⚡ PowerSkin Manual

Natural skin smoothing and blemish reduction for Final Cut Pro.

Installation

1. Double-click the PowerSkin installer (`PowerSkin-1.4.3.pkg`) and follow it (administrator password required).
2. The installer places the PowerSkin app in `Applications` and the effect template in your `Movies › Motion Templates` folder, then opens PowerSkin once. That starts your **free 7-day trial** with every feature unlocked.
3. **Restart Final Cut Pro** if it was running.

Updating works the same way: run the new installer over the old version. When it finishes, the PowerSkin app opens and reads **PowerSkin is licensed**. Your license carries over, so there is nothing to enter; click **Done**. The effect appears in the Effects browser under ⚡ **PowerApps → Effects → PowerSkin**.

> **Effect not showing?** Quit Final Cut Pro fully (⌘Q) and reopen it. FCP only scans for new effects at launch.

Requirements

- macOS 13 or later, Apple silicon or Intel
- Final Cut Pro 10.6 or later. Auto Mask (FCP 12.3+) is optional

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Quick start

1. **Apply** PowerSkin to your clip from Effects → ⚡ PowerApps → Effects.

2. **Let Auto Skin find the skin.** It is on by default: PowerSkin measures the skin color inside the detected face on every frame and limits itself to it, with no mask to add. Switch **View** to **Mask** once to see the coverage (warm white where the effect applies), then back to **Result**. If the face is lit an unusual color, press **Sample** once. If part of the skin is missed, turn on **Select** and drag over it in the viewer (see Select skin on the picture). If hair or eyes get in, pull in the upper end of the Saturation or Brightness bar on the Skin Mask tab. Prefer Final Cut's own masking? Untick Auto Skin and add an Auto Mask → Skin; PowerSkin then processes whatever the mask lets through.
   Want pixel-perfect edges? Add Final Cut's Auto Mask → Skin on top (FCP 12.3+). Both masks combine. Auto Mask costs playback performance, so use it only when you need it.
3. **Dial it in, or let PowerSkin do it.** Press **Auto Fix** and PowerSkin analyzes the shot's skin and sets Smoothing, Texture, Blemish Reduction, Redness and Skin Tone Correct to match what it measures (press again, **Reset All**, to return to defaults). Every value stays a normal slider you can tweak. Manually: raise **Blemish Reduction** for acne/spots, add **Shadow Lift** for dark circles, and use **Skin Tone Correct** for color casts (see below).

> **Tip. Check what you're removing:** switch View to **Detail** while adjusting. Only blemish-scale detail should appear in the difference view; if facial structure shows up, lower Smoothing or Blemish Size.

Perfect skin tones with Skin Check

Every healthy skin tone, all complexions, sits on the same hue line on a vectorscope (the “flesh line”). PowerSkin makes this foolproof:

1. Switch View to **Check**. The image turns gray; skin glows **green** when tones are correct and **red** when there's a color cast. A mini-vectorscope in the corner shows your skin's color cloud and the orange flesh line.
2. Press **Auto Skin Tone**, PowerSkin measures the cast and sets the slider for you (press again to reset), or drag **Skin Tone Correct** yourself until the face is green and the cloud hugs the line.
3. Switch View back to Result. Done: complexion is preserved; only the cast is removed.

The Skin Tone tab shows the same vectorscope inside the inspector, so you can watch the trace while you adjust.

See the skin tone correction on and off

From version 1.4.3. At the top of the Skin Tone tab, **Skin Tone Correction** turns everything on that tab off and on with one click: Correct, Hue, Saturation, Warmth and Redness Reduction. The retouch and the mask stay as they are, and the sliders keep their values.

- Turn it off to see the skin as it is without the color correction, then on again to compare.

- The vectorscope follows it, in the inspector, over the picture and in the viewer: off shows where the skin sits before correction, on where the correction puts it.
- It is a different comparison from Compare, which shows the whole effect before and after. This one shows the color part alone.

While it is off the correction is off in the export too; the panel says so in amber. Turn it back on before you export.

The inspector panel

From version 1.4.1 PowerSkin has its own panel across the Video inspector.

- **Auto Fix**, **Skin Tone Only** and **Amount** sit at the top, always in reach.
- **View** switches between Result, Mask, Skin Only, Check and Detail. The two buttons beside it turn on **Compare**, a before and after split, and the vectorscope over the picture. Any view other than Result, the split and the scope are in the export while they are on; the panel says so in amber.
- Three tabs hold the rest: **Retouch**, **Skin Tone** and **Skin Mask**.
- **Reset Tab** puts the controls of the open tab back to their defaults. Double-click any slider or range bar to reset just that one.
- The **i** button at the bottom opens a short explanation of every control. Resting the pointer on a control shows its tip.
- **Classic Sliders** shows Final Cut's standard rows under the panel as well. Use them for keyframes and exact numbers.

