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The Best Sunscreen Gel Formulas Pair Protection With an Invisible Feel

BY DEANNA PAI

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Photo: Courtesy of Getty Images

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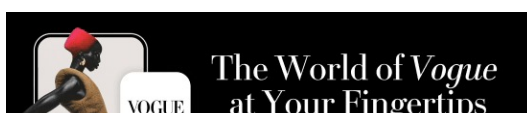
For those hoping for the most elegance from their face sunscreen—such as an invisible finish, featherlight feel, and quick absorption—the best gel sunscreens deliver all of these (among other advantages) with ease. While past iterations of sunscreen had a reputation for their telltale white cast and greasy feel, the latest formulations skirt those concerns by design.

Vogue's Favorite Sunscreen Gels:

- **Best Water-Resistant:** Allies of Skin The One Invisible Sunscreen Gel SPF 50, \$45
- **Best for Face:** Sun Bum Daily Sunscreen Gel SPF 50, \$22
- **Best for Body:** Dune The Bod Guard Invisible Gel Sunscreen SPF 30, \$20
- **Best Hydrating:** Isntree Hyaluronic Acid Daily Sun Gel SPF 30, \$20
- **Best Finish:** Bask Daily Invisible Gel Sunscreen SPF 40, \$28
- **Best Scent:** Vacation Orange Gelée Sunscreen Gel SPF 30, \$23
- **Best Anti-Aging:** Coola Refreshing Water Plumping Gel Serum SPF 30, \$48
- **Best Drugstore:** Neutrogena Hydro Boost Water Gel Lotion SPF 50, \$18
- **Best Overall:** Supergoop! Unseen Sunscreen SPF 50, \$22

In this article:

- What to look for in a gel sunscreen
- How does gel sunscreen work?
- Is gel sunscreen better?
- Is gel sunscreen as effective as cream/spray?
- What are the benefits of a gel sunscreen?
- Meet the Experts





Largely powered by chemical filters, most gel sunscreens are "of a light texture, hydrating, typically non-comedogenic, and easy to layer," says Y. Claire Chang, MD, a board-certified dermatologist in New York, NY, which, she notes, makes them ideal for hot and humid climates—as well as for those with acne-prone or oily skin. She recommends seeking out formulas that also offer broad-spectrum protection, water-resistance, and a SPF level of 30 or higher.

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While they're intended to be crowd-pleasers, the best gel sunscreen for you may ultimately come down to your personal preferences and needs. With that, consider these nine formulas worth adding to your skin-care routine.

Best Water-Resistant: *Allies of Skin The One Invisible Sunscreen Gel SPF 50*

ALLIES OF SKIN

The One Invisible Sunscreen Gel SPF 50

\$45 AMAZON
\$45 REVOLVE
\$45 ALLIES OF SKIN

- **Why We Love It:** This formula is truly clear and packed with antioxidants, which puts this among the go-to sunscreen gels for San Diego, CA-based board-certified dermatologist Melanie Palm, MD. Furthermore, “vitamin C and green tea help combat free radicals that can prematurely age the skin,” she says. It also has an aloe-based ingredient that creates an invisible shield over skin, allowing for long-lasting wear with a weightless feel, and is water-resistant for up to 80 minutes.
- **Type:** Chemical (Avobenzone 2%, homosalate 7%, Octocrylene 10%, octisalate 5%)
- **SPF Level:** 50
- **Broad-Spectrum:** Yes
- **Key Ingredients:** Vitamin C, green tea extract, red raspberry seed oil
- **Size:** 1.7 fl. oz.

