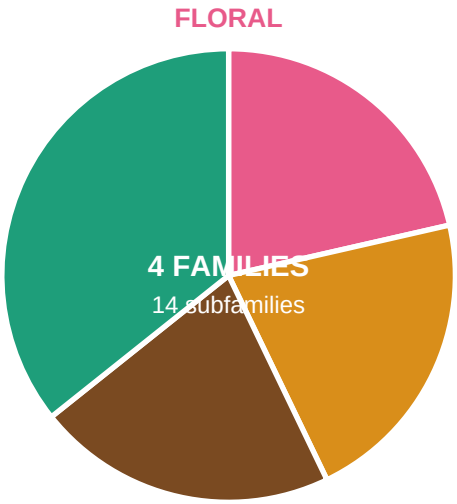
The Fragrance Wheel

4 olfactory families • 14 subfamilies • How to find your next perfume



Based on the Michael Edwards fragrance wheel — the classification used in *Fragrances of the World* and in retail training worldwide. Neighbouring segments smell related; opposite segments smell like contrast.

Source: PerfumeLead — perfumelead.com/what-is-fragrance-wheel-and-olfactory-families/ • Free printable — perfumelead.com

FLORAL — the largest family

Subfamily	Key notes	Classic example
Floral	Rose, jasmine, tuberose, ylang-ylang	Dior J'adore
Soft Floral	Iris, aldehydes, vanilla, musk	Chanel N°5
Floral Amber	Orange blossom, sweet spices, vanilla	YSL Black Opium

AMBER — warm, resinous & spicy (formerly called Oriental)

Subfamily	Key notes	Classic example
Soft Amber	Incense, myrrh, cinnamon, labdanum	—
Amber	Amber, vanilla, benzoin, tonka bean	Mugler Angel
Woody Amber	Patchouli, oud, sandalwood, amber	Baccarat Rouge 540

WOODY — structure, depth & longevity

Subfamily	Key notes	Classic example
Woods	Cedar, sandalwood, pine, vetiver	Le Labo Santal 33
Mossy Woods	Oakmoss, patchouli, bergamot	—
Dry Woods	Leather, tobacco, birch tar, cedar	Tom Ford Tuscan Leather

FRESH — the lightest & brightest

Subfamily	Key notes	Classic example
Aromatic Fougère	Lavender, geranium, oakmoss, coumarin	—
Citrus	Bergamot, lemon, mandarin, grapefruit	—
Water	Calone, sea salt, melon, cucumber	—
Green	Violet leaf, galbanum, cucumber, grass	—
Fruity	Apple, peach, blackcurrant, plum	—

HOW TO USE THE WHEEL — 5 STEPS

1. Place a perfume you love. Find its main notes and locate that segment — that is your home base.

2. Explore the neighbours first. Scents next to your home base share character, so they are the safest new choices.

3. Try the opposite for contrast. A family across the wheel adds something new — e.g. a fresh citrus lover trying a warm amber for evenings.

4. Use the triangle rule for layering. Pick three subfamilies that form a triangle — e.g. citrus top, floral heart, woody base — for a balanced result.

5. Let your nose decide. The wheel narrows your search; it does not rank perfumes. Two perfumes in the same segment can still smell very different.

Note: In the current Michael Edwards wheel, the family historically called “Oriental” is labelled “Amber” (changed 2021). Both names refer to the same warm, resinous, spicy family.