Clips from older projects get the panel and the new controls by themselves once this version is installed and Final Cut has been restarted. They keep their settings and their look.

Before and after: Compare

From version 1.4.2. **Compare** splits the Result view: the untouched picture left of a line, the retouched picture right of it.

1. Click the split button beside the View switch.
2. Click PowerSkin's name in the inspector. Final Cut shows an effect's controls in the viewer only while that effect is selected.
3. Drag the line in the viewer. **Before** and **After** mark the two sides.

The split is part of the picture, so it is in the export while Compare is on. Turn it off before you export.

Select skin on the picture

From version 1.4.2. Some skin has very little color: pale skin, flat or log footage, soft overcast light. Its hue then runs over a wide span across one face, and no single sampled color describes it. Parts of the face drop out of the mask, often the nose and the lips. **Select** sets the ranges from what you point at.

1. On the Skin Mask tab, turn on **Select**, beside Sample.
2. Click PowerSkin's name in the inspector, so the viewer listens to it.
3. **Drag over the skin** in the viewer. Orange dots follow the drag. When you let go, the Hue, Saturation and Brightness ranges are set to hold every color you dragged over.
4. **Drag again to add** skin that is still missing.
5. **Hold Option and drag to remove** a color that should not be in, for example hair. The dots are blue. One range is pulled in just far enough to leave that color out.
6. Turn Select off when you are done.

A selection sets Skin Color, Use Picked Color and Auto Skin for you, and you can still adjust the range bars afterwards. Turning Select off and on again starts a fresh selection.

> **Good to know.** While Select is on, PowerSkin takes every click on the clip in the viewer, so Final Cut's own on-screen controls, Transform and Crop among them, do not respond on it. A color that sits in the middle of the selected skin cannot be removed; it is skin to the mask. If you select skin outside a face, a hand for example, turn Limit to Faces off.

The range bars

On the Skin Mask tab, three bars set what counts as skin: **Hue**, **Saturation** and **Brightness**. Each bar shows the colors of the current frame as a shape, and an orange diamond marks the skin tone PowerSkin measured.

- Drag the **low** or the **high** end to move it alone.
- Drag the **white frame** to move the whole range.
- Drag a **hollow handle** to set how gently the selection fades out.
- Double-click a bar to reset it.

The Saturation and Brightness bars need a face or a picked color to work from. A bar that has no effect right now is dimmed and says why. Until a frame has been read the bars say **Move the playhead to read the frame**.

A steady mask: Track Face and Reduce Flicker

Face detection looks at every frame by itself, and on some shots, above all when a face nearly fills the frame, what it finds jumps a little from frame to frame. The mask and the retouch then flicker. **Track Face** cures

that.

1. On the Skin Mask tab, click the arrow beside **Protect Features**.
2. Press **Track Face**. PowerSkin goes through the clip once and counts the frames; when it is done the card reads **Tracked**.
3. Set **Reduce Flicker**. 50 steadies the face over a quarter second to either side, 100 over one second. At 0 the track is not used.

The track is kept with your project and is used in the viewer and in the export alike. Press **Track Again** after you replace or re-cut the clip's media.

Parameter reference

PARAMETER	WHAT IT DOES
Smoothing	Overall evening of skin: removes pore-scale texture (except what Texture keeps) and evens ordinary mid-scale unevenness, while facial structure is preserved. 0 removes nothing. Default 35 is subtle; 60+ is glam.
Texture	How much fine pore detail is kept. Higher = more real skin. Keep at 50–70 to avoid the plastic look.
Restore Details	Brings pores and natural skin features back at full strength everywhere the blemish and discoloration detectors found nothing, so you can smooth harder without the waxy look. Blemishes and discolored patches stay removed. Not a sharpener: nothing is amplified beyond the original.
Blemish Reduction	Targeted removal of acne, moles and spots. Detects outliers, so normal shading survives even at 100.
Blemish Size	The size of imperfections being targeted. Raise for larger blemishes, lower for fine spots only.

