

ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

■ What are eau de toilette, eau de parfum, and parfum (and body spray, deodorant, eau de cologne, parfum de toilette, and so forth)?

Pure perfume is dissolved in a solution of 98 percent alcohol and 2 percent water, the preferred solvent. Different concentrations of perfume oil are sold under different names: eau de toilette (EdT) is around 10 percent perfume oil, eau de parfum (EdP) somewhere around 15–18 percent, and parfum (also known as extrait) 25 percent and higher. Occasionally, just to maintain the mystique, fragrance houses spring strange names on you: parfum de toilette is generally the same as eau de parfum, body sprays and eaux de cologne are usually lighter than eau de toilette, and for everything else you will probably have to ask and get a wrong answer. LT/TS

■ Why don't they sell the perfume pure?

They do in some countries, but you probably wouldn't like it much. Pure oils tend to have very dense smells in which the components are hard to discern, which can make you miss most of the point of a well-crafted perfume. It's as if the story in the fragrance were written in very small print. The appropriate dilution opens up the fragrance and makes it legible to your nose. A very few fragrances are sold in wax or cream form, and usually smell rather different. These solid or semisolid fragrances are convenient if you don't mind a little grease.

Usually there is no difference in the composition of the oil used to