

An idiot's guide to buying a fake Rolex

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4. The genuine Rolex movement sweeps smoothly round at about 28,800 revs per hour each second is broken down into eight steps. Even when a fake uses a Swiss made movement, the second hand's ticking is usually visibly jerky.

5. Over where 'Swiss made' appears, the brand's logo is

laser etched into the crystal. In a genuine Rolex, this is made

up of hundreds of dots set at different heights throughout the crystal

(so it doesn't create a weakness in the glass) and as such is barely visible to see it clearly you have to look through a loupe (the small magnifying glass used by jewellers and watchmakers).

6. If you remove a Rolex bracelet you should find the watch's case number and model number engraved on the side at six o'clock and 12 o'clock .

(The watch on the left is the fake)

In the old days, counterfeit Rolexes were so poorly made that not even a blind chimp would mistake one for the real thing. They conferred upon the wearer an aura of tacky desperation, not cool. Nowadays, it's a different story. The old tell tale giveaways sloppy printing, soft metal and cheap quartz movements that made the second hand clunk its way round the dial have been eradicated.

Good fakes feel substantial, keep decent time and have the

patina of high quality. Some are so convincing that the only way to tell they're fake is to take the back off.

Most now use proper mechanical movements and sometimes boast transparent 'exhibition' backs so you can see the wonders of horology for yourself.

Even the word 'replica' suggests that the product you're buying is legal ish a 'tribute' to the original rather than a blatant rip off.

As a result of all these improvements, the counterfeiters now charge much higher prices. Their justification? That just as with supermarket 'own brand' goods, you're buying practically the same thing as the genuine article, but without some greedy brand taking a huge profit.

The first website I visit let's call it website A sells replica Rolexes for a reassuringly expensive 400.

Yes, it seems a lot, but surely they wouldn't have the brass neck to charge such astronomical prices for a fake unless the quality matched the outlay? Best Fake ID Then again, they're criminals, so moral rectitude and offering value for money probably aren't high on their list of priorities.

Throughout its pages, Website A goes to great pains to stress that, unlike other unscrupulous operators, they're in the business of selling that gloriously oxymoronic item, the genuine replica. 'You will not find the same quality replicas elsewhere,' it trumpets. 'There may be people who try to represent other fake watches as being Swiss made but only we can guarantee it.' How exactly they do this isn't clear.

Mind you, Website A certainly does come across as reputable. They insist they'll give you a full refund if you're not satisfied with your watch, and even mend it when (I mean if) it breaks.

US customs officials destroy a consignment of fake watches

If you fancy a model that isn't shown on their existing range, they'll make it for you to order within three weeks. But the real clincher, for me, is that they invite you to pay using PayPal, the money transfer system owned by eBay. If PayPal have given Website A an account, they must be legitimate, right? where to get a fake id

The watches pictured on the site look great. I decide that for a man of my standing only the finest fake Rolex will do, so I fire off an order for a platinum Yachtmaster, type in my credit card details and press 'Send'.

The next site I visit (Website B) offers watches at considerably cheaper prices replica Rolexes cost a mere 100. Bargain! My eye is caught by a Submariner with a black bezel.

OK, so they do warn me that in spite of being a diving watch, my fake Submariner isn't actually water resistant but hey, for a hundred quid, who's complaining? Once again, I place my order. My new watch, I am informed, will be with me within three weeks.

Counterfeiting is one of the world's biggest growth industries and now accounts for five to seven per cent of all global trade. In the UK alone, the black market is worth more than 9 billion. It makes me wonder, have I just broken the law?

I talk to David Grome, a barrister who specialises in prosecuting cases relating to counterfeit goods. He assures me that while it is theoretically possible to say that someone who knowingly purchases a counterfeit watch is aiding and abetting the commission of the offence by the seller, how to get a fake id buyers in the UK (unlike those in France and Italy) are never prosecuted.