

# KNOW YOUR STUFF

# ALCOHOL

AKA: booze, drinks, bevvies & sauce plus brand names



## WHAT IS IT?

A liquid for drinking which is available in a wide range of colours and flavours, but also strengths; spirits such as vodka contain around 40 per cent alcohol, whereas wine is around 12 per cent, and beer and cider are usually around 4 per cent. A unit is a way of expressing the amount of alcohol that is in a drink, and is usually specified on the product packaging, which gives a way of comparing different products.

## THE HIGHS

Drinking alcohol can reduce feelings of anxiety and inhibitions, making social interaction feel easier.

## THE LOWS

Immediate effects can include slurred speech, blurred vision, and loss of coordination and judgement, which can lead to injury and accidents. Testosterone levels rise (in both men and women), increasing sexual drive which can lead to risky sexual behaviour, and also causing aggression which may lead to arguments and fights. Alcohol mixes badly with many other drugs, including medicines such as those used for mental health conditions and even conditions such as hayfever. Drinking more alcohol affects judgment and decision making, so someone may do or say things that they otherwise wouldn't. There is also a risk of alcohol poisoning – effectively an overdose – which can cause someone to pass out and can be fatal.

Regularly drinking more alcohol than the maximum advised (14 units per week for adults, but no more than two or three units on one occasion) can cause all kinds of damage to the brain and body, increasing the risk of serious health problems such as cancer, liver disease and heart issues. Dependence can creep up, partly because tolerance to alcohol builds the more someone drinks, and this means there is a chance that stopping will cause withdrawal symptoms (which can range from sweating, shaking, vomiting and anxiety to hallucinations and fits, and can even be fatal).

The laws around alcohol are complicated, but broadly it is illegal for under 18s to buy alcohol, and many places operate a Challenge 21 (or 25) scheme which means that sales can be refused to anyone who can't prove their age if asked. The police have powers to confiscate alcohol from under 18s in public places, and there are also laws around drink driving and being a risk to yourself or others as a result of drinking.

Research shows that starting to drink before the age of 15 is linked to increased risks in terms of behaviour and physical and mental health. There are also risks to teenagers who are older than this, because drinking alcohol can affect the normal development of the brain and body, so 15-17 year olds are advised to either steer clear of it completely, or only drink a maximum of a unit or two no more than once a week.

									
Pint of strong BEER/LAGER/CIDER 5.2% ABV 3 UNITS	Pint of STRONG LAGER 8% ABV 4.5 UNITS	500ml bottle of STRONGER CIDER 7.5% ABV 3.8 UNITS	250ml glass of RED OR WHITE WINE 13% ABV 3.3 UNITS	25ml single SPIRIT AND MIXER 40% ABV 1 UNIT	50ml double SPIRIT AND MIXER 40% ABV 2 UNITS	275ml bottle of ALCO-POP 5% ABV 1.4 UNITS	Pint of LAGER 4% ABV 2.3 UNITS	750ml bottle of WINE 13.5% ABV 10 UNITS	Pint of BITTER 5% ABV 2.8 UNITS

For more information go to:

**FRANK**

<https://www.talktofrank.com/drug/alcohol>

Copyright © 2026, The Daniel Spargo-Mabbs Foundation, all rights reserved. Material published by DSMF must be appropriately credited, may not be adapted, and may not be used for commercial purposes.



**DSM** foundation  
The drug education charity

[www.dsmfoundation.org.uk](http://www.dsmfoundation.org.uk)

The Wellbeing Hub  
— from Teen Tips —



[www.teentips.co.uk](http://www.teentips.co.uk)