Auto Scale	On by default. Sizes the pore, blemish and structure bands from the detected face, so a subject who walks toward the camera keeps the same look with no keyframes, and a wide shot is not over-processed. With several people the largest face sets the scale. On a close-up where the face fills the frame and cannot be found as a whole, the frame itself is taken as the face. If neither applies, the bands fall back to a frame-size rule. In the panel this is the **Auto** switch beside Detail Scale.
Detail Scale	A multiplier on the band sizes, 25 to 400 percent, keyframeable. Use it to trim Auto Scale, or as a manual distance control with Auto Scale off (hands, body shots, or a shot where detection blinks).
Redness Reduction	Pulls down localized redness (irritation, broken capillaries) without shifting overall skin tone.
Shadow Lift	Brightens dark circles, eye bags and shadow-side wrinkles, and neutralizes their bluish cast. A built-in limit protects real facial structure. Try 30–60.
Tone Evenness	Unifies patchy, uneven skin color toward the surrounding tone. Luminance is untouched.
Warmth	A gentle warm/cool trim along the skin tone axis.
Skin Tone Correct	Rotates skin hue onto the vectorscope flesh line: removes color casts while preserving complexion and saturation. 40–70 is the tasteful zone; 100 is a full snap.
Skin Hue	Turns the skin's hue by hand after Skin Tone Correct, up to 15 degrees toward red or toward yellow.
Skin Saturation	Makes the skin less or more saturated, from half to one and a half times.

Auto Skin Tone	One click measures the skin's color cast on the current frame and sets Skin Tone Correct to the right value (clean footage sets 0). Becomes **Reset Skin Tone** while a correction is active.
Auto Fix	Analyzes the shot's skin (texture roughness, blemish density, redness and color cast) and sets Smoothing, Texture, Blemish Reduction, Redness and Skin Tone Correct in one click. Becomes **Reset All**, which restores those five to their defaults. Suggestions are conservative and always editable.
Skin Tone Only	Color correction with no retouching. One press sets Smoothing, Restore Details, Blemish Reduction, Redness, Shadow Lift, Tone Evenness and Warmth to zero, so no smoothing or detail work happens, then runs Auto Skin Tone to bring the skin onto the vectorscope flesh line. The button then reads **Restore Retouch**: press it to put your previous settings back (after relaunching Final Cut, it restores the defaults).
Auto Skin	Built-in skin detection. On by default. PowerSkin classifies every pixel by how close its color sits to the vectorscope flesh line and confines the effect to skin, with no Final Cut mask. Untick to process the whole frame (for example under your own mask).
Hue Range	How far a hue may sit from the skin center and still count as skin. Widen it if parts of the face drop out (check with the Mask view); narrow it if wood or beige walls get in. In the panel this is the Hue bar.
Saturation Range	How much more or less saturated than the center a pixel may be. Hair and irises are usually less saturated than face skin, so lowering this is the first move when they leak into the mask.

Brightness Range	The brightness window around the skin center. Lower it to drop hair, irises and eye whites that share the skin's hue; raise it if forehead highlights or shadowed cheeks fall out.
Hue, Saturation and Brightness Shift	Moves a range off the skin center, so its low and high ends need not be the same distance away. Set by dragging one end of a range bar.
Hue, Saturation and Brightness Fade	How gently a range fades out at its ends. Set with the hollow handles of a range bar.
Mask Size	Shrinks or grows the mask at its edge. Below 0 it pulls in from hair and background, above 0 it reaches further out.
Mask Feather	Softens the edge of the mask. Called Mask Softness before 1.4.1; projects keep their value.
Skin Color / Sample Skin Color / Use Picked Color	The center of the skin model. By default PowerSkin measures it on every frame from the skin inside the detected face, which absorbs moderate color casts by itself. For a shot where nothing looks like skin to the model (a face lit blue, a heavy grade), press **Sample Skin Color**: it averages the real color of the cheeks, nose and forehead on the current frame, writes it into Skin Color and ticks **Use Picked Color**, so the mask centers on that color. You can also set Skin Color by hand; clicking the swatch opens the macOS Colors panel, which has a magnifier eyedropper that samples anything on screen, including the viewer.

