources on page 2.

4 more you'll hear about

Salicylic acid (BHA) — blackheads, clogged pores, oily skin

Oil-soluble, so it gets inside your pores and loosens what's clogging them. **When:** PM start 2 to 3 times a week. Not the same night as retinol while you start. Ask your doctor first if you're pregnant or allergic to aspirin.

Niacinamide — redness, shine, uneven tone

Vitamin B3. Supports your barrier, helps even out tone and can reduce oiliness. **When:** AM PM gentle and easy to pair, a good first serum.

Azelaic acid — breakouts + redness + dark marks

Calms redness, fights acne bacteria and helps fade the marks breakouts leave behind. **When:** AM PM it can tingle at first, so start once a day.

Sunscreen, SPF 30+ — every skin, every morning

Not a serum, but the step that protects everything the others fix. Broad-spectrum, SPF 30 or higher, as the **last step every morning**, even on cloudy days.

The golden rule: they don't all go on together. Vitamin C in the morning, retinol at night.

Morning order

Cleanser → Vitamin C → Hyaluronic → Moisturizer → SPF

Thinnest to thickest. Sunscreen always goes last.

Night order

Cleanser → Retinol *or* an acid → Hyaluronic / Niacinamide → Moisturizer (ceramides)

One strong active per night while you start.

Which ones does your skin need, and in what order?

Get your routine for your skin type in 60 seconds: **serumschool.com/routine** → and follow @serumschool for a new lesson every day.

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Sources: Pavicic T et al. J Drugs Dermatol 2011;10(9):990–1000 (hyaluronic acid) · Mukherjee S et al. Clin Interv Aging 2006;1(4):327–348 (retinoids) · Telang PS. Indian Dermatol Online J 2013;4(2):143–146 and Pullar JM et al. Nutrients 2017;9(8):866 (vitamin C) · Coderch L et al. Am J Clin Dermatol 2003;4(2):107–129 (ceramides) · Arif T. Clin Cosmet Investig Dermatol 2015;8:455–461 (salicylic acid) · Bissett DL et al. Dermatol Surg 2005;31(7 Pt 2):860–865 and Draelos ZD et al. J Cosmet Laser Ther 2006;8(2):96–101 (niacinamide) · Schulte BC et al. J Drugs Dermatol 2015;14(9):964–968 (azelaic acid) · American Academy of Dermatology, Sunscreen FAQs, aad.org/media/stats-sunscreen.

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