

## REVIEW Solar Panel

Battling California rays at 11,053 feet, the Mammoth Mountain Ski Patrol puts sun protection to the test. By Greg Melville

**FEW THINGS ARE LESS COOL THAN** returning from vacation with a raccoon face. Deciding which sun-protection products are worth the slather, however, is no simple undertaking. So SKI persuaded the ski patrol at Mammoth Mountain, Calif., to do it for you. The patrollers tested seven top products, judging each by its ease of application, feel and endurance. The categories were rated on a scale of 1 ("I'd rather fry") to 5 ("Sun-sational").

### NEUTROGENA Active Breathable Sunblock

SPF 45 Active Breathable Sunblock looks, feels and smells like a skin moisturizer (it's made by a cosmetics company, after all) but protects you from the whole spectrum of UV rays. It gets its grease-free consistency from silica powder, an ingredient that absorbs oil. The only gripe from our testers is that it needs to be reapplied after a few hours if you're really working up a sweat.



**Application 5**  
**Feel 4**  
**Endurance 2.5**  
**Tester Take** "Quick application, without the need to heavily rub into the skin."  
—Joe Han  
**Price \$10** for a four-ounce bottle  
[neutrogena.com](http://neutrogena.com)

### COPPERTONE Endless Summer Ultrasheer Sunscreen Stick

Because it comes in a slim twist-up stick, the SPF 30 Endless Summer Ultrasheer doesn't hog pocket space or leak. It's also oil-free, so it doesn't tend to clog pores. Application may take a few seconds longer than a lotion you can slap on your face, but as a bonus, you can put it on without removing your gloves. Protection-wise, it's tough to beat: It contains zinc oxide, and one coat lasted testers all day.



**Application 4.5**  
**Feel 5**  
**Endurance 5**  
**Tester Take** "The twist-up stick was fantastic. Like a wonderful big tube of lipstick—but I shouldn't tell you all of this because I'm a burly ski patrol man!"  
—Eric Weishuhn  
**Price \$6** for a three-ounce stick  
[coppertone.com](http://coppertone.com)

### ROCKY MOUNTAIN Titanium Dioxide Formula Sunscreen

Attention, paleface: If you want to preserve your fish-belly hue at all costs, put on SPF 50+ Titanium Dioxide Formula. This odorless sunscreen is made for high altitudes and goes on thick (until it's rubbed in), but it won't wash away, because while many sunscreens are film-based, meaning they coat your skin to protect it, this one actually bonds to your hide.



**Application 2**  
**Feel 2.5**  
**Endurance 5**  
**Tester Take** "A more secure lid would be a plus."  
—Alex Clayton  
**Price \$4** for a two-ounce bottle  
[rmsunscreens.com](http://rmsunscreens.com)

### PROTECH Moisturizing Sunscreen SPF 30 Plus

Some sunscreens clog your pores like shortening. Not ProTech's Moisturizing Sunscreen, which contains avobenzone (see "Sun Smarts," below). Nearly scent-free and grease-free, it goes on smoothly and vanishes quickly. Testers found it more effective if a second coat was applied halfway through the day. One warning: Don't apply it near your eyes. When it mixes with sweat, it's a serious tear-jerker.



**Application 4**  
**Feel 5**  
**Endurance 3**  
**Tester Take** "Most impressively, it doesn't leave a greasy palm film."  
—Zoe Amos  
**Price \$32** for a three-ounce bottle  
[protechskincare.com](http://protechskincare.com)

### ALOE GATOR SPF 40+ Gel

The good news about the Aloe Gator SPF 40+ Gel sunblock is that one application lasts the entire day, no matter how much you sweat or how soggy the conditions (it received the highest waterproof ratings of any of the products tested). The not-so-good news is that it has the consistency of petroleum jelly until it's massaged into your skin, and it leaves a slightly greasy residue, slime aside. This is a worthy, scent-free alternative to other, thicker sunblocks.



**Application 3.5**  
**Feel 2**  
**Endurance 5**  
**Tester Take** "The product did not rub in right away, but it did the job as a sunblock."  
—Bobby Hoyt  
**Price \$10** for a four-ounce tube  
[aloe-gator-suncare.com](http://aloe-gator-suncare.com)

### DERMATONE Z-Cote Lips 'n Face Protection Creme

Z-Cote gives you the sunblocking benefits of zinc oxide without making you look like a circus clown. With some vigorous rubbing, this SPF 30 cream vanishes into your skin—and it'll hold up on the slopes longer than your legs will. Plus, it's a water-free moisturizer, which means it helps prevent chapping and windburn. Although it's touted as "fragrance free," it has a sweet, fruity smell—which isn't so bad.



**Application 3.5**  
**Feel 3**  
**Endurance 4.5**  
**Tester Take** "Very smooth, but it takes awhile to massage in."  
—Chad Caldwell  
**Price \$4.75** for a half-ounce tin  
[dermatone.com](http://dermatone.com)

## SUN SMARTS

**What's the difference between sunscreen and sunblock?**

A sunblock deflects the sun's rays, thanks to ingredients like zinc oxide and titanium dioxide. It's often oilier than sunscreen, more time-consuming to apply and sometimes doesn't fully vanish into the skin. A sunscreen filters the sun's rays, minimizing their effects. It's usually invisible after application but sometimes needs to be reapplied throughout the day because it can wash off more easily than a thicker sunblock.

**Which product will best protect my skin?**

Consumers often choose sun products based on their SPF, which stands for Sun Protection Factor. The theory goes that the higher the number, the longer it will take for you to burn. So if you're wearing an SPF 15, it should take you 15 times longer to get a sunburn than it would if you wore no sunscreen at all, while an SPF 30 would protect you for 30 times as long. Starting Jan. 1, 2005, the Food and Drug Administration will not allow any sun product to be labeled higher than a "30+" because the additional protection benefits of an SPF higher than 30 are negligible.

However, SPF is only part of the protection story. It measures how well a product works against UVB rays, which are the primary sunburn culprit. But it doesn't address how well a product battles UVA rays, which are thought to be the main cause of the more aggressive forms of skin cancer. There is currently no standard to measure UVA protection.

To further complicate matters, there are two kinds of UVA rays: long-wave and short-wave. Most sun-protection products today only shield you from UVB and short-wave UVA rays, though the long-wave rays are the most damaging. For protection from long-wave UVA rays, look for products containing either zinc oxide or avobenzone.