

Aromatherapy web notes

Categories of oils

There are some differing opinions as to which oils fall into which category. Oils are classified for simplicity and are described by their volatility, i.e. how quickly their odour evaporates. The most volatile oils are known as **top notes**, e.g. eucalyptus. Oils that evaporate at a medium volatility are known as **middle notes**, e.g. lavender. A **base note** has a low volatile rate and evaporates slowly. It is the last scent left on the skin in a blend, e.g. rose. Each note has specific characteristics.

Top notes:

- have a sharp and immediate aroma
- absorb quickly into the skin
- evaporate very quickly
- originate from citrus plants and some herbs
- are generally stimulating
- their aroma lasts approximately 24 hours

Middle notes:

- aromas create the heart of the fragrance and form the bulk of the blend
- aroma is more flowery and slower to register
- evaporate moderately quickly
- are absorbed into the skin moderately quickly
- aroma lasts approximately 2-3 days
- originate from flowers and herbs
- are slightly sedative
- are generally balancing

Base notes:

- slow evaporation
- aroma is heavier, floral, spicy and woody
- originate from woods, resins and flowers
- are absorbed into the skin slowly
- aroma can last up to one week
- generally relaxing to both the mind and body
- are often viscous oils
- fix the top and middle notes (i.e. hold the aroma together)

Synergy

Some oils when blended work together enhancing each other's properties. Others, however, clash and inhibit the blend's potential. Here are a few guidelines for achieving a synergistic blend:

- oils from the same botanical family blend well
- oils which share common constituents blend well
- oils within the same group generally blend well, e.g. spices, floral etc.
- lavender, jasmine and rose enhance any blend
- the aroma must be pleasing to the user

- your intuition will be important as you make your choice.
- the holistic approach is also important here in that the blend should work to balance all the body's needs. It should take into account, physical, emotional and psychological well being.

Harmony

Some aromatherapists believe that a good blend is created from a balance of oils from each category, i.e. top, middle and base. These notes create harmony in the blend and give the aroma lasting power. This is not always possible and does not really affect the therapeutic value of a blend. Odours are subjective and will be described differently by different individuals.