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*Perfume should be complex,
subtle, mysterious and intriguing*

The Essence

PERFUMES and colognes are popular holiday gifts. But choosing a fragrance can be a hit-or-miss proposition unless you know there's more to it than meets the nose.

Here are a few pointers from Richard Loniewski, a professional perfumer and the No. 1 nose for Charles of the Ritz.

- Never try more than two or three fragrances at one testing session or you'll confuse your nose.
- The best place to apply fragrance is on the inside of the wrist or on the inside of the elbow.
- Never eat highly spiced or garlicky foods before shopping for a perfume. The scent will come through your pores, and when you apply perfume, it will affect the way the fragrance smells on you.
- When applying the fragrance, wait 20 or 30 seconds for the initial alcohol to evaporate. Then sniff for your first impression, what perfumers call the "top note."
- After three hours sniff again and

you'll perceive the perfume in its "dry down" stage. You will then experience the ingredients at the "base" of the fragrance which help maintain its character and long-lastingness.

IF YOU FOLLOW these suggestions, you will thoroughly familiarize yourself with a perfume and discover a sure-fire way to avoid mistakes. Loniewski said.

You can make fragrance selection even more foolproof this holiday season if you understand and compensate for skin type.

"If the recipient of your gift is light-complected and naturally blonde, plan to purchase a fragrance with more body. People with pale skin and blond hair often have dry skin. This means that the skin will immediately attract and absorb the oils in the fragrance—the scent will disappear."

"Darker-complected people often have oilier skins. The fragrance stays on the surface and "comes off" the skin

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