THE FOUNDER’S DESK

The Appointment Before the Routine

What to bring to a first visit and what you should be able to explain when you leave.



The consultation begins at your bathroom shelf

An appointment often starts with the products already on the shelf. The cleanser you use twice a day and the mask you reach for only before a night out are both worth mentioning. Bring a phone photo of the labels and say what you actually do on a busy day. That version of the routine is the one a recommendation has to fit.

Talk about what has changed, too. When did skin start feeling tight or looking dull? What had you added or stopped? What treatments have you had recently? The most useful details are often ordinary. A calendar and a few photos can make it easier to remember them.

Ask for a sequence you can repeat

A skincare routine becomes workable when you can put the steps in order without needing elaborate instructions. Ask which step your esthetician would prioritize and how you’ll know whether it feels comfortable. If you are already using a prescription, share it so the appointment can take it into account. Discuss prescription changes with the clinician who prescribed it.

Write the cosmetic steps down in your own words. If the plan takes more time than you usually have, say so while you are still in the treatment room. Ask which steps are flexible and what to revisit at the next appointment.

Make your appointment goal specific

“I want better skin” makes sense as a starting point. It gets more useful when you describe the experience you want to change. Perhaps your makeup catches on rough areas, or your cheeks feel tight after washing. If you’re coming in before an occasion, explain when it is and what you’d like to feel comfortable doing afterward. A photograph can help communicate a preference when the result you imagine is hard to describe.

Bring the unedited account of your routine. Include the step you skip, the product you use only when you remember, and the prescription you take under a clinician’s guidance. Share past appointments that were comfortable and the ones you would hesitate to repeat. These details help the team discuss an appointment that fits your habits.

Bring a better question next time

At a follow-up, describe what you used consistently and how your skin felt. A routine you managed four days a week tells you something about the routine and your schedule. If a product felt unpleasant enough that it stayed in its box, that is worth saying. The next plan should reflect the way you actually live.

To prepare for your first visit, choose the appointment that seems closest to your goal, then tell the studio what you hope to get from the time you booked. Let the team know if you have an event, a travel date, or sensitivities you want to discuss.

Leave with a plan you can try

Before you leave, ask what to keep doing that evening and what to revisit later. If the studio suggests a new product, ask where it belongs in the order you use things. If a follow-up is discussed, ask what you would be checking by then. A useful recommendation gives you something to observe before your next visit.

There is a practical way to test whether the plan made sense. Explain it to yourself as if you were getting ready tomorrow morning. Where is the product? How much time do you have? What would you do if it feels uncomfortable? If the answer is unclear, ask for a short written summary. The best appointment conversation should stay intelligible after the treatment room door closes.

Further reading

American Academy of Dermatology — selecting skin care products

Meet Edyta Maselbas