Limit to Faces	Restricts the skin mask to detected faces (plus forehead, ears and neck) and, from 1.4.1, to the outline of the person, so a wall or wooden background of a similar color stays out. Uses Apple's on-device face and person detection at a few milliseconds per frame. If no face is found the whole frame stays eligible, so hands and body shots still work. Untick for shots where skin outside the face matters.
Select on Picture	**Select** on the Skin Mask tab. While it is on, a drag over skin in the viewer sets the Hue, Saturation and Brightness ranges to hold the colors under it; another drag adds, an Option-drag removes. See Select skin on the picture. From 1.4.2.
Protect Features	Off by default from 1.4.2 (it was on before; clips in existing projects keep their setting). Turn it on for a whole face seen from the front. Keeps the nostrils, eyes, brows and lips untouched: PowerSkin finds them with Apple's on-device face analysis and leaves a soft oval around each one, following the face as it moves. The under-eye area stays outside, so Shadow Lift still works on dark circles. Use the Mask view to see the protected ovals as dark shapes inside the skin. The arrow beside it opens the options below. Needs a whole face in the frame.
Protect Eyes, Brows, Nose, Lips	A switch for each protected feature. Turn one off to retouch right up to it.
Feature Feather	How softly the protected ovals fade into the retouch. 25 is the edge PowerSkin always had; higher reaches further out.
Feature Size	Shrinks or grows the protected ovals, from half to twice their size.

Track Face	Goes through the clip once and keeps where the face and its features are, so the mask, the protected features and the detail size stay steady from frame to frame. See A steady mask.
Reduce Flicker	How far the tracked face is steadied over time: a quarter second to either side at 50, one second at 100. At 0 the track is not used. Needs Track Face.
Mix	Wet/dry blend with the original. 0 shows the untouched image. In the panel this is **Amount**.
Skin Tone Correction	The Skin Tone tab's own switch, on by default. Off shows the picture and every vectorscope without Skin Tone Correct, Skin Hue, Skin Saturation, Warmth and Redness Reduction, and leaves their values alone. Off in the export too while it is off. More under See the skin tone correction on and off. From 1.4.3.
Show Scope	Draws the vectorscope over the picture in the Result and Skin Only views. In the export while it is on. A mask of Final Cut's own on the effect hides the scope in the picture; from 1.4.2 it is then still shown in the viewer while PowerSkin is selected in the inspector.
Compare / Split Position	A before and after split in the Result view, and where its line sits. Drag the line in the viewer. In the export while it is on. See Compare. From 1.4.2.
Skin Check	The green/red skin-tone verdict view with mini-vectorscope (see above). **Check** in the panel's View switch. Preview only. Switch back before export.
Show Removed Detail	Difference view of what's being taken out. **Detail** in the View switch. Preview only. Switch back before export.
Show Skin Mask	Shows the Auto Skin coverage: warm white where the effect applies, dim elsewhere. **Mask** in the View switch. Preview only. Switch back before export.

Show Skin Only	Shows the corrected skin and turns everything else black, so the vectorscope reads only the skin. Open the scope next to it to check the trace sits on the flesh line. Needs Auto Skin on; with Final Cut's Auto Mask, use Final Cut's own mask view. **Skin Only** in the View switch. Preview only. Switch back before export.

> **Surgical fixes:** apply PowerSkin twice: one instance with your general settings and Auto Skin on, and a second with only Shadow Lift raised, masked with small shape masks under the eyes.

Trial & License

- **Trial**: 7 days, every feature, starts automatically on install.
- **License**: everything, forever, free updates. One-time purchase.

When the trial ends, output is watermarked until you activate a license key. Your settings and timelines are untouched. Activating clears the watermark in place.

Activating

1. Your license key arrives by email from Payhip after purchase.
2. Open **PowerSkin** from Applications, paste the key, click **Activate**. The window then reads **PowerSkin is licensed**.
3. Final Cut Pro picks up the change within seconds, no restart needed.

Updates

PowerSkin checks for updates automatically. When one is available, the app shows a **Download Update** button and the effect's inspector header reads **UPDATE AVAILABLE**. Run the downloaded installer over the old version. Settings and license are kept: after an update the app opens, says **PowerSkin is licensed**, and there is nothing to enter. To use another key, click **Use a different license key** in that window.