Love It	Leave It
Doubles as a primer	Small size
Rated PA++++, highest UVA protection	

Best for Face: Sun Bum Daily Sunscreen Gel SPF 50

SUN BUM

Daily Sunsreen Gel SPF 50

~~\$22~~ \$17
AMAZON

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- **Why We Love It:** This fragrance-free sunscreen offers the best of both worlds, supplying hydration with vitamin E but leaving skin with a matte finish. Plus, “it also contains antioxidants, including vitamin E, to help protect the skin from oxidative damage,” says Dr. Palm. And fortunately, it's also non-comedogenic.
 - **Type:** Chemical (Avobenzone 3%, homosalate 9%, octisalate 5%, octocrylene 10%)
 - **SPF Level:** 50
 - **Broad-Spectrum:** Yes
 - **Key Ingredients:** Vitamin E, vitamin C, jojoba seed oil
 - **Size:** 1.7 fl. oz.
-

Love It	Leave It
Leaves a matte finish	Some might not like the texture of silicone
Offers long-lasting hydration	

Best for Body: Dune The Bod Guard Invisible Gel Sunscreen SPF 30

DUNE

The Bod Guard Invisible Gel Sunscreen SPF 30

\$25 \$20 AMAZON
\$25 NORDSTROM
\$25 BLUEMERCURY

- **Why We Love It:** A nourishing body lotion often receives priority over head-to-toe body sunscreen. You don't have to choose between the two with this formulation: The whipped gel-cream is infused with botanical extracts and vitamin E to hydrate skin for up to 72 hours. It won't pill once applied (and dried) and doesn't impart a white cast, even on those with deep skin tones—setting an entirely new standard for a full-body, broad-spectrum sunscreen.
- **Type:** Chemical (Avobenzone 2.0%, homosalate 5.5%, octisalate 4.5%, octocrylene 4.0%)
- **SPF Level:** 30
- **Broad-Spectrum:** Yes
- **Key Ingredients:** Hibiscus extract, neem leaf extract, vitamin E
- **Size:** 8.4 fl. oz.

Love It	Leave It
Doesn't pill on skin or leave a residue	Takes time to absorb on wet skin
Generous bottle size	

Best Hydrating: Isntree Hyaluronic Acid Daily Sun Gel SPF 30

ISNTREE

Hyaluronic Acid Daily Sun Gel SPF 30

\$20 \$15 AMAZON
\$20 SOKO GLAM
\$20 YESSTYLE

-
- **Why We Love It:** For an especially moisturizing option for dry skin types, Dr. Chang points to this Korean sunscreen, which is “packed with 10 types of hyaluronic acid as well as niacinamide to protect and hydrate the skin at the same time,” she says. That makes it ideal for those prone to dryness and redness alike. Moreover, it’s non-greasy, and the inclusion of ectoin—which creates an invisible barrier of sorts over skin to protect it from external aggressors.
 - **Type:** Chemical (Avobenzone 2.7%, homosalate 9%, octisalate 4.5%)
 - **SPF Level:** 30
 - **Broad-Spectrum:** Yes
 - **Key Ingredients:** Hyaluronic acid, ectoin, niacinamide
 - **Size:** 1.7 fl. oz.

Love It	Leave It
Layers nicely beneath makeup	May leave a subtle white cast
Imparts a matte finish	

Best Finish: Bask Daily Invisible Gel Sunscreen SPF 40

BASK

Daily Invisible Gel Sunscreen SPF 40

\$28 NORDSTROM

-
- **Why We Love It:** Those who appreciate the preternaturally smooth finish of a primer may want to reach for this formula, which creates a seamless canvas for makeup. Squalane, the stable form of a lipid naturally found in the skin barrier, is one of just nine ingredients (not including the chemical sunscreen filters) included to keep skin hydrated. The fragrance-free, hypoallergenic formula also has a satisfying slip that makes it a dream to smooth on, and it's water-resistant for up to 80 minutes—making it suitable for daily wear and beach days alike.
 - **Type:** Chemical (Avobenzene 3%, homosalate 10%, octisalate 5%, octocrylene 5%)
 - **SPF Level:** 40
 - **Broad-Spectrum:** Yes
 - **Key Ingredients:** Squalane, vitamin E, coconut oil

- **Size:** 1.7 fl. oz.

