

Designer Handbags : Real vs

FAKE



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So you finally found it at the flea market or on a second-hand sales website: this little vintage wonder you couldn't afford until now. The deal is amazing, and you are on the verge of falling for this designer bag. But not so fast! Before closing the deal with the seller, you have to make sure that you are actually about to buy an original piece and not a counterfeit (If you do buy legal knock-offs, be sure you don't pay much and double check the quality!).

If you have troubles recognizing a genuine handbag from a fake, you should know that there are numerous signs that can point to a bag's lack of authenticity. As a matter of facts, you will be surprised to see how trivial it can be most of the time, to distinguish the original from the imitation.

Here is a checklist of the most common signs that immediately distinguish a genuine bag from a fake.

The Overall Design



This seems pretty obvious, but most people actually dive straight into analysing the details of a bag, before visually appreciating it as a whole. The bag's design should be your first clue about its authenticity. Some fake designs are obviously fake, but others may require a little more research to catch. Odds are, if you do not recognize the design as a Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Gucci or Prada, it may not be.

The Stitching

Look closely at the stitching of the bag. The seams and stitching of the bag should be even and clean. Sloppy, slanted, and uneven stitching is a sign of a poorly made, and therefore, a fake bag. Designer bags will always have quality stitching because it is part of the designer's reputation to produce a quality item. Most counterfeit bags are worked off from photographs: the stitching will therefore miss a couple of stitches and the pockets are almost never in the right place.



A good indicator of a counterfeit footprint is the number of stitches per inch (SPI) of the seam. SPI (stitches per inch) refers to the number of stitches in a single inch of seam. A higher SPI count will translate into greater overall seam strength, (and therefore a higher quality handbag). Authentic designer bags will generally have a higher SPI count than many of the counterfeits on the market.

The Tags or Labels



Check the inside tags as they are a dead giveaway of a knock-off. Are they stamped into leather or hand-stitched? An obvious fake will have no name on the inside tag. Check outside tags as well because many designers include authenticity labels on the outside of the bag. If the tags don't look hand-stitched, stamped, or are even not there, it's probably a fake.

The Material



The material can tell you a lot about the bag's quality. If the real bag normally has a pattern inside then the fake bags with mainly have just one colour throughout the inside. If it's leather, it should smell like leather. If it's supposed to be durable canvas, it should be strong and well stitched. It is often difficult to distinguish by feel between real leather and synthetic leather due to the former's lack of distinctive texture of the surface layer, but in general real leather is rough to touch, unlike synthetic leather which is elastic when stretched with force. Real leather will also have a typical leather smell, which is not present in synthetic materials. There should also be little wear to the bag and the bag should be sturdy. A flimsy bag is a typical red flag that the bag may be a fake. Also, legitimate bags use brass or gold metal, while many fakes use plastic with a layer of gold paint.

The Lining

Pay attention to the interior lining. Most knock-offs use cheap plastic or suede to line their bags. If the interior sounds like paper rubbing together, then it's not the real thing. A real bag may be lined with a variety of textiles, depending on the specific design, but most are lined with canvas, fine micro monogram textile, cross-grain leather, polyester, or microfiber suede. Again, check the stitching of the lining if relevant, and observe if the bag has a double stitching (not always the case).



Wear Break-In



Although this is post-purchase, how your bag wears in can be a sign of its authenticity. For example, the leather on the handle, after a few weeks, should look like a good worn leather jacket does. It should have an "aged look". Stitching should stay intact and not begin to fray. Zipper handles that fall off early on indicate a fake.

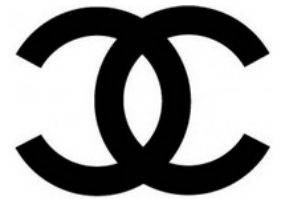
The Zipper Manufacturer



The zipper is often an overlooked part of the bag or purse, but yet one that helps differentiate a real from a knockoff. Usually the underside of the zipper will have a logo or a signature. Many handbag manufacturers use the same high quality zipper manufacturer (like YKK) on all of their bags. Also, high quality zippers will have smooth zipping.

The Logo

Logos are often a slip-up area for copies. They may have spelled the name slightly differently or hold typographical error, such as Carter instead of Cartier. And, the more popular the "knocked off" bag, the greater the need to be careful because it's easy to be taken advantage of. When you look at the stitching on the sides and you see the "LV" it should be continued onto the other side of the bag and this also goes for the other symbols on the bag. And most knockoff Chanel bags have interlocking Os instead of Cs, which actually makes it legal to sell but is, of course, a fake. They snip it to make it look real when it comes out of a dust bag.



The Serial Number

This is a stamp inside that says the brand (it may not be in all bags). Often times the serial number is still fake, but will look different and be a different font. Beware of serial numbers that aren't stamped into the fabric and instead printed only in ink.

For instance, the majority of Louis Vuitton bags made after the early 1980's have a production code stamped on the bag. Since the 1990's, the code includes two letters followed by four numbers. Before the 1990's, the code was a one or two letter code followed by three or four numbers. Look in the right place. Usually, the date code is located beneath the D-ring.



Tips

While an original designer bag is not cheap, consider it an investment that will stand the test of time and make you the center of attention wherever you go.

It is advisable to buy designer handbags only from a store or authorized dealers. However if you consider buying it elsewhere, like at the flea market, pay a visit to the main store beforehand. Analyze the bag from all angles for details and make sure those details are present in the bag that you eventually purchase.

4 Clues That Should Put A Flea In Your Ear

Unrealistic Price

Designer bags cost a lot of money because they are well crafted and they're status symbols. If the price is too good to be true, then it is, and the bag's a fake. If you do buy legal knock-offs, be sure you don't pay much and double check the quality!

Evasive Sellers

Ask the vendor if the bag is real, a copy, or a fake. Judge for yourself the ring of authenticity from the answer; keep your emotions in check and your common sense at the forefront. Sellers who avoid answering questions or are evasive have something to hide

Color Variations

Although some variations will be blatant, others may be very subtle. Be sure to have a close inspection.

Plastic Wrapped Around The Handles

Be wary of bags that have plastic wrapped around the handles. The oxidizing natural cowhide leather does not need this protective plastic, and bags that come with that plastic might be fakes.

Useful online resources by wikiHow :

How to Spot Fake **Louis Vuitton** Purses:

<http://www.wikihow.com/Spot-Fake-Louis-Vuitton-Purses>

Detect A Faux Coach Handbag From An Authentic **Coach**
Handbag:

<http://www.wikihow.com/Spot-a-Fake-Coach-Bag>

How to Spot a Fake **Vera Bradley** Purse:

<http://www.wikihow.com/Spot-a-Fake-Vera-Bradley-Purse>

How to Spot a Fake **Prada** Purse:

<http://www.wikihow.com/Spot-a-Fake-Prada-Purse>

How to Spot Fake **Gucci** Bags:

<http://www.wikihow.com/Spot-Fake-Gucci-Bags>

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