

BEAUTY

Way to Glow, Girl

Friend and faux – put together with the help of top tanner James Harknett, our golden goddess guide means you can fake your way to the perfect flattering tan

One of Britain's best-kept beauty secrets, James Harknett certainly has the Midas touch. The man with the golden (spray) gun, he is responsible for helping numerous celebrities light up the red carpet with their gorgeous faux glows. James, whose tan fans include Emma Willis, Denise Van Outen and Ashley Roberts, offers a couture tanning service at the W Hotel in London, where he custom-blends a variety of products to tailor-make the perfect colour, finish and application for each client.

James can create a red carpet tan, a wedding day tan, a London, Barcelona or New York tan – even a man tan. “There is a self-tan for absolutely every skin type, I promise,” he reveals. “I helped Sienna X create a super-light tan for a Holly Fulton catwalk show at London Fashion Week that used just six per cent of the tanning ingredient DHA (most products feature 8-10 per cent). It gives the softest blush and glow to skin and is now one of my favourite products.”

When it comes to achieving a professional finish at home – and avoiding any self-tan disasters – James recommends taking a conservative approach. “There is no reason to make a tanning mistake as there are different depths of colour available to complement every skin tone,” he explains. “The secret is to do a trial first, and always go for the lightest colour option for your skin. You can always add colour, but it is harder to get rid of it.”

And his top tip for finding the right product for you? “Think about how your skin tans in the sun and be honest with yourself. If you have dark hair and eyes and tan easily, then pretty much any fake tan will suit you. My advice is to opt for a lotion and feel free to choose medium or dark. If your skin is medium in tone and would eventually tan when exposed to the sun, a tanning mousse in a light to medium shade is ideal. Finally, if you have light skin, hair and eyes and turn red in the sun, then opt for a gradual tan with a guide colour so you know where you are applying it.”

Once you have chosen the perfect self-tanner, avoiding a streak-free finish is all about the four Ps: Prep, Protect, Pamper and Preen. Follow James's how-to guide for guaranteed success.

STEP 1 PREP

“Always exfoliate. Don't go crazy and scrub like mad, but do use a wash-off scrub and work it over every inch of skin. That way, you not only remove dry skin but also the last of your deodorant, antiperspirant, body moisturiser or oil and any old self-tan – it is these that cause the majority of streaking.”

STEP 2 PROTECT

“I apply a moisturising barrier cream to troublesome areas – elbows, knees, the backs of ankles, inner wrists, hands (particularly the cuticles and knuckles) and feet. You don't need a lot – just enough to dilute the self-tan by about 50 per cent.”

STEP 3 PAMPER

“The secret to a great self-tan is to take your time. This is not a five-minute job, so try to think of self-tanning as a pamper session. That's why I always recommend a Sunday evening. Apply in front of a well-lit, large mirror and start with your legs, putting each one in turn on the edge of the bath and working from hip to ankle. Use a mitt for your body (both James Read and Boots Soltan do great self-tanning mitts) and you will get a more even finish. Next, work from the shoulders down your body and from the shoulders down your arms. Ask for help with your back or use one of those all-angle sprays like Garnier's No Streaks Bronzer Dry Body Mist, which sprays even when upside down.”

STEP 4 PREEN

“Finish with your face; I love the new generation face products. Apply as you would a face moisturiser, starting with your cheeks, across the tops of your cheekbones and blending outwards from the centre of your face. Blend across your forehead, down your nose and chin, then blend into your jawline and neck. Finish by applying a dab of moisturiser around your hairline to blend the self-tan into your hair, then wipe over your brows with a cotton bud to take away any product caught in the hairs.”

• Appointments with James Harknett at the W Hotel in London W1 cost from £40 to £55; visit jamesharknett.co.uk.

NO SUN REQUIRED...

We've selected our favourite fake tanners so you can get that perfect beachy glow. Select one suitable for your skin type and follow James's how-to guide for a stress-free and, most importantly, streak-free tan this summer



1. Clarins Instant Smooth Self Tanning, £19, a soft-focus facial mousse that builds a gradual tan over time
2. Estée Lauder Bronze Goddess Golden Perfection Self-Tanning Lotion for Face, £23
3. James Read BB Gradual Tan For Face in Medium, £20.50, available from Marks and Spencer
4. St Tropez Self Tan Bronzing Mousse, £20.43, is a bestseller – and for good reason as it offers great natural colour
5. L'Oréal Paris Sublime Bronze Express Pro spray in Medium, £15.49
6. bareMinerals Faux Tan Face, £18
7. Lancaster Sun Self Tan Beauty Comfort Cream Face from feelunique.com & Body in A Week in Ibiza, £17, available in Selfridges stores
8. Rimmel London Sun Shimmer Instant Tan Gradual Glow Medium Matte, £6.99 from Tesco, gives instant colour in a flattering matt finish, then develops to a deeper tan over time
9. Garnier Ambre Solaire No Streaks Bronzer Dry Body Mist, £7.79 from Boots
10. Sienna X Dark Glowing Self Tan, £23.95, is James's choice for that super-sexy, deep LA tan; visit feelunique.com