



KIT GUIDE · LIPS & EYES

Get a full face from one palette and three crayons

For anyone who buys colour often and wants less waste in the drawer. After reading, you will be able to read any palette for balance, stretch it across eyes, brows and cheeks, and pack it for travel.

- **Read first**
Weight in grams tells you more than pan count.
- **Matte shimmer**
Matte shapes, shimmer catches light.
- **Fingers brushes**
Press cream with fingers, diffuse powder with brushes.

By Kendra Pruitt · Updated Sep 8, 2026 · 9 min read

CONTENTS

01	Read a palette before you buy it	05	Layer sheer colour that lasts
02	Get the matte to shimmer balance right	06	Pack a small backstage style travel kit
03	Make one palette do eyes, brows, liner and cheeks	07	The checklist
04	Choose fingers or brush for the finish you want	08	Sources and further reading

You stand at the counter with three palettes open and they all look different until you swatch them. Then the mid brown repeats, the shimmer repeats, and the shade you wanted for travel is missing again. Once you can read matte to shimmer balance and net weight, one good palette starts to cover lids, brows, liner and cheeks.

01

Read a palette before you buy it

Start with light, mid tone and deep. A versatile palette holds at least one transition shade to blend the edges, a deeper colour for the outer corner and a light shade for the lid or inner corner. If those three jobs are missing, the palette will ask you to bring a second palette, which defeats the point.

Count finishes as well as colours. Most balanced eye looks use matte through the crease and outer corner, then shimmer on the mobile lid. An 18 pan example with 12 matte shades and 6 shimmer shades shows that split in practice, with enough matte to shape and enough shimmer to add light without taking over. Matte creates shape and visual depth without reflecting light and suits the crease, outer corner and lash line. Shimmer reflects light and suits the mobile lid, centre of lid or inner corner.

Check total net weight as well as pan count. A 2 in 1 eye and cheek palette at 14 g holds far more product than quads at 4 g, even if the quad looks neat. Weight tells you how much powder or cream you actually take home, while pan count tells you only how it was divided.

Check for duplicates before you pay. Temptalia offers a Compare Any Two Palettes tool and a Dupe List to check if shades between two palettes are known dupes and to avoid buying the same shade twice. Use it in the aisle or at home with the palettes you already own. Retail talk calls this avoiding shade overlap, and artists call it a kit audit. Either way, the habit saves money and drawer space.

The evidence here is practical rather than complete. No retail numbers show which palettes sell through or get returned most, and placement guidance does not replace skin tone and undertone matching. Swatch on your own skin, in daylight if you can, and keep the receipt for anything sold as universal.

02

Get the matte to shimmer balance right

Think of matte as structure and shimmer as light. Use matte through the crease, outer corner and lash line for shape. Use shimmer on the mobile lid and inner corner for lift. That division keeps the eye readable at a distance and pretty up close, which is why it turns up in kit after kit.

Keep one shimmer in charge

One shimmer dominant is usually enough for daytime. Metallic or gold to the inner eye corner will brighten without needing a second sparkle on top. If you add shimmer to the centre of the lid as well, keep the texture pressed rather than swept so the edge stays clean.

Press shimmer, sweep matte

Application changes the finish. A fluffy blending brush scatters particles loosely for soft edges, which suits matte through the crease. A dense flat brush packs shimmer with focus, which suits the mobile lid. Tapping off excess pigment before application prevents fallout and uneven texture, especially with powder shimmer that can flake.

Powders can flake and cause fallout, so order matters. Lay down matte first, blend the edges, then press shimmer where you want reflection. That way fallout lands on bare skin or base you can still tidy, not on a finished shimmer.

FROM THE EDITORS

Fallout means loose powder that drops under the eye during application. Sell-through means the share of stock that actually sells. Both terms come up on the shop floor, and both help you judge whether a palette is working hard enough.

03

Make one palette do eyes, brows, liner and cheeks

A palette earns its place when shades cross categories. Eyeshadow can fill brows when the hue matches brow colour, applied with a stiff angled brush then blended soft. Choose a matte that matches rather than a shimmer, and blend until no hard edge shows. The brow should look filled, not drawn.

Eyeshadow swept along the lash line with an angled brush works as liner, with a dampened brush giving more intense results. Press a deeper matte along the upper lash line and smudge gently outward for a soft line. Dampen the angled brush for evening or for lower lash definition, since water increases payoff without adding a new product.

Cheeks take more care because eyeshadows are often more pigmented than blushes. A small amount of satin or matte eyeshadow can be used as blush because of that pigment load. Start with less than you think you need, tap off the brush, and build in thin layers. Eyeshadow a couple of shades darker than skin tone can be applied under cheekbones as contour and blended with a fluffy brush. Blend upward toward the hairline rather than downward toward the mouth.

For highlight, shimmering nude brown eyeshadow can be applied to cheekbones and nose bridge as highlighter. Keep the layer sheer and press rather than sweep, since sweeping can move base underneath. Metallic or gold tones also work at the inner eye corner to brighten, which ties the face together without a separate highlighter compact.

Lips can join in when the texture allows. Nude eyeshadow over concealer on lips can give a nude lip effect, and shimmery white shadow pressed to the centre over lipstick can make lips look fuller. Use a light hand and a clean finger or brush, and treat powder on lips as a sheer veil rather than full coverage.

The caution here is about intensity. High pigmentation can be harder to blend for beginners than a buildable sheer formula. Sheer layering gives more control across brows, cheeks and liner, even if it takes one extra pass.