Love It	Leave It
Hypoallergenic formula is unlikely to cause reactions	Tube opening makes it hard to dispense a small amount of product
Brimming with nourishing ingredients	

Best Scent: Vacation Orange Gelée Sunscreen Gel SPF 30

Orange Gelée Sunscreen Gel SPF 30

\$23
NORDSTROM

\$23
BLUEMERCURY

- **Why We Love It:** When Vacation reimaged the classic Orange Gelée sunscreen—which debuted in the 1920s and finally met its demise in 2019—it sold out in a matter of days. The formula looks and smells like the original, with a bergamot-spiked scent and orange tint, but it's decidedly modern: It now features jojoba, sesame, and sweet almond oils as well as vitamin E and broad-spectrum SPF 30 protection.
- **Type:** Chemical
- **Key Ingredients:** Shea butter, vitamin E, jojoba oil
- **Size:** 3.12 oz.
- **Type:** Chemical (Avobenzone 2.9%, homosalate 6.9%, octisalate 4.9%, octocrylene 9.5%)
- **SPF Level:** 30
- **Broad-Spectrum:** Yes
- **Key Ingredients:** Shea butter, vitamin E, jojoba oil
- **Size:** 3.12 oz.

Love It

Has a delicious scent

Leave It

Some may not like the oily feel, although it sinks in

Love It	Leave It
Balm-to-oil texture melts into skin	

Best Anti-Aging: Coola Refreshing Water Plumping Gel Serum SPF 30

\$48
NORDSTROM

- **Why We Love It:** The newest addition to Coola's Refreshing Water collection—which, as the name implies, features formulas intended to feel like nothing—this weightless formulation is as much of a serum as it is a sunscreen. It hydrates with a blend of hyaluronic acid and organic aloe and coconut waters, while a marine extract actively smoothes wrinkles and fine lines, leaving skin firm and supple.
- **Type:** Chemical (Avobenzone 3.0%, homosalate 6.0%, octisalate 5.0%, octocrylene 7.0%)
- **SPF Level:** 30
- **Broad-Spectrum:** Yes
- **Key Ingredients:** Hyaluronic acid, coconut water, aloe vera
- **Size:** 1 fl. oz.

Love It	Leave It
Leaves a radiant finish	Bottle cap is prone to breakage

Best Drugstore: Neutrogena Hydro Boost Water Gel Lotion SPF 50

NEUTROGENA

Hydro Boost Water Gel Lotion Sunscreen 50

~~\$17~~ \$11
AMAZON

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- **Why We Love It:** Neutrogena is a mainstay for accessible sunscreen formulas that are also pleasant to use, and this formula is no exception. It “provides broad-spectrum SPF 50 coverage and is water-resistant, oil-free, non-comedogenic, and hypoallergenic,” says Dr. Chang, who also recommends it to patients for its smooth application and fast absorption. It also contains glycerin and vitamin E for a burst of hydration.
 - **Type:** Chemical (Avobenzone 3%, homosalate 15.0%, octisalate 5.0%, octocrylene 10.0%)
 - **SPF Level:** 50
 - **Broad-Spectrum:** Yes
 - **Key Ingredients:** Hyaluronic acid, coconut water, aloe vera

- **Size:** 1 fl. oz.

Love It	Leave It
Has a slightly cooling sensation	Prone to pilling

Best Overall: Supergoop! Unseen Sunscreen SPF 50

SUPERGOOP!

Unseen Sunscreen SPF 50

\$22
AMAZON

- **Why We Love It:** Beloved by dermatologists and editors alike, the Supergoop! Unseen Sunscreen is true to its name, proving nearly imperceptible on skin. “This sunscreen offers lightweight, invisible protection without a white cast for those who don’t like the feeling of heavier sunscreens,” says [Annie Chiu, MD](#), a board-certified dermatologist in Newport Beach, CA. It doubles as a makeup primer, and its oil-free formulation makes it a good option for most skin types, including those who are oil- or acne-prone.
- **Type:** Chemical (3% avobenzone, 8% homosalate, 5% octisalate, 4% octocrylene)
- **SPF Level:** 50
- **Broad-Spectrum:** Yes
- **Key Ingredients:** Meadowfoam seed oil, bisabolol, licorice root
- **Size:** 1.7 fl. oz.

Love It	Leave It
Won't clog pores	Some might not like the silicone texture
Doubles as a makeup primer	

What to look for in a gel sunscreen ▼

How does gel sunscreen work? ▼

Are gel sunscreens better?



Is gel sunscreen as effective as cream/spray?



What are the benefits of a gel sunscreen?



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