



Ingredient Education

Understand What's Inside

Choose What Works

A PRACTICAL INGREDIENT GUIDE

Learn What Your Hair Products
Are Made to Do



Ingredient Education

Learn ingredient families instead of memorizing thousands of names.

How to Read a Product Ingredient List

Ingredients are generally listed from the highest amount to the lowest amount.

Beginning of the List

The first five to seven ingredients usually make up most of the product. They provide the best clues about how the product may work.

Middle of the List

These ingredients help support the formula. They may provide conditioning, softness, moisture, strength or hold.

End of the List

Ingredients near the end are usually included in smaller amounts.

These may include:

- Preservatives
- Fragrance
- Colour
- Essential oils
- Botanical extracts

Some ingredients can still be effective in small amounts.

The 1% Guideline

Ingredients used at more than 1% are generally listed from highest to lowest. Ingredients used at 1% or less may appear in any order.

The label does not show the exact percentage of each ingredient.

Check Featured Ingredients

If a product promotes shea butter, rosemary or castor oil, look for that ingredient on the list. If it appears near the end, the product likely contains a smaller amount.



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A More Practical Way to Read Products

You do not need to memorize every ingredient name to make informed product choices. Start by recognizing the ingredient family and the general role that family may play in a formula.

INGREDIENT FAMILY	GENERAL FUNCTION	COMMON NAMES	PRODUCT EXAMPLE
Surfactants	Clean the scalp and hair	Sodium C14-16 Olefin Sulfonate; Cocamidopropyl Betaine; Decyl Glucoside; Sodium Cocoyl Isethionate	Malibu C Hard Water Wellness Shampoo
Conditioning agents	Improve softness, slip and manageability	Behentrimonium Chloride; Behentrimonium Methosulfate; Cetrimonium Chloride; Stearalkonium Chloride	PATTERN Lightweight Conditioner
Humectants	Attract or help hold water	Glycerin; Propanediol; Butylene Glycol; Honey; Sodium PCA; Sodium Hyaluronate	Mielle Pomegranate & Honey Leave-In Conditioner
Emollients	Smooth and lubricate the surface	Cetearyl Alcohol; Cetyl Alcohol; Caprylic/Capric Triglyceride; Babassu Oil; Avocado Oil	Mielle Pomegranate & Honey Leave-In Conditioner
Occlusives	Reduce water loss and create a barrier	Petrolatum; Mineral Oil; Shea Butter; Beeswax; Dimethicone	PATTERN Heavy Conditioner
Film formers	Provide hold, protection or humidity control	PVP; Polyquaternium-55; Polyquaternium-11; Acrylates Copolymer; VP Copolymers	The Doux Big Poppa Defining Gel
Proteins and amino acids	Temporarily support damaged or weathered hair	Hydrolyzed Collagen; Hydrolyzed Keratin; Hydrolyzed Wheat Protein; Silk Amino Acids; Keratin Amino Acids	ApHogee Two-Step Protein Treatment

Keep in mind: An ingredient can sometimes serve more than one purpose, depending on the formula.

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INGREDIENT FAMILY	GENERAL FUNCTION	COMMON NAMES	PRODUCT EXAMPLES
Chelating agents	Bind to certain mineral or metal deposits	Disodium EDTA; Tetrasodium EDTA; Sodium Gluconate; Phytic Acid; Tetrasodium Glutamate Diacetate	Malibu C Hard Water Wellness Shampoo
Silicones	Improve slip, shine, smoothness and protection	Dimethicone; Amodimethicone; Dimethiconol; Cyclopentasiloxane; Trimethylsiloxymodimethicone	CHI Infra Silk Infusion
Preservatives	Protect water-based products from microbial growth	Phenoxyethanol; Sodium Benzoate; Potassium Sorbate; Benzoic Acid; Benzyl Alcohol	Mielle Pomegranate & Honey Leave-In Conditioner
Fragrance and essential oils	Provide scent but may irritate sensitive users	Fragrance/Parfum; Limonene; Linalool; Citral; Lavender Oil; Citrus Peel Oils	PATTERN Lightweight Conditioner
pH adjusters	Help establish the product's intended pH	Citric Acid; Lactic Acid; Sodium Hydroxide; Potassium Hydroxide; Aminomethyl Propanol	The Doux Big Poppa Defining Gel
Active ingredients	Address a specific regulated scalp or skin concern	Ketoconazole; Salicylic Acid; Selenium Sulfide; Zinc Pyrithione (availability varies by country)	Nizoral A-D Anti-Dandruff Shampoo

A useful first step: Identify the ingredient families that match the product's intended job - cleansing, conditioning, moisturizing, styling, protecting or treating a regulated concern.

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Why the Ingredient List Is Not the Whole Story

An ingredient list can provide useful clues, but it cannot always predict the complete experience. Product performance is influenced by the entire formulation and how the product is used.

INGREDIENT FAMILY	GENERAL FUNCTION
1. Concentration	The amount of an ingredient matters. A small amount may behave differently from a high concentration.
2. Ingredient combination	Ingredients interact with one another. The complete blend may change softness, cleansing strength, hold or feel
3. Formulation method	Processing, ingredient order and product structure can affect how the final formula spreads and performs
4. Application	The amount used, hair condition, technique, water level, layering and environment can all influence the result

Bottom line: Use the ingredient list as one source of information, then evaluate how the complete product performs on the hair and scalp.