

Gender Euphoria in a Bottle: 6 Tips on Choosing a Gender-Neutral Fragrance

The future of scent is here and queer

Since the release of Calvin Klein's infamous CK One, gender-neutral scents have started appearing on commercial shelves, and the last few years have seen them skyrocket in popularity. This sudden saturation can make finding a fragrance that fits your gender expression seem daunting, but locating that special scent is *so* worth it. These tips are a great way to jump-start your search, which is half the fun! Go forth and sniff euphoria!

1. Start with a mood, not a gender

What do you want to feel when you wear your fragrance? Would you like it to evoke a mood of warmth and security, or perhaps uplift and energize? Do you want to feel provocative and sexy, grounded and steady? Asking these questions will help choose the type of notes to look for, which is hugely helpful if you're shopping online and can't smell your fragrance in person. In general, floral notes will evoke soft, romantic moods, woody notes create a feeling of cozy calmness, citrus notes are refreshing and playful, green notes inspire serenity, spices are intriguing and magnetic, and musks give a feeling of comforting familiarity. Most scents use a mix of these categories, so look for which area is most heavily represented (and read the creative description provided by the perfumer, if available). Traditional feminine smells feature florals while traditional masculine smells stick to woods and leather, but don't let that dictate your choice! Fragrances like Gucci's [Memoire](#) or Le Labo's [Santal 33](#) (floral and wood heavy, respectively) are currently two of the most popular gender-neutral scents on the market.

2. Get more specific using a memory

Did you know that out of the five senses, scent has the strongest connection to the hippocampus? [Scientists believe](#) this explains why certain smells have the ability to help us recall distant memories and emotions. Imagine a time when you felt particularly joyful, and try to recall the smells you experienced. What season was it? Where were you? What was the weather

like? Using this method was the singular most helpful tip in my own quest for a signature fragrance: I identified a memory of running through a dewy field during the last minutes of a May dusk, and so began searching for lush, green fragrances with aquatic or wet notes. (I eventually settled on Armaf's [Tres Nuite](#), an inexpensive and impressive dupe for Creed's much pricier [Green Irish Tweed](#)).

3. Utilize the wonder that is [Fragrantica](#)

Fragrantica is community driven, online fragrance encyclopedia where users can independently review and discuss fragrances. Almost any fragrance you can find on a shelf will have a listing on Fragrantica--they now have almost 75,000 fragrances in their library! Each listing includes a full note breakdown and user-submitted descriptions and ratings to read before committing to a purchase. Because Fragrantica is an independent company, you can be assured the reviews are unbiased and honest. The site also allows you to search by note or perfumer, browse community forums, and use their nifty Perfume Finder, which will give you algorithm-determined suggestions for new fragrances based on what you already like. Fragrantica is particularly useful for exploring niche fragrances which can't be tested in your everyday Ulta or Sephora.

4. Embrace niche, steer clear of designer

Start dipping your toes into the world of niche scents! Although the term "niche fragrance" doesn't have a strict definition, it usually refers to independent perfume houses which manufacture on a small scale using high quality ingredients, with the aim of producing interesting and unique scents. Niche houses often offer several gender-neutral scents (some produce gender-neutral scents exclusively!) and even their "traditionally" gendered scents display more variety than the standard floral/powder/musk or woody/aquatic/leather dichotomy available from designer labels. For starters, go take a look at [Boy Smells](#) (I recommend their smoky, mysterious fragrance [Violet Ends](#)), Maison Margiela's famous [Replica](#) line ([By The Fireplace](#) and [Jazz Club](#) are cult favorites), and the Los Angeles house [West Third Brand](#) (seriously, their EDT [XXX](#) was the beginning of my gender

awakening). For less pricey options, explore indie brands such as [Poesie](#) (try [Twice to Tea](#) for a sumptuous caffeinated scent), the wild and wacky [Sucreabeille](#) (browse their entire unisex section [here](#), and don't miss their popular scent [Blood and Bone](#)), and the otherworldly [Nui Cobalt Designs](#) (check out the earthy [Demeter in Mourning](#) from their 2022 fall collection).

5. Always take your scents for a test-drive

Fragrance is expensive, so it's important to give a potential new scent a few days (or even weeks) of wear time before committing to a full size bottle. Scents metamorphosize as they wear, often ending with a drastically different vibe than they start with. I often love the top notes of a fragrance but find myself unable to tolerate the dry-down, especially if it leans heavily feminine or masculine as the day progresses. Additionally, fragrance smells different on paper than it does on skin, so simply taking a few whiffs from the tester strips offered in store won't give you an accurate idea of the scent. Look for rollerballs or sample sets before committing to larger options. The *only* time I'd recommend blind-buying a full size fragrance is if it's been heavily discounted (on that note, sign up for email notifications so you know when sales are coming) *and* it contains notes or scent categories you know you'll like.

6. Get on Perfumetok

Tiktok is an unlikely hero in the quest for finding gender neutral scents. Perfumetok has a plethora of recommendations and commentary on lesser known brands as well as popular fragrances, all wrapped up into bite-sized videos. For starters, follow these three creators: [@queerperfume](#), who specializes in "queer perfume matchmaking"; [@sleeplesscents](#), a Desi creator who reviews the vast world of South Asian perfumes, often overlooked and undervalued by western consumers, and [@uncommon.smells](#), an undisputed expert on indie brands. Best of all--the more you watch, the more fragrance videos will appear on your FYP. Get scrolling!

