

7 DEADLY SINS

Over-spritzing, wrist-rubbing, insensitive
storage – CARSON PARKIN-FAIRLEY
tells you how NOT to wear perfume

Photographer – Jane Hilton
Art Director – Nikki Brewster
Hair & Make-up – Helen Bannon
Model – Felix Burnett at Present Model Management





1 Thou shalt not smell a tester perfume immediately

A perfume features top, heart and base notes, and most of the time, it's the heart notes that really matter because they last the longest. The mistake that many people make is to smell the perfume immediately after spraying it onto themselves or a strip. What you smell initially is probably alcohol, or the top notes, which disappear within a few minutes. Let the perfume dry down to the heart notes before smelling it. Spray it, walk around for about 20 minutes, and then smell to see if you like it.

2 Thou shalt not rub it up the wrong way

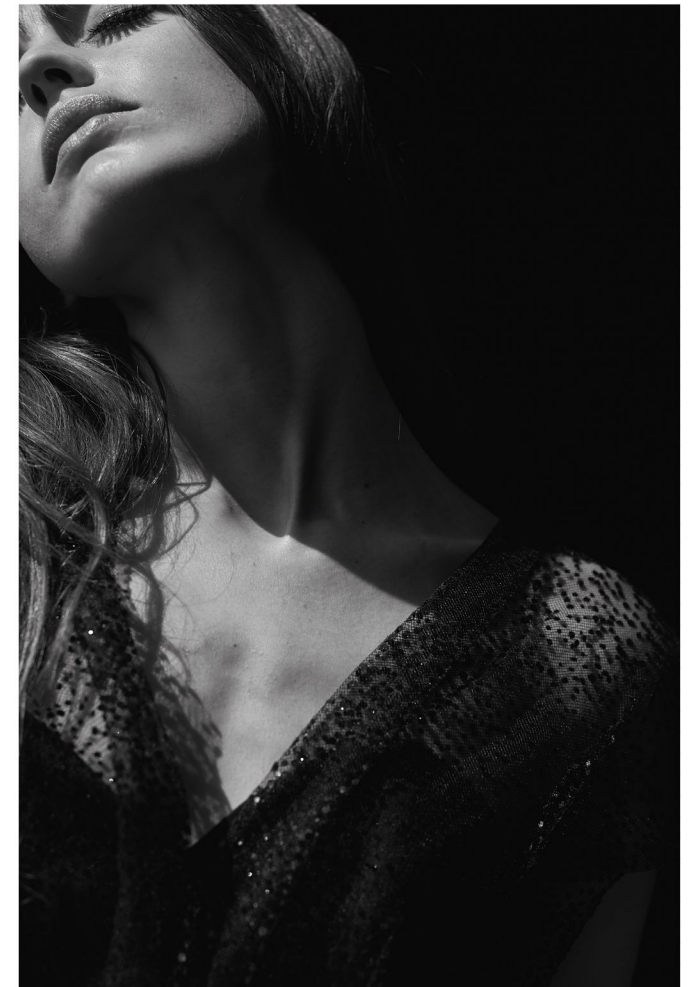
It's an unconscious routine to apply perfume to your wrists, then rub them together. Perhaps you saw your mother doing it, or once saw it in a film. Either way, you're not doing the best by your fragrance. By rubbing your wrists together, you create heat, warming up the scent and accelerating the transition from top to heart notes. As Alexandra Kosinski, perfumery director for CPL Aromas, warns, 'It can dull top notes and speed up evaporation.' And since top notes are a part of the scent, and play a big part in your fragrance selection, it's important to enjoy them too. Alternatively, 'If you don't like the top note but love the rest of the fragrance,' says Pia Long, Perfumer and co-founder of Olfiction, 'rub away!'

