ARYEVA

How to read a skincare label in two minutes

For skincare sold in India. Ten checks, front to back.

1. **Read the back first.** The front of the pack is advertising. The back is a declaration, and it follows rules.

2. **No list on the pack?** Packs of 60 ml or 30 g or less don't have to print one (Cosmetics Rules, 2020, Rule 34(7)). The brand's website may have one, but it's information, not a declaration.

3. **Above 1%, most to least.** Ingredients above 1% are listed from the largest amount to the smallest. At 1% or less, they can come in any order.

4. **Find the 1% marker.** Phenoxyethanol, a common preservative, is normally used at 1% or less. Treat everything listed after it as a small amount.

5. **Where is the name ingredient, and in what form?** Zinc PCA isn't zinc oxide. Tea tree extract isn't tea tree oil. Check its position and its exact name.

6. **A % on the front: of what?** One ingredient, a “complex” the brand defines, or several ingredients added together.

7. **Trade names aren't ingredients.** “Phyto-retinol” or a named complex will appear under a different name in the list, or not at all.

8. **Claim words have no fixed legal meaning.** “Oil-free”, “non-comedogenic” and “dermatologically tested” have no standard test in India. Ask what the evidence was.

9. **Fragrance and colour.** Look for parfum or fragrance, named essential oils near the end, and CI numbers, which are colours.

10. **The small print.** Batch number, use-before date, licence number, net contents, MRP and consumer care. The green or brown dot shows vegetarian origin; it appears to be optional on cosmetics since September 2026.

> *What a label can't tell you: exact amounts, pH, how stable the formula is, or whether it will suit your skin.*

Rules checked 12 November 2026. Not legal advice. Free to print and share with a link back.