



Fragrance Flubs: 6 Mistakes You Should Never Make With Scented Candles

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Scented candles can be tiny miracle workers, creating a full-blown atmosphere with one swipe of a match. The right scent can encourage romance, set the tone for a party, or, if you're looking to sell, entice a potential buyer to linger.

"There's nothing better than walking to a room and smelling a beautiful aroma that enhances the aesthetics of the space," explains **Sue Phillips**, a fragrance expert with Scenterprises.

But it's surprisingly easy to go wrong with these waxy wonders, especially when you don't quite know how your chosen scent will affect your room. Whatever you do, avoid the following scented candle slip-ups so you don't become known as that crazy candle person.

1. Using a scented candle to mask odors





[Photo by Emma Blomfield](#)

Did you make fish last night? Are your dogs, lovable as they are, stinking up the house? Before you light an expensive scented candle, beware: Trying to mask odors with a candle doesn't work well, experts say.

"When you light a scented candle to hide an unpleasant aroma, you'll just end up with *both* odors competing in your room," says AC Brown, owner of the beauty and wellness company Goodnight Darling.

Your best bet: Open a window to air out the room, and then light your candle to bring in a fresh scent.

2. Buying cheapo scented candles



[Photo by Urrutia Design](#)

Truth: Bargain-bin scented candles smell rank. The type of wax you buy really matters. Shop for soy or beeswax, rather than cheaper paraffin or petroleum byproducts, and try to verify that the wick doesn't contain lead, recommends **Darla DeMorrow**, a home expert with HeartWork Organizing.

"I stick with locally made candles or ones from USA-based manufacturers," she says. Also look for dye- and allergen-free versions made without phthalates.

As for the candle's packaging, strive to marry the product's look with your home's appearance.

"Candles in colored glass are a bit dated," Brown says. "Opt for black, amber, or white, clear glass, as these fit with most decor."

3. Ignoring the room's purpose



[Photo by Oliver Burns](#)

Each area of the house lends itself to a particular set of scents. Make sure you aren't unwittingly sending the wrong message with your scented candles. Not sure what goes where? Here's the breakdown, room by room:

Kitchen: "This space typically doesn't require fragrance because there's nothing better than authentic food aromas," Phillips explains.

But if you can't bake a batch of cookies or whip up a beef stew, turn to a homey scent.

"Research shows that the smell of vanilla and apple pie are very compelling and can transport you back to childhood," she adds.

Consider the time of day when selecting a scented candle, says lifestyle guru **Cynthia O'Hara**, aka the Harried Housewife.

"Try lemony candles in the kitchen during the day, when a refreshing scent is welcome, and then vanilla in the later afternoon or evening, when a cozier feeling is desired," she suggests.

Living room: This spot is one of conviviality, so turn to warm, smooth sandalwood, one of the oldest aromas dating to ancient Egypt, Phillips says.

"This scent complements a crackling fireplace and will help you relax and entertain," she adds.

Bedroom: The need to unplug from our busy lives can be helped along by the right scent, especially in the boudoir.

"Lavender-scented candles or as a sachet under your pillowcase will encourage relaxation, aid in a good night's sleep, and help you wake up refreshed," Phillips notes.

Bathroom: It's dealer's choice for this spot, so pick a scent that's personally appealing. "Nearly any candle or scented spray will help neutralize odors and that mildewy smell," she says.

4. Forgetting the season



[Photo by AMR Interior Design & Drafting Ltd](#)

You wouldn't light pumpkin spice candles in the spring, right? That's a fragrance that screams cold weather and cozy slippers.

"Match your scent to the season, especially when entertaining," O'Hara says.

She suggests heady aromas like maple or cinnamon in the kitchen or dining room in fall, and bayberry and gingerbread in winter. Balsam and pine aromas are also great in the family and living rooms during colder months. Opt for light floral scents in the spring and summer.

5. Lighting more than two candles in a room





[Photo by Houzz](#)

Candles are like martinis. One is good, two are better—but a third can make you miserable.

"Too much fragrance can literally make people feel sick," Brown warns.

DeMorrow agrees. "A person can go 'nose blind' in about 15 minutes, which might lead you to light more candles—but someone new walking into the room might be overwhelmed," she says.

And scent travels, so light just one or two candles to fill a space.

6. Lighting them and forgetting about them





[Photo by David Churchill - Architectural Photographer](#)

We shouldn't have to say it, but we're going to anyway: **Do not leave the house or go to bed with candles still lit.**

"Keep them away from drapes, bedding, and tablecloths, and put them on coasters, not directly on the table's surface," says **Julie Coraccio**, a home organizing professional with Reawaken Your Brilliance.

"Allow 3 feet of open space around the candle, and set a timer as a reminder to blow it out," adds DeMorrow.