04

Choose fingers or brush for the finish you want

Fingers and brushes do different jobs, and knowing which to reach for changes payoff more than buying another shade. Fingers press pigment directly for denser colour and a more reflective finish, while brushes lift and diffuse powder for thin even layers. In trade terms, payoff means how much colour shows on skin in one pass.

Use fingers to warm and press cream and shimmer for stronger payoff. Fingertip warmth around 93F or 34C softens cream binders so pigment spreads smoothly, while powder shadows change little with warmth. That is why cream eyeshadow sticks feel easier with fingers. Cream eyeshadow sticks deliver vibrant colour in one swipe with minimal product, while sheer powders may need multiple layers. Cream sticks glide without pulling and dry to a crease resistant finish.

Use brushes to diffuse powder and blend matte edges. A fluffy brush keeps the crease soft. A dense flat brush packs shimmer where light should sit. A stiff angled brush gives brows and liner the precision fingers cannot. Finger warmth helps cream and shimmer melt and look brighter, but fingers give less precision for crease or liner work, so switch tools when the edge matters.

Dampen an angled brush for stronger liner payoff, then tap off excess to limit fallout. Tapping sounds fussy and takes two seconds. It keeps powder from dropping onto cheeks and keeps cream from going on too thick at the lash line.

FROM THE EDITORS

Wear time claims depend on lids, humidity, sebum, prep and technique, so long wearing labels alone are not reliable. Primer, thin layers and setting where skin runs oily matter more than the promise on the carton.

05

Layer sheer colour that lasts

Sheer layers look more modern than one thick coat and they tend to wear better. Creams are highly blendable and can be applied very sheerly or built for stronger impact while keeping a softer contour. Start with a neutral matte base close to skin tone, blend it through the crease, then add colour only where it counts. Thin coats grip better and crease less than a single heavy layer.

Cream sticks give one swipe intensity while powders may need multiple layers and primer for similar intensity. If you prefer powder, accept the extra pass. Build gradually, press shimmer last, and let each layer settle before adding the next. For glitter or very reflective shimmer, use primer or a tacky base underneath so particles have something to hold.

A hybrid routine uses cream to sculpt then sets only oil prone areas such as the T zone with finely milled powder. The same logic works for eyes and cheeks. Set cream on lids lightly if lids turn oily by midday. Leave cheeks dewy if skin is dry, and set only where makeup moves. Setting everything with powder can dull the shimmer you just placed with care.

Prep still decides the result. Clean skin, a thin base where needed, and blotting papers later will do more for longevity than piling on product in the morning. Technique matters here, but available method detail gives no controlled wear test data for cream versus powder. Treat wear as personal and test on your own lids and climate.

06

Pack a small backstage style travel kit

Backstage kits stay small because every product does two jobs and every brush earns its space. A compact travel eye choice should have a base colour, a crease colour and a lid colour and packaging that is not bulky. That trio covers a day look and an evening shift with liner added. Add one shimmer nude that can double as highlighter and inner corner brightener, and you have cheeks covered as well.

Multi use sticks lead the kit because they skip extra tools. Dual ended brushes save space for travel, with multi use sticks that can be applied with fingers to skip extra brushes. Pack one dual ended brush with a fluffy end for blending and a flat or angled end for liner and brows. A second small fluffy brush helps if you prefer powder blush or contour, but fingers can handle most cream cheeks.

Keep the base simple. Tinted sunscreen as a base evens tone without a separate foundation bottle. Wipes for removal handle mistakes and end of day cleansing when a full routine is not practical. Restock and keep the bag ready so travel does not become a repack from scratch each time.

Before zipping the bag, run the duplicate check again. If two sticks or pans do the same mid brown matte, keep the one with better blend and leave the other home. If a shade never touches skin in a normal week, it does not earn travel weight. The goal is a full face from few products, not a full drawer in miniature.

07

The checklist

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- ☐ Pick transition, outer corner depth and lid light in one palette
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- ☐ Weigh grams as well as pan count before buying
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- ☐ Run Compare Any Two Palettes before a new purchase
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- ☐ Shape crease and lash line with matte first
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- ☐ Press one shimmer on mobile lid or inner corner
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- ☐ Tap off brush to limit fallout
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- ☐ Line lashes with deeper matte, damp brush for night
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- ☐ Match brow powder to brow hair, blend soft
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- ☐ Use tiny amounts of satin matte as blush
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- ☐ Press shimmer nude as highlighter
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- ☐ Warm cream with fingers, blend powder with brushes
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- ☐ Build sheer layers, set only oily areas
-
- ☐ Pack base plus crease plus lid, dual ended brush
-
- ☐ Keep tinted sunscreen and wipes in the bag
-

08

Sources and further reading

- How to Use Makeup Palettes · lorealparisusa.com
- Cream vs Powder Contour: Differences, Benefits & How to Choose the Right Sculpting Products for Your Skin Kryolan · global.kryolan.com
- Is It Better to Apply Eyeshadow with a Brush or Fingers? · colocara.com
- Matte and Shimmer Eyeshadow: How to Choose · shyrbeauty.in
- Joybuy · joybuy.fr
- Compare Any Two Makeup Palettes and Find Dupes · temptalia.com

For information only, not medical advice. Shade and wear notes reflect our testers' skin; patch test anything new, and check the full ingredient list if you have allergies or sensitive skin.



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Kendra produces the founder interviews at Gloss Report: the research, the question lists, the follow-ups. She spent five seasons assisting session artists backstage in New York, so her first question is usually about wear time under hot lights.
