First, a few tips about makeup brushes in general. Women should know that using the proper brushes can actually make applying makeup much easier and faster - you'll have greater control of cosmetics with a brush (so no streaky or clumpy messes that have to be wiped down with a tissue), and the look will be far more natural and long-lasting. When it comes to choosing a brush, price doesn't necessarily matter - you can get decent natural bristle brushes and synthetic brushes at the drug store or the department store. There's one sure-fire test to finding a good, durable makeup brush: take the brush and rub it against your skin. The bristles should feel soft against your skin, not rough or scratchy. To test the strength of the bristles, run the brush against your hand and see if any fibers fall out. If they do, don't buy the brush...if the brush stays intact and feels soft to the touch, go ahead and buy it. And finally, when you do get your brushes, make sure to keep them clean - there are loads of products on the markets designed specifically for makeup brush cleaning - or, to save some cash, wash your brushes with a mild shampoo (baby shampoo works beautifully) to keep them clean and oil-free.

So, now that you know what to look for in a brush, which brushes do you really need? Walk into any department store, and you're immediately overwhelmed by the selection of different sizes and shapes of makeup brushes. The good news is that you don't need 75 brushes in your makeup kit; you can get away with just a few key tools that will get you looking fresh and fabulous in no time. There are 7 brushes every woman needs.

Brush #1: Foundation brush: A curved, stiff, tight and smooth-bristled foundation brush helps you evenly apply liquid and cream foundation to your face. The benefits of using a foundation brush: you'll lose the tell-tale ring of color that goes around your face and along your jaw line that you get when you apply foundation with your fingers (the foundation brush blends foundation right into the skin; your fingers create a greasy, oily clumpfest on your face with foundation), and it'll save your skin some stress too (the oils on your fingers mixed with foundation can clog pores; use a clean brush, and you won't be adding more oil to the face). To use, pour a little liquid foundation onto the back of your hand. Dip the foundation brush into the product, and press it into your skin, going all around the face in a light, pressing manner (don't rub - the skin won't absorb the foundation, it'll just spread all over the place). If you're an uber-perfectionist, splurge in a concealer brush too, which you use in the same way as you would the foundation brush (but David says that a concealer brush isn't absolutely necessary...you can use your ring finger to apply your concealer, just tapping a little concealer on the finger lightly onto the skin).

Brush #2: All-over eye color brush/shadow blender: This brush should be soft and fluffy and spread out easily when it touches the lid. It should be big enough to cover at least a quarter of the lid, but small enough to be contained in the eye area. You'll use this brush to apply your all-over eye color and to blend colors you build up on the eye with other shadows. Just sweep the brush across your base color, then sweep across your entire eye from lashes to brows. After applying crease color, use this brush to blend to achieve a more natural look.

Brush #3: Eye shadow crease brush: The eye shadow crease brush (also known as the eye-contour brush) has a rounded shape to create contour on the outer corners of lids and crease. Usually small and dense, sweep this brush lightly across your contour color shadow (whichever color you want to use in the crease of your eye, typically a contrasting color from the overall shadow color). Sweep into the crease of the eye by placing brush right against the brow bone (starting on the outer corner), and glide across the eye, keeping the brush against the bottom of the brow bone as you sweep. To finish the look, blend with your all-over eye color brush.

Brush #4: Flat liner brush: Some women like to use eye pencils, but there's much more you can do using a flat liner brush and a cake eye liner or eye shadow as a liner. You can create a strong line along the lash by using a dampened liner brush, or a soft smoky look that blends right into the lid using a dry liner brush (David actually likes using a regular liner on the eyes, then uses a liner brush and a cake shadow or liner and runs a line over it to seal it in place). To use: either wet or dry, press flat liner brush into your cake shadow or liner. Starting at the outer corner, place
the brush at the base of the eyelashes, and wiggle into the lash line. Continue inward, as far as you'd like.

Brush #5: Spoolie: A spoolie is just a great, multi-purpose brush to keep in your makeup bag. You can use it to groom eyebrows (mist a little hair spray onto it, and brush across brows to keep them perfectly in place), or to de-clump mascara (after applying mascara, swipe spoolie across lashes from base to tip for lush, clump-free lashes).

Brush #6: Blush brush: Many, many women use the same brush to apply their blush and their loose powder. They shouldn't!!! The blush brush is shaped for the apples of the cheeks, with an angled, flat head that ensures blending of powder blush without streaking or harsh edges. To use, sweep brush across powder blush. Smile, finding the apple of the cheek, and in a circular motion, apply color on the apple and sweep (still, in a small, circular motion) up to the hairline. The final result is a natural blush, not an all-over red color that you'd get if you used a powder brush to apply your blush.

Brush #7: Powder brush: The last brush you use to finish your look, the powder brush has the largest bulb of all brushes (you can also get away with using it for bronzer). Look for a soft hair brush that is full but not too dense - the effect you want is a dusting of color across the face (using a dense brush to apply bronzer or powder puts you at risk of having it end up looking like dirt on the face). To apply loose powder or bronzer, take the fluffy and dip it into the powder. Tap the tool lightly over the container to remove any excess. Dust your face with powder, stroking your face gently with the brush to cover all areas evenly.