Troubleshooting

- **Effect missing from FCP**: restart FCP. Still missing: launch the PowerSkin app once, then restart FCP again.
- **Watermark on output**: the trial has ended. Open the PowerSkin app and activate your key (or buy one); the watermark clears within seconds. The effect's inspector header shows the current license state.
- **Skin Check tints the background**. Cosmetic only: the verdict view guesses what's skin, but Auto Skin still limits the actual effect to skin.
- **The mask or the retouch flickers**: press **Track Face** (arrow beside Protect Features on the Skin Mask tab) and raise **Reduce Flicker**. This is most visible when a face nearly fills the frame.
- **The panel or a new control is missing after an update**: quit Final Cut and open it again. Clips from older projects get the new controls by themselves.
- **Undo after dragging a slider**: from 1.4.3 one Undo (⌘Z) puts a dragged slider back where the drag began. Undoing further back can then take several presses that show no change, because Final Cut counts each picture update during the drag. For step by step undo, turn on **Classic Sliders** and drag Final Cut's own rows.
- **The skin tone sliders are dimmed**: Skin Tone Correction at the top of the Skin Tone tab is off. Turn it on.
- **The split line cannot be dragged, or dragging over the picture does nothing**: click PowerSkin's name in the inspector first. Final Cut passes the mouse to an effect only while it is selected. For Select, also check that the Select switch is on.
- **Final Cut's Transform or Crop controls do not respond in the viewer**: turn **Select** off on the Skin Mask tab.
- **The vectorscope disappears when you add a Final Cut mask to PowerSkin**: the mask cuts it out of the picture. Click PowerSkin's name in the inspector and it is shown in the viewer again.
- **The bars say "No face found"**: on a close-up PowerSkin reads the skin from the whole frame by itself. On any other shot press **Sample**, so the mask centers on the color you picked.
- **Part of the face is missing from the skin mask**: turn on **Select** and drag over the missing skin in the viewer. Or widen the Hue or Brightness bar, or raise Mask Size. If the shot has a strong color cast, press Sample first.
- **The mask catches hair, eyes or eyebrows**: with **Select** on, hold Option and drag over them. Or pull in the upper end of the Saturation bar, then the Brightness bar. They share the skin's hue but not its saturation or brightness.
- **Patches around the eyes, nose or mouth stay untouched**: Protect Features is on and the face is turned or partly out of frame. Turn it off, or turn off the one feature that is misplaced.

- **The mask catches wood, walls or a beige background**: make sure Limit to Faces is on, and narrow the Hue bar.
- **Nothing is selected on a stylized or heavily graded shot**: press Sample Skin Color, or untick Auto Skin and use Final Cut's Auto Mask → Skin.
- **The effect looks too strong on a wide shot, or does nothing on a close-up**: make sure Auto (beside Detail Scale) is on. If the face is not detected (hard profile, covered face), turn it off and set Detail Scale yourself.
- **Halos along fingers, hair or the jaw**: fixed in 1.1.2. Update via Check for Updates in the PowerSkin app.
- **Nostrils, eyes or lips look smoothed or lightened**: make sure Protect Features is on, with the switch for that feature on. On a hard profile, a partly covered face or a close-up without a whole face the features may not be found; add a Shape Mask set to Subtract over that area instead.
- **Playback stutters**: if you added a Final Cut Auto Mask, remove it. Auto Skin does the same job on the GPU at a fraction of the cost.
- **"A plug-in is not responding" or FCP disables PowerSkin**: update to the latest version first (open the PowerSkin app and click Check for Updates). If it still happens, send a diagnostic log: see below.

Sending a diagnostic log

If you write to support about a crash or hang, this log tells us exactly what Final Cut asked PowerSkin to do right before the problem. The log itself contains frame sizes, timings and measurements only, no footage. While logging is on, PowerSkin also saves up to 24 small stills of what its face detection saw (`face-00.png` and so on) in the same folder. They stay on your Mac; attach them only if you want us to see them, and delete them afterwards.

1. Quit Final Cut Pro.
2. Open Terminal (Applications > Utilities) and paste this line, then press Return:
   `mkdir -p ~/Library/Application\ Support/PowerSkin && touch ~/Library/Application\ Support/PowerSkin/debug-enable`
3. Open Final Cut Pro and reproduce the problem (for example add PowerSkin, then add the Auto Mask).
4. In Finder choose Go > Go to Folder, paste `~/Library/Application Support/PowerSkin` and attach the file `debug.log` to your email.
5. If Final Cut showed a crash or "not responding" dialog, also open Console (Applications > Utilities), pick **Crash Reports** in the sidebar, and attach any entry named PowerSkin, PowerSkinXPC or Final Cut Pro from that time.
6. When done, delete the `debug-enable` file so logging stops, and the `face-*.png` stills if you do not need them.

Uninstalling

The easy way

1. Download the PowerSkin Uninstaller and unzip it.
2. Right-click `PowerSkin Uninstaller.command` and choose **Open** (the right-click is needed the first time because the script isn't from the App Store), then confirm.
3. Restart Final Cut Pro.

Manually

Delete these items, then restart Final Cut Pro:

- `/Applications/PowerSkin.app`
- `~/Movies/Motion Templates/Effects/⚡ PowerApps/Effects/PowerSkin`
- `~/Library/Application Support/PowerSkin` (settings and license data)

Your license key itself stays valid either way. Reinstall and activate again whenever you like.