



SENSORY EFFECT

It used to be assumed that if a product used essential oils instead of chemical fragrance, sensitive skin wouldn't break out with redness or spots. Times have changed. 'Even if it is natural, essential oils still impart scent through a volatile reaction, which can sensitise skin,' says Paula Begoun, founder of Paula's Choice skincare, whose new gentle exfoliator, The Unscrub, £25, contains no added fragrances. Similarly, Tiffany Masterson has included essential oils in her 'suspicious six' – a hit list of ingredients you'll never find in her Drunk Elephant products. Instead, marula oil, which has remarkable skin benefits, features in the reworked Lala Retro Whipped Cream, £50, and just happens to have a pleasantly nutty non-irritating scent. Another way to think of fragrance-free medicinal-smelling products, like Skinceuticals' Discoloration Defense Serum, £85, is that they are so high-tech, they don't need all the bells and whistles.

NEW-GEN FORMULAS

The basic deal is this: if a product doesn't have a good delivery system, the active ingredients won't penetrate beyond the surface layer. While retinol and AHAs (alpha hydroxy acids) may sound like the ultimate weapon against everything from acne to ageing, so far using them together has led to redness, peeling and sensitivity. But now cult US brand Skinbetter Science has joined retinol and lactic acid in a skin-friendly molecule called AlphaRet. This molecule is added to a formula with glycolic acid, which gradually breaks down within the skin – so you ward off the appearance of fine lines minus irritation when you use the AlphaRet Overnight Cream, £166. Also, Elemis has created a water-in-oil formula for its new Superfood Cica Calm Booster, £27. 'This enables it to be concentrated like a serum but nourish like an oil,' says co-founder Noella Gabriel. 'It also means that the cica, fermented agave, rice water and green tea oil are delivered deeper as oils are lipophilic and pass through the skin.' ■