

## Make-Up – It’s Easier Than You Think

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What is it about clowns that separate them from just about every other profession? More than everything else, it’s their artistic application of bright and colorful make-up. Oh sure, clowns wear silly clothes and their hair is usually different. Clowns wear big, floppy shoes and most clowns have a big, red nose. But clowns who have worked diligently at their craft are virtually known for their memorable face and their trademark almost always is their make-up.

There are many manufacturers of excellent quality make-up on the market today. Buying the make-up is just one part of the process for clowns. Before buying, however, one must determine which brand or brands are the best for you. Here are a few of the more popular make-up companies from which to consider: Ben Nye, Mehron, Jim Howle, Stein’s, Kryolan, ProFACE, StarBlend, Celebre and Snazaroo. If you’re interested in finding others from which to choose, simply do a search online or visit your neighborhood make-up suppliers or theatrical supplies locations. Please, try to remember that what works for one person may not work the same way for the next person. Each of us has a unique skin type and make-up will perform differently on different people. We certainly have an array of tone, smoothness, color, texture, oiliness, dryness, and etcetera. Consequently, when make-up is applied, there is a remarkable variety of results.

When I am asked various make-up questions, my answers are pretty consistent – take your time and try out as many brands as you can find, borrowing from friends or simply purchasing the smallest containers (to keep expenses at a minimum.) When you find the brands that look the most professional, last the longest and feel best, you’ll be on the right track. Nothing teaches you more about make-up than first-hand experience. Therefore, you’ll automatically be working on the most important part – PRACTICING.

When you choose the make-up that works best for you, you’re ready. What are you ready for? Now, you’re ready to get ready. This is another important step that is overlooked by many. Those who take their make-up process seriously will almost always follow a systematic process. Preparation is usually very high on their list. So, for now, I’ll call this **“the prep-up.”**

Here’s one process that works for me. It’s a method I’ve used for years and I begin with a good night’s sleep. When I’m going to be clowning at an event, I think about how I’m proud to be a Shrine Clown. I believe it to be a privilege to follow in the footsteps of so many who have come before me, who helped build our reputations in clowning. So, with plenty of rest, I’m geared up to give my best. I wake up early, shower, shave, and have something to eat. I brush my teeth and put on some appropriate music, getting myself in a good frame of mind. I’m aware that I’ll be in character for the duration of my planned event and therefore, I usually don’t listen to the news or things like that. I’ll likely put on some relaxing music and begin.

I decide which character I’ll become before I start, because I have performed as Whiteface, Auguste, Hobo/Tramp and Character categories over the years, although only one at a time. (Ha, ha. I also try to amuse myself when I can. This can be helpful in clowning.) The next thing I begin is **“the set-up.”**

Getting started with make-up requires an area to put on my face. I know that I’m most comfortable sitting down in front of a nice size mirror at a table or countertop and the lighting should be bright enough to see everything easily. (Setting up with even lighting is very important so give this detail some thorough consideration.) I’ll lay out my supplies which will include the various colors of greasepaint and/or pancake make-up along with the brushes, sponges, grease pencils, mascara, liquid liner, Q-Tips, glitter, paper towels, cloth towels, baby oil and baby powder. I’ll also have a cup of water to use with my sponges. Lastly,

depending on which wig I'll be wearing, I have a brush or comb to ensure it's in great shape and ready for use.

Now, I'm ready to begin with **“the make-up.”** For my purpose here, this article will share some basic thoughts about the make-up suggestions from my perspective. I prefer to keep things simple. And, I think that in many cases, less is more. In other words, I prefer simpler make-up designs more than designs which require skilled artistry. I prefer mouths and eyebrows that move with various facial expressions. I also prefer some kind of simple make-up placed on the cheeks of a whiteface to enhance those expressions as well as to enhance that all-white face. I also like a little glitter on a whiteface – but not too much. I prefer the muzzle on an auguste to also move. Years ago, my training on clown make-up referred to this movement as a “working face.” I prefer the white mouth of a hobo/tramp to be able to move enough to enhance the expressions or moods being portrayed. I prefer a smaller red mouth on a whiteface and a larger red mouth on an auguste. Similarly, I prefer a larger red nose on an auguste and a smaller red nose on a whiteface. Lastly, I never allow for bare skin to be seen on my whiteface or auguste, but my hobo/tramp might show bare skin in places where the costume is tattered or ripped. However, some strategically placed make-up in these few places will certainly enhance the look, perhaps even moving a competitor up a notch in the mind of an observant judge. An extra such as this might make the difference between placing and winning a competition.

Keep in mind here that these are my preferences and not necessarily the same as others. When clowns are performing, it's likely that their personalities will show through their make-up. It's unlikely that their audience will ever say that the make-up is flawed. But in competitions, you are likely to be examined and judged by clowns who make decisions based on their own traditions and experiences. Therefore, whether you will be performing for fun and profit or for competition, it is imperative that you prepare by knowing and understanding who your audience will be and giving them what want.

You might come up right away with a design that works perfectly for you. Or, it might take years to come up with a make-up design that you will finally be happy with and content. I remember tweaking my make-up designs continually for about 3 years each, making alterations every time I put on my faces until I was happy with the looks. I'm confident that you will find the design and look that is right for you by a little effort and lots of practice. Ask your clown friends and brother joeys to critique your efforts and to make suggestions. Watch others to help you get ideas about make-up and ask questions to learn about the clowning profession. Then, when you've gone through the “prep-up,” done the “set-up” and worked on the “make-up,” all you'll have left to do is **“the show-up.”** Get yourself out there and do your thing for the kids.

So, here's a routine that works for me which is simple to follow and it covers the basics. Very simply, you start with the **prep-up** and the **set-up**, then you apply the **make-up**. When you're done, just **show up**.  
There you are. Make-up - it's easier than you think.

Most importantly, have fun and keep smiling....