

Choose Your Perfect Signature Perfume with World-Class Experts' 10 Best Questions

Highlight

Did you know that a signature perfume can extend your fashion wardrobe? Here's how, based on insider tips from the world's top perfume gurus.

The 10 Best Questions

1. Do I want a signature fragrance, a celebrity scent, or a designer perfume?
2. Am I loyal to a signature fragrance or just stuck in a rut?
3. What image or message do I want my signature fragrance to project?
4. How well do I know my fragrance families?
5. Can I find a signature scent that I can coordinate with my total style and wardrobe?
6. What memories do I associate with my past fragrance favorites? What new memories do I want to create?
7. Which perfume concentration is right for my signature scent?
8. Are there any occasions when my signature scent isn't the best choice?
9. Am I being swayed by prestigious brand names, famous celebrities, or fancy perfume bottles?
10. How can I save money on my signature fragrance?

The Golden Question

The million-dollar question you almost forgot to ask.

Does my signature scent make me feel like a million bucks?

The 10 Best Answers

1. Do I want a signature fragrance, a celebrity scent, or a designer perfume?

The world's top fragrance guru Michael Edwards explains the differences. "A signature scent is a scent by which someone is recognized. When Marilyn Monroe confessed that she wore nothing to bed but Chanel No. 5, it was etched in our collective memory as her 'signature' scent."

Celebrity scents are created by media personalities rather than a fragrance house like Elizabeth Taylor's "Passion" released in 1987 and Britney Spears' 2004 "Curious."

By contrast, designer perfumes are linked to fragrance designer brands like Chanel No 5. So, it's your signature scent can also be a celebrity or designer fragrance, too.

2. Am I loyal to a signature fragrance or just stuck in a rut?

Are you wearing your perfume like a never-changing uniform? Signature scents transcend the fickleness of fashions. But some world-class perfume experts caution against always playing it safe.

Parisian fragrance designer Frédéric Malle told *Vogue*, "A lot of people wear Chanel No. 5 for the same reason they might buy an Apple computer – because they think they can't go wrong. Smelling rich and beautiful doesn't require hundreds of different scents."

3. What image or message do I want my signature fragrance to project?

Pick the perfect perfume by thinking about your image, not just the scent. Meghan Casserly writes for *Forbes*, "For the professional woman, no matter how confident your handshake, the message of your fragrance can be stronger than your grip."

British fragrance designer Jo Malone asks, "What effect do you want?" Make sure it's age, occasion, and workplace or school-appropriate.

Raymond Matts, a former fragrance director at Estée Lauder, believes you should focus on the perfume's emotional response. His suggested Best Question: "Where do I want this fragrance to take me? How do I want to feel?"

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4. How well do I know my fragrance families?

Knowing your fragrance family, or preferred scent types, goes a long way in defining your signature perfume. Edwards told *Allure*, "Finding the right fragrance is almost as hard as finding the right man." Both involve a confusing jumble of feelings."

The scents you most enjoy probably belong to just one or two of the fragrance families, much like favorite wines or teas.

There's no official list, but try Nordstrom's Fragrance Finder based on Edward's work here: <http://shop.nordstrom.com/c/fragrance-finder>

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5. Can I find a signature scent that I can coordinate with my total style and wardrobe?

“Many women overlook perfume as an invisible ‘last step’ in getting ready in the morning. In reality, your fragrance should match what you’d want your ultimate ‘self’ to be,” says Avery Gilbert, author of *What the Nose Knows*.

What colors, types of clothes, and accessories make you come alive? Ask that same question when searching for your signature scent.

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6. What memories do I associate with my past fragrance favorites? What new memories do I want to create?

Have you ever considered trying to create a life-long “scent memory” for your partner, friends, children, or grandchildren to remember you by? The right signature scent will define their memories of you forever. Master author Rudyard Kipling once said, “Smells are surer than sights and sounds to make the heartstrings crack.”

Top fragrance “nose” French-born Roja Dove agrees. “All it takes is one drop of a perfume and your mother or grandmother is right by your side again. Perfume is the magic of keeping the memo

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7. Which perfume concentration is right for my signature scent?

The concentration of a perfume’s essential oils affects its lightness and lasting power. Here are the usual concentrations and their percentages of perfume oil.

More perfume oil equals increasingly expensive choices. You may be able to find a wide range of concentrations in your chosen fragrance. If so, use different products to build the scent on your skin.

Concentration	% Perfume Oil	Lasting Power	Best for
Eau Fraiche and Aftershaves	3% or less	2-3 hours or less	Every day wear
Eau de Cologne	3 – 5%	Up to 3 hours	Every day wear
Eau de Toilette (Women)	4 – 8%	3-5 hours	Every day wear
Eau de Toilette (Men)	5 – 10%	3-6 hours	Every day wear
Eau de Parfum	8 – 15%	5-6 hours	Evening wear
Pure Perfume	15 – 30%	6-7 hours	Special occasions

8. Are there any occasions when my signature scent isn’t the best choice?

A drawback to having a signature scent is that you be on auto-pilot without considering if there are changing variables like a special occasion or different seasons.

This is a highly personalized answer but be smart and think about it before it's too late to take back your fragrance faux pas.

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9. Am I being swayed by prestigious brand names, famous celebrities, or fancy perfume bottles?

Perfume designers and manufacturers are counting on all of these factors as psychological persuasion over their competitors. According to expert Edwards in his *Fragrances of the World*, 1423 new fragrances were released in 2013.

Ultimately, you want the signature scent that is truly about you. Edwards says, "The perfume bottle is created purely for image. Be sure that you've got your eyes wide open when sniffing around for the newest scent."

Perfume journalist Elena Vosnaki writes for *Fragrantica.com*, "Contrary to what you might think, the perceived image and poshness (or lack thereof) of the brand is no reflection of your taste or socioeconomic status."

10. How can I save money on my signature fragrance?

Once you have chosen your signature scent, there are places, times, and ways that you can save money on your choice. It's partly in being a good "strategic shopper" and using some of the experts' ideas and questions. See more here.

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The Golden Question

The million-dollar question you almost forgot to ask.

Does my signature scent make me feel like a million dollars?

It's the self-confidence when you hear *your* favorite question: "You smell great! What is that fragrance?"

Global fragrance expert Marian Bendeth gets the final word. "The designer, the cost, it doesn't matter. It's all about self-esteem and how it smells on you. It should make you feel like a million dollars."

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QDoc's Q-Tipsters

Take the time to figure out what scent is really you. What questions have worked for you? Please share here.

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