

7 Mistakes Men Make When Buying Fragrance



What's the biggest mistake you can make when buying a fragrance?

You buy *the wrong one*. And that can be an expensive or foul-smelling misstep.

Now, there are thousands of fragrances out there. So, *the wrong one* could be any number of fragrances. And it's not like there's one single *correct one* either. But there are many things to consider when shopping around for a new scent, like cost, scent families, potency and even your own patience levels. And if you avoid the common mistakes of shopping for scents, then you are all the likelier to end up with a fragrance you love.

To learn about these mistakes — and how to avoid them — we spoke with one of the world's top fragrance experts, Clayton Iolahia of What Men Should Smell Like, who has been writing extensively about fragrance for a decade. (His site is one of the best places to get ideas for new scents, too.) Here are the missteps he sees many men making when they shop for scents, as well as his advice for you to avoid the same fate.

Mistake 1: They mistake low price for low quality

“Don’t be fooled into thinking a bigger price tag means a better scent,” says Ilolahia. “A lot of the time price is linked to the bottle design, packaging and brand marketing more than the scent inside the bottle.” It can also pertain to the concentration of perfume oils, too, which simply means that the scent is stronger or wears heavier — maybe these aren’t things you value or need in a scent. “There are great low-cost fragrances out there to be found, many of them are created by leading perfumers who also create expensive designer and niche fragrances,” he adds. In short, don’t shy away from lower prices. That’s good news, right?

Mistake 2: They don’t take enough time

What you smell in the first whiff is not the same scent others will pick up throughout the day. “I never buy a fragrance after a quick test in-store because I’m only smelling the top notes at that stage,” Ilolahia says. His advice: “Ideally, test the fragrance on your skin instead of a paper smelling strip (because that’s where you will be wearing the fragrance if you buy it). Then, go for a walk and see how it smells after the middle and base notes appear.” These take more time to unfold, and they’re the notes that linger longer, as well as work with the chemistry of your skin to evolve into something special — or something not so. “You’ll get a more accurate read of the fragrance away from the counter,” he says.

Mistake 3: They stumble over gender constructs

“If you are feeling bold, discard gender when shopping for a new scent. I often find great fragrances for men amongst the isles of fragrances marketed as ‘feminine’,” Ilolahia says. “Floral notes are often considered feminine when actually most men’s fragrances have floral notes in them too, but marketing people don’t communicate this because they think they will lose sales.” Luckily, many brands are dropping gendered branding altogether, since their scents wear so well on all people.

Mistake 4: They limit their sampling

When it comes to testing scents, there are two key ways you can help yourself in terms of sample size. First, come prepared with a note or two that you like (such as woody, or musky, or floral), or a similar scent that you want to emulate: “Your nose will tire after smelling three to five different fragrances,” Ilolahia points out. “Be prepared to tell the salesperson the notes you like and any fragrances you previously liked. This will help them cut down the guessing game and they can match new fragrances to your preferences.” Secondly, he suggests switching between sales counters, too. “Keep in mind that in large department stores, the salesperson may be working exclusively for one or a few brands, so their recommendations may only be from a select few fragrances, not the whole store.”

Mistake 5: They don’t do enough research

There is no shortage of scents to try, either — Ilolahia says about 2,500 new ones launch each year. One way to narrow down your choices is to find out who created the scent — that is, research the perfumer, or *the nose* behind the scent. “Perfume is like music. Perfumers are like artists,”

Ilohahia says. “The brands are like record labels. Build a collection and have scents for different moods and occasions like you would build playlists of music on your phone.”

Mistake 6: They mistake strength and longevity for overall performance

“For a lot of guys, [perceived] good performance is about how long a fragrance lasts or how powerful the fragrance projects,” Ilohahia says. Try to think outside those bounds, however: “Fragrances that are very ‘loud’ and enduring often sacrifice more nuanced and subtle characteristics,” he adds. You need to factor in how the scent plays with the chemistry of your own skin, as well as (again), how those lingering notes play out.

Mistake 7: They neglect the other products in their grooming regimen

Don’t forget that this scent is but one product in your entire regimen, and those things can often compete with one another. “If you find a fragrance you want to be your scent, consider everything else that is part of your grooming routine,” Ilohahia says. “Almost every product you are using, particularly hair styling products, contain fragrance. These could interfere with your cologne or fragrance choice. I prefer to use grooming products that have little to no scent.” And always apply your fragrance last—especially after any body lotion, and after your body temperature has cooled down from a hot shower. You don’t want anything to compromise the scent’s abilities before you even step out the door.