

CAROLINE  
HIRONS. #

skin

care

THE ULTIMATE NO-NONSENSE GUIDE

# Skincare

## Caroline Hirons



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This book is dedicated to my  
mum and nana.

## **NOTE TO READERS**

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# INTRODUCTION

I feel like I grew up in the industry. It's literally in my blood.

Some of my earliest memories are of my grandmother religiously removing her makeup before bed. It was as hypnotising as it was methodical. Eyes first, in her bedroom mirror, then a full facial cleanse at the bathroom sink. The message was always the same: take care of your skin. It was non-negotiable. That message was passed down to my mum, who in turn made sure I heard it loud and clear. The first time I asked if I could buy some makeup, Mum said, 'Yes, once you've shown me you can take care of your skin.' That seemed a fair deal to get my hands on my first pot of Bourjois blush.

My nana started working on beauty counters in Liverpool in the 1960s, for Coty, then for Guerlain. We would go and meet her for lunch and the counter girls always looked immaculate, with their crisp uniforms, perfect makeup and styled hair. And they smelled amazing. My mum Cathy followed in her mother's footsteps, working for Coty as a teenager and going on to work for Helena Rubinstein in the 80s. As a teenager, I tried everything from white lipstick to blue eyeshadow, and Mum never batted an eyelid (though the black crimped hair and pale lipstick did make her look twice) – all she said was, 'Make sure you wash that off properly.'

It hadn't occurred to me to work in beauty until I'd had my first two children. I needed a part-time job and called my friend Lorraine, who at the time was working on the Aveda counter in Harvey Nichols. She'd always been the mate that I'd follow around London to buy my Clarins (I used Clarins pretty much throughout my late teens and early 20s). As it turned out, Aveda had a vacancy for a Saturday/Sunday salesperson. I went for the interview, got the job and never looked back. I realised on day two that not only was I good at the job, but that I loved it: I loved the interaction with customers, the banter on the shop floor, and the general retail environment. On reflection, I think I felt like I was also keeping up the family tradition. I discovered that I had a particular affinity with the skincare section. It made sense to me.

One of my first staff training sessions sealed the deal: some of the tips and techniques that the trainer mentioned I still use to this day.

As much as I loved the shop floor, I knew I wanted to take my passion for skincare further. The Aveda counter had a beauty room attached to it and we were all trained in mini-treatments. I found I was trying to spend all of my time in the treatment rooms; it added another dimension to skincare that I found more interesting, to see it in action on someone's skin. I knew I wanted to qualify as a beauty therapist and that I had to go to the best training school available, with the highest qualification. I've always been annoyingly Type A.

I started working for Space NK in London and knew 100 per cent that skincare was my thing.

And thanks to sitting through brand training sessions that would be either brilliantly informative or 'kill me now' dull, I learned how to talk to people if you want them to listen.

After doing my research and finding out what courses were available, I signed up to the prestigious Steiner Beauty School in Central London. They offered the best courses for me at the time, as they ran night classes, which meant I could keep working in the job I loved (and needed). I went to work as normal, then on Monday and Tuesday evenings I would go straight to class at Steiner, knocking up regular 50+-hour weeks while still being a wife and mother.

Steiner was brilliant. It had floral divider curtains, pink waffle blankets, a hideous uniform, and a picture of the Queen in the main training room, which was the first thing you saw when you walked in – it always cracked me up.

It was so old-fashioned, but the training – intense and in-depth – was excellent. They did not play: they were really strict and no-nonsense, and I loved it. I knew I had made the right choice. It took me longer to graduate than planned, as I had another two children while I was training. I would train as long as I could to clock up the required hours, go off and have a kid, then return to work full-time and head back to Steiner in the evenings, until I got the certificate that, without a doubt, sealed the direction that my career would eventually go in. It was hard, but when you're obsessed with what

you're doing, and have an end goal, and support, it's fun. It also helps if your parents instilled a borderline-psychotic work ethic in you, which mine did. Thankfully.

I left Space NK and went on to work for Chantecaille and Liz Earle (among others), and at one point even did a stint at my beloved Clarins. The training was great – the uniform, not so much.

Eventually realising that I was a square peg in a round corporate hole, I started my own consultation business in 2009. My (at the time undiagnosed) ADHD would frequently land me in hot water as an employee, but as an independent consultant I was paid to tell brands what they needed to hear, not what they wanted to hear. As my husband once said, 'Who would have thought that being gobby and opinionated would become a career?'

When I started my blog in 2010, no one was really talking about skincare, and if they did, it was only to mention a new product release. The focus was on makeup and nails. My blog stood out. I could never have planned how successful it would become – you can't 'make' something go viral.

I quickly gained a trusted audience by saying things like: 'Actually, I wouldn't advise that. Don't do that. Do this.' 'Don't put that on your face.' 'Wipes are horrible.' And so on. My followers are incredible, and insane about skincare. I couldn't do this without them.

The blog has now had over 120 million page views and has opened up a whole new world for me.

Through my Skincare Freaks Facebook group, I've seen every fad, heard every myth, and witnessed with my own eyes what works and what doesn't.

I've handled thousands of faces and tested so many products, and I'm lucky enough to count leading cosmetic scientists, the best dermatologists, expert doctors and especially my fellow aestheticians, as friends.

*Skincare* covers all issues for all ages, ethnicities, budgets, skin tones and skin types, from your daily routine to spots to dryness, and how to care

for your skin when you're ill. You'll find tips to help you deal with pigmentation, dehydration, and lines and wrinkles, too.

I've taken everything I've learned from my years in the industry and my time on the blog to help you navigate the world of skincare simply and succinctly, tell you what you need and what you don't, and where not to waste your time and energy.

If I rave about a product or an ingredient, it's because I know it genuinely works.

Equally, if I tell something to get in the sea and get lost, it's because I know it's a waste of your hard-earned cash. If you already follow me, you'll be aware that I never kiss or blow smoke up anyone's arse – I haven't done it before and I'm not about to start now. And if you're new, come and join us.

Thank you so much for reading. Skin Rocks™



A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink. The signature is cursive and appears to read 'Caroline'. It features large, rounded loops and a fluid, connected script.