What you can and can’t say about skincare on Instagram

Skincare can talk about how skin looks and feels. The trouble starts when a post claims more.

Use this rulebook: affilo.app/playbooks/skincare/use
Read it online: affilo.app/playbooks/skincare

A first pass, not legal advice

This playbook sets out the main rules for ads seen in the UK, as we read them on 7 November 2026. It is a starting point for briefing creators, not legal advice. Check your claims with your compliance lead or a lawyer before an ad runs.

Say it’s an ad, up front

`CAP 2 · Influencer guidance`

Paid or on commission, the post is an ad, and people have to know that before they tap or read on.

Don’t say

- My new holy grail serum #gifted
  Flagged by the #ad check · CAP 2
- Using this every night now #spon
  Flagged by the #ad check · CAP 2

Say instead

- #ad My evening routine with this serum
- #ad A month of using this every night

Put #ad at the start of the caption and turn on Instagram’s paid partnership label too. In Stories, label every frame the product is in.

Cosmetic effects only

`CAP 12`

Skincare can claim to change how skin looks and feels. Claims to treat a skin condition make it a medicine.

Don’t say

- This cleared my eczema in two weeks.
  Flagged by this rulebook · CAP 12
- Heals acne scars for good.
  Flagged by this rulebook · CAP 12
- It cures my rosacea.
  Flagged by this rulebook · CAP 12

Say instead

- My skin feels softer after a week.
- It looks less dry by the end of the day.

Ageing: say how it looks, not what it does

CAP 12 · CAP 3

Reduces the look of fine lines is a cosmetic claim that needs evidence. Reverses ageing claims to change the body.

Don’t say

- Reverses ageing.
  Flagged by this rulebook · CAP 12, CAP 3
- Erases wrinkles for good.
  Flagged by this rulebook · CAP 12, CAP 3

Say instead

- My skin looks smoother in the morning.

No filters on the result

CAP 3

A filter or edit that changes how the product’s effect looks is misleading, even a light one.

Watch for

- A beauty filter on the after shot
  For your reviewer · CAP 3
- Before and after photos in different light
  For your reviewer · CAP 3

Instead

- No filter, same light, a week apart

Don’t claim proof you can’t show

CAP 3

Clinically proven, expert recommended and the like need evidence the brand holds before the ad runs, about this product.

Don’t say

- Dermatologist recommended.
  Flagged by this rulebook · CAP 3
- Clinically proven to reduce redness.
  Flagged by the claims check · CAP 3
  Try: Say why you chose it instead: “I wanted one that’s third-party tested.”

Say instead

- I chose it because it’s fragrance free.

No promises about results

CAP 3

Guaranteed, instant or for everyone is likely to mislead. Say what it was like for you.

Don’t say

- Instant results.
  Flagged by the claims check · CAP 3

Try: Say what it’s like for you, not for everyone.

- Works for everyone.
  Flagged by the claims check · CAP 3
  Try: Say what it’s like for you, not for everyone.

Say instead

- Here’s my skin after four weeks.

Made with AI? Say so

CAP 3

AI-made people, results and testimonials need a label wherever a viewer would take them as real.

Watch for

- An AI-made person giving a testimonial, with nothing to say so
  For your reviewer · CAP 3
- A result the product can’t give, made with AI
  For your reviewer · CAP 3

Instead

- Add a short on-screen line: “Made with AI”.

The rulebook

Sign up as a brand and these lines go on every product you add, ready to edit. Creators see them with the brief, and every script is read against them when it comes in for review.

Lines creators may not say

- Cures, treats or heals
- Eczema, psoriasis, rosacea or acne
- Reverses ageing
- Erases wrinkles
- Dermatologist recommended

Lines creators may say

- My skin feels softer

Disclosure #ad

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Sources

CAP Code section 2: recognition of marketing communications
An ad must be obviously identifiable as an ad.
www.asa.org.uk/type/non_broadcast/code_section/02.html

CAP Code section 3: misleading advertising
Evidence for objective claims, testimonials, prices and edited images.
www.asa.org.uk/type/non_broadcast/code_section/03.html

CAP Code section 12: medicines, medical devices, health-related and beauty products
Medical claims, and what beauty and health products may say.
www.asa.org.uk/type/non_broadcast/code_section/12.html

The ASA and CMA guide for influencers on making clear that ads are ads

Where #ad goes, and which labels aren’t enough.

www.asa.org.uk/resource/influencers-guide.html