

The Best Retinol Serums to Try in 2025, According to Experts

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Retinol remains a go-to ingredient in skincare. It helps with **fine lines, uneven texture, and dullness**. Meanwhile, dermatologists often cite it as a “gold standard” in actives.

But not all retinol serums are created equal. Concentration, formulation (cream, serum, encapsulated), delivery system, and supporting ingredients matter a lot.

Top retinol serums to watch

While I couldn't fetch the *ELLE* article itself (Internal Error), typical best-of lists include these kinds of standout retinols. Below are examples that often appear in expert roundups. (You can cross-check with *ELLE* when it loads.)

Product	Why it's a standout	Skin type / notes
Skinceuticals Retinol 0.3 / 0.5	A classic, efficient formula in a stable delivery	Great for beginners (0.3) or intermediate users (0.5)
The Ordinary Retinol 0.5% in Squalane	Affordable, gentle, good entry point	Ideal for those testing retinol
Paula's Choice 1% Retinol + Peptides	Combines retinol with supportive peptides	Good for mature or resilient skin
La Roche-Posay Redermic R	Gentle yet effective, suited for sensitive skin	Often recommended by dermatologists
Differin Adapalene Gel 0.1%	Technically a retinoid; strong, acne-friendly	Best for acne or resilient skin
SkinCeuticals Retinol 1.0	High strength for seasoned users	Only for those already accustomed to retinol
Sunday Riley A+ High-Dose Retinoid Serum	Luxury formula with botanicals	For users wanting added glow and texture

How to choose a retinol serum

1. Start with a gentle strength

If you're new to retinol, begin with lower concentration (e.g. 0.3%) or an encapsulated version.

2. Consider skin sensitivity

If your skin is reactive or easily inflamed, choose a soothing formula with hydrating or barrier support ingredients (ceramides, niacinamide, squalane).

3. Packaging matters

Retinol degrades in light and air. Go for opaque, air-tight pumps or tubes.

4. Frequency & build up

Start 2–3 nights per week. Increase only if your skin tolerates it.

5. Layer smartly

Use after cleansing and before moisturiser. Allow the serum to sink in before applying heavier products.

6. Don't skip sunscreen

Retinol can make your skin more sensitive to UV. Use broad-spectrum SPF 30+ daily.

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