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Sniffing out fakes

A test for smells that can distinguish between real and counterfeit perfumes has been developed by chemists at the University of Illinois. To make the sensor, Kenneth Suslick impregnated small teflon discs with 24 compounds called metalloporphyrins, which contain metal ions. "These are really colourful compounds," says Suslick. Because gases cause specific colour changes in each metalloporphyrin, smelly gases can be identified by the colours on the discs. "It's like a litmus test for smells," says Suslick.

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