

Making Lotion

A beginner's guide to the emulsion

What Is a Lotion?

A lotion is an **emulsion** — a blend of water and oil, two things that don't naturally mix, held together by an **emulsifier**. How your lotion feels comes down to two main choices.

How much water

More water makes a lighter, more fluid lotion.
Less water makes it thicker.

Whether you use a butter

Butters make a lotion richer, firmer, and more protective on the skin.

The Three Phases

1

Water Phase

Your water-based ingredients, warmed on their own.

2

Oil Phase *(with optional butter)*

Your oils, your emulsifier, and any butter, warmed on their own. While both the water phase and oil phase are still warm, you combine them — this is where the emulsion forms.

3

Cool-Down Phase

Once the lotion has cooled a little, you add your heat-sensitive ingredients here — things like your preservative and your essential oils.

Making It Your Own

Small choices change how your lotion feels, how it absorbs, and how it cares for the skin. Here are some ways to make yours unique.

Humectants · glycerin, honey

Ingredients that pull moisture into the skin and hold it there, giving a soft, dewy, hydrated feel. If you've worked with honey or glycerin before, you already know a humectant — think of them as moisture magnets.

Surfactants · castile soap, decyl glucoside, soapwort

The name comes from *surface acting*. These help things spread, mix, or gently cleanse, and a little changes how a lotion glides onto the skin. Herbalist-friendly examples include castile soap, decyl glucoside (made from coconut and corn), or saponin-rich plants like soapwort and yucca. If you've ever made a soapwort wash, you've already worked with one.

Water Phase Choices · hydrosol, tea

Using a hydrosol or tea in place of plain water brings the plant's properties and a subtle natural scent into your lotion.

Oils

Your choice of oils shifts how rich the lotion feels and how quickly it absorbs. Keep it simple — any skin-friendly oil works.

Waxes · jojoba

Add structure, protection, and a slightly firmer finish.

Butters · mango, cocoa

Add thickness, richness, and a protective barrier.

Essential Oil Blend

Adjust how much you add depending on the strength of your oils and the purpose of your blend. A little goes a long way.

Formulation Worksheet

up to **100 percent** total.

Water Phase	PERCENT
Total Water Phase	

Oil Phase — emulsifier + optional butter	PERCENT
Total Oil Phase	

Scenario	Cool-Down Phase (%)
Scenario 1: No Cooling	~45%
Scenario 2: Cooling with 100% Efficiency	~65%
Scenario 3: Cooling with 50% Efficiency	~85%

Grand Total
Should equal 100 percent

Notes