SMELLYWATERICT

Collect Intentionally. Wear Deliberately.

Where to Buy Samples & Decants

A SmellyWaterICT Resource Guide

Stop Buying Blind

The fastest way to waste money in fragrance is buying full bottles you haven't worn. A $200 bottle you wear twice costs $100 per wear. A $6 sample that saves you from that bottle is the best deal in the hobby.

Smart collectors sample first, buy second. That's not indecision — that's collecting intentionally. This guide tells you exactly where to get samples and decants worth your money.

Make it a habit, not a one-off. Keep a small "testing shelf" — five or six samples you're working through — and don't buy another full bottle until the shelf is empty. Your wallet will notice the difference within a month.

Samples vs. Decants — Know What You're Buying

Samples are the tiny manufacturer vials, usually 1ml–2ml. Cheapest option, best for first impressions and yes/no decisions.

Decants are hand-poured from authentic full bottles into small atomizers, typically 2ml up to 10ml or more. You pay more, but you get enough for extended wear — two weeks of a fragrance tells you things one wearing can't. Buy decants of finalists, not of maybes.

Where to Buy — The Full List

This is not a sponsor list. One retailer below is a SmellyWaterICT affiliate partner, and it's labeled as such. Everything else is here because it belongs here — these are the places collectors actually use, whether they pay me anything or not. Different shops win for different jobs, so the list is organized by what each one does best.

Dedicated Decant Shops

MicroPerfumes — SmellyWaterICT Partner

MicroPerfumes sells samples and decants with a clean, browseable catalog and straightforward pricing. They're a good first stop if you're new to sampling — the site is easy to navigate, order minimums are low, and you can put together a varied test batch in one checkout. Best for: beginners building their first sample order, or anyone who wants a no-fuss sampling run. Full disclosure: this is my affiliate link, and I earn a commission if you buy through it — at no extra cost to you.

Shop MicroPerfumes — The #1 Fragrance Sample Shop, Try Before You Buy!

Scent Split

Scent Split is a dedicated decant retailer based in Houston, Texas — they split authentic full bottles into smaller sizes so you can test or wear fragrances without committing to the full bottle. Their catalog runs deep on designer and niche houses like Creed, Tom Ford, Parfums de Marly, and Roja, and sizes run 1ml, 2ml, 5ml, and 9ml. Best for: working through a want-list of specific fragrances you already have in mind, and for decants big enough to truly evaluate.

Visit Scent Split

DecantX

DecantX offers hand-decanted samples and atomizers from hundreds of designer and niche brands, with free standard shipping in the U.S. and no minimum. Best for: broad designer and niche sampling in one order, especially when you want larger atomizer sizes.

Visit DecantX

The Perfumed Court

The Perfumed Court has been selling perfume samples and decants since 2007, with a specialty in luxury, niche, rare, and vintage fragrances you won't find on most other lists. Sizes run from tiny 1/2ml vials up to 8ml sprays. Best for: discontinued, vintage, and hard-to-find scents, and for very small, cheap first tests of expensive fragrances.

Visit The Perfumed Court

Surrender to Chance

Surrender to Chance hand-decant authentic fragrances across mainstream, niche, indie, luxury, and vintage categories, including discontinued gems and sampler sets built around themes. They're based in Topeka, Kansas. Best for: sampler packs, indie and vintage exploration, and finding things the bigger shops don't stock.

Visit Surrender to Chance

MaxAroma

MaxAroma is a large fragrance retailer that also decants genuine fragrances into its own refillable 5ml travel atomizers, alongside brand discovery sets. Best for: a 5ml travel size of something you've already tested and liked, rather than a first 1ml test.

Visit MaxAroma

Niche Boutiques With Sample Programs

LuckyScent

LuckyScent is a niche fragrance retailer that sells a sample of nearly everything it carries, plus curated sample packs built around notes, themes, and new releases. Best for: discovering niche and independent brands you haven't heard of yet, not just sampling the famous ones.

Visit LuckyScent

Twisted Lily

Twisted Lily is a niche fragrance boutique carrying hard-to-find European and independent brands, with individual samples and one of the widest selections of brand discovery sets anywhere. Best for: working through a single house at a time with a proper discovery set.