3 Thou shalt not leave it in the sunshine

Although it's where they may look prettiest – all neatly lined up, catching the sunlight – 'Bathroom shelves are where perfumes go to die,' Long explains. Extreme fluctuations in temperature, along with exposure to light, can interfere with the molecules in a fragrance, so perfumes kept in bathrooms are likely to spoil sooner because of the humidity. Similarly, oxygen is not a friend to scent; lengthy exposure to it can cause a perfume to oxidise or 'turn'. Long recommends not keeping the last few millimetres of a perfume at the end of a bottle for long, for fear of it going bad. Instead, she suggests using it up or decanting it into a travel bottle. It is best to keep your fragrances in their boxes or in a dark drawer, not directly exposed to light. You may not be able to admire the beautiful bottles all day, but each time you choose one from your cupboard it'll feel like opening a present.

4 Thou shalt not test too many

Shopping for a new fragrance can be tiring. In fact, smelling too many can lead to temporary olfactory fatigue. 'The body becomes desensitised to the scent because the odour receptors stop sending messages to the brain,' Kosinski explains. To combat this, 'Only smell three or four scents before taking a swift break for some fresh air and a drink of water,' Long recommends. 'And don't smell very similar scents in rapid succession, because your brain will "delete" the shared aspects.' You may have been offered coffee beans in some perfumeries as a means of "clearing your palate", but these are just another smell, so the best advice is to get some fresh air or smell a patch of your own unscented skin. This will help reset your brain and nose, keeping them alert, clear and ready to smell again.





All clothes and accessories available from Harvey Nichols
 Dotted black tulle gown by Roland Mouret
 Shoes by Christian Louboutin
 Zip-front fishnet jacket and black trousers by Koral
 Black dress with tassel tie by Forte Forte

5 Thou shalt not forget thy pulse points

Behind your ear, at the bottom of your throat, inside your elbow, on your wrist and behind your knee, pulse points are the perfect place for perfume. The skin is thinner in these areas and so radiates heat better, which brings a fragrance to life. The level of moisture in your skin is also a big factor, so keeping your skin well moisturised will mean you get the best out of your scent. Though there are other fun places to spray it, too: the décolletage or the back of the neck (for when people lean in to greet you). ‘Lightly misting your hair or a scarf can leave a lasting impression,’ Kosinski explains, ‘because when it moves, it helps the scent diffuse’ – meaning you’ll enjoy the waft of it for longer.

6 Thou shalt not dismiss synthetics

An often debated topic in the world of scent is natural ingredients versus synthetics, but it needn’t be contentious. ‘It’s not that one is better than the other,’ Kosinski says, ‘but rather, the use of both allows perfumers to create more complex smells.’ Artist, musician and self-taught perfumer Paul Schütze likens it to the digital-versus-analogue debate. ‘I’d never want to sacrifice one over the other. If you compare digital sound to synthetic molecules, they’re controllable, clear, precise and often penetrating. They are great for some things and less good for others.’ And with more than 7,000 molecules on offer, Schütze says, ‘you work with a much bigger palette – and who wouldn’t want that?’ ‘There is an instinctive human assumption that the word “natural” automatically means safe or better,’ Long adds. ‘But in terms of chemistry, natural and synthetic are the same – plants are made of chemicals, and so are we,’ so there’s no need to fear them. In fact, the use of both is ideal – with natural raw materials providing aesthetic beauty (the body and soul of a fragrance) and synthetics adding beautiful abstraction to scents.

7 Thou shalt not forsake all others

‘Our brains are primarily set up to detect differences in our environment, and this goes for our sense of smell too,’ Long says. Essentially, if you’re surrounded by a smell, your brain becomes comfortable, feels safe and eventually stops registering it, which is why we can’t smell our own houses, or why sometimes you adjust to your own perfume and can no longer smell it on yourself. Having a signature scent can make for pungent results, the danger being that you’ll stop smelling it yourself and simply overspray. Long recommends having a few scents to switch between, so ‘you’ll never grow so accustomed to one, and will avoid knocking people over with the amount you accidentally use.’ •