Visit Twisted Lily

Ministry of Scent

Ministry of Scent is a San Francisco niche perfumery with a simple sample program: samples are $6 each, plus $6 shipping, and you can redeem the price of your samples and their shipping toward a full bottle of a scent you tried. Best for: niche sampling when you expect to buy the bottle from the same shop if you love it.

Visit Ministry of Scent

More Ways to Sample

- **Brand discovery sets, direct from the house** — Many fragrance houses sell their own discovery set on their website. It's often the cheapest way per ml to try a whole line, and some brands credit the set's price toward a full bottle. Always check the brand's own site before paying a third party for the same scents.
- **In-store counters** — Sephora, Ulta, Nordstrom, and Macy's will usually make or hand you small samples in store, and all of them sell discovery and travel sets. Selection is limited to what they stock, but it costs nothing to ask, and you get it today instead of waiting on shipping.
- **Scentbird** — A subscription, not a decant shop: one 8ml (0.27 oz) travel vial a month from a catalog of over 1,100 fragrances, chosen by you. Best for: a slow, steady drip of designer testing without placing individual sample orders. Visit Scentbird

- **Community swaps and marketplace sellers** — Reddit's r/fragranceswap, plus individual decant sellers on eBay and Etsy, can be great for splits of bottles the shops don't carry. This is also where the fakes live, so do the work: check the seller's history and reviews, ask for a photo of the original bottle your decant came from, and walk away from prices that look too good to be true.

What to Buy First

Start with 1ml–2ml samples. That's enough for 3–5 full wearings — plenty to know whether a fragrance belongs in your collection. Don't buy 10ml decants of things you haven't tested; that's just a smaller blind buy.

Test on skin, not paper. Paper strips lie. A fragrance's opening on a blotter tells you almost nothing about how it wears on you for eight hours. Spray skin, then live your day.

Give it a full day. First impressions are chemistry plus mood. Wear it through a workday. Notice the dry-down at hour six — that's the part you'll actually live with. If you wouldn't rewear it, it doesn't earn a bottle slot.

Sample with a question. Don't order random bestsellers. Pull three fragrances from your tracker's Wish List and order those. Every sample should answer something: *Is this my next bottle, or is it out?*

A $30 starter order that actually teaches you something: pick five samples around $5–6 each. Make three of them fragrances you're genuinely considering buying, and make two of them scent families you've never explored — if you live in fresh blues, try an oud and a gourmand. The point isn't to find five winners. It's to calibrate your nose and kill two or three bad ideas cheaply.

Accessories Worth Owning

Samples are small and easy to lose. A little organization goes a long way:

- **Travel atomizers** — decant from a full bottle into a 5ml atomizer instead of carrying glass everywhere. One per fragrance you're actively wearing that week.
- **Sample vial storage** — a small case or tray with dividers keeps 1ml–2ml vials upright and findable. Piling them in a drawer is how samples disappear.
- **Display trays** — for the bottles you've committed to. Keeps them out of sunlight, off the bathroom counter (humidity kills fragrance), and looking deliberate.

What to skip: bargain-bin plastic atomizers that leak in your pocket (glass and metal only), "mystery sample sets" from sellers you can't verify (authenticity matters — stick to the retailers above), and storing anything in the bathroom. Heat and humidity are fragrance killers.

Product links for the good stuff live at **smellywaterict.com** — picked for quality, not hype.

The Honest Bit

One link in this guide is an affiliate link: MicroPerfumes, labeled as a SmellyWaterICT partner where it appears. If you buy through it, I earn a commission from qualifying purchases — it costs you nothing and keeps the lights on at SmellyWaterICT. Every other retailer in this guide is listed for free, because they're worth listing. I only recommend retailers I'd hand my own money to.

Collect Intentionally. Wear Deliberately.

Track what you test. Every sample in this guide deserves a row in your collection tracker — what you tried, what you thought, whether it earned a bottle. The **Fragrance Intelligence Pro** tracker ($39, on Etsy and Gumroad) was built for exactly this: log the sample, rate it honestly, and let the data tell you what to buy next.