

# KNOW YOUR STANDARDS



## Toolkit for public libraries

A guide to implementing the Know Your Standards program in your community.



# Know your standards

## TOOLKIT FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

A 'standard drink' is the measure of alcohol used to work out safe drinking levels. However, research shows that an individual's understanding of the concept of a standard drink, their use of it and their drinking practices (size of usual drinks) often differs from official definitions. There is a tendency to over-size drinks and to under-estimate the alcohol content of beverages<sup>1</sup>. A question asked in the 2012 Annual Alcohol Poll found that many Australians are unaware of the number of standard drinks in various alcohol products<sup>2</sup>. Also, although 65% of Australian adults were aware of the existence of the Australian Alcohol Guidelines in a 2020 poll, only 7% were able to correctly identify the number of drinks a person should have in a single occasion to minimise health harms<sup>3</sup>.

According to the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE):

*Having an awareness of what constitutes a standard drink is important for a range of health and social reasons. To know if you're okay to drive, people need to understand how many standard drinks they've had. Also, to know if people are consuming alcohol at low risk levels and within the Alcohol Guidelines, people need to know how many standard drinks they've had.<sup>4</sup>*

Know Your Standards is an alcohol education program and awareness campaign delivered in public libraries in NSW. The aim of the program is to provide community members with information and resources to improve their knowledge and awareness of standard drinks and the Australian Alcohol Guidelines. Having an awareness of what constitutes a standard drink can assist people to know if they are consuming alcohol at low risk levels and within the guidelines.

The program:

- provides people with the knowledge and tools about standard drinks to help them make informed decisions and choices about drinking
- communicates approaches and strategies for reducing risks associated with alcohol and drinking
- provides people with discussion points around alcohol issues.

The program in public libraries consists of:

- print and online information resources
- practical demonstrations of the differences in what constitutes a standard drink for commonly used alcoholic beverages
- events and activities.

The information in this toolkit is developed and provided by Drug Info, State Library of NSW and is a guide to implementing the Know Your Standards program in public libraries. Drug Info provides up-to-date information about alcohol and other drugs via a dedicated website and through local public libraries in New South Wales. Drug Info is a partnership between the NSW Ministry of Health and the State Library of NSW.

<sup>1</sup> "My drink is larger than yours"? A literature review of self-defined drink sizes and standard drinks. Devos-Comby L, Lange JE. *Curr Drug Abuse Rev.* 2008 Jun; 1(2):162-76.

<sup>2</sup> Awareness of standard drinks and the Guidelines. *Annual Alcohol Poll 2012*, Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) [fare.org.au/annual-alcohol-poll-2012/](http://fare.org.au/annual-alcohol-poll-2012/)

<sup>3</sup> Awareness of guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking. *Annual Alcohol Poll 2020*, Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) [fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/ALCPOLL-2020.pdf](http://fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/ALCPOLL-2020.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Awareness of standard drinks and the Guidelines. *Annual Alcohol Poll 2012*, (FARE) [fare.org.au/annual-alcohol-poll-2012/](http://fare.org.au/annual-alcohol-poll-2012/)

## STANDARD DRINKS

### What is a standard drink?

A 'standard drink' is a unit of measurement. In the same way as one metre measures a particular distance travelled, one standard drink measures a particular amount of alcohol consumed (or poured). The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) defines standard drink sizes to establish guidelines for alcohol use and work out safe drinking levels.

**A standard drink in Australia contains 10g of alcohol.**

This is always the same, no matter what type of alcoholic beverage or how it is served. As some drinks are stronger than others (for example, low-strength beer is around 2.7% whereas spirits are typically 40%), the higher the alcohol concentration of a drink, the less liquid it contains.

One Australian standard drink is equal to approximately:

- 285 mL of full strength beer (4.6% alc. vol)
- 425 mL of low strength beer (2.7% alc. vol)
- 255mL of cider (5% alc. vol)
- 100 mL of wine (12% alc. vol)
- 100 mL of champagne (12% alc. vol)
- 30 mL of spirits (40% alc. vol)

Beer		Wine		Spirits		Cider	
Light	Full Strength	Red / White	Champagne	Shot	Pre-Mix	Middy	Bottle
							
2.7% Alc./Vol	4.6% Alc./Vol	12% Alc./Vol	12% Alc./Vol	40% Alc./Vol	5% Alc./Vol	5% Alc./Vol	5% Alc./Vol
285ml	285ml	100ml	100ml	30ml	375ml	285ml	375ml
<b>0.6</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>1.5</b>

### Serving size vs standard drink size

Often, alcoholic drinks which are purchased contain more than one standard drink. A serving of alcohol in a pub or club can be larger than a 'standard' drink, for example a standard drink of wine is 100ml but a typical serve may be 150ml.

*Interesting Fact: When at a licenced venue, the line on a wine glass (plimsoll line) does NOT indicate a standard drink measure. This line indicates approximately 150ml which enables the venue to serve 5 glasses per bottle.*

### Labelling of standard drinks

In Australia, all bottles, cans and casks containing alcoholic beverages are required by food labelling law to state on the label the approximate number of standard drinks they contain. Labels on alcoholic beverages display the number of standard drinks and alcohol content (%) each specific type of alcohol/beverage contains.

[foodstandards.gov.au/consumer/labelling/Labelling-of-alcoholic-beverages](http://foodstandards.gov.au/consumer/labelling/Labelling-of-alcoholic-beverages)



Beer



Spirits



Wine

# Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol (Australian Alcohol Guidelines)

## SUMMARY OF THE GUIDELINES

### Guideline 1: Reducing the risk of alcohol-related harm for adults

To reduce the risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury, healthy men and women should drink no more than 10 standard drinks a week and no more than 4 standard drinks on any one day.

The less you drink, the lower your risk of harm from alcohol.

### Guideline 2: Children and people under 18 years of age

To reduce the risk of injury and other harms to health, children and people under 18 years of age should not drink alcohol.

### Guideline 3: Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding

A. To prevent harm from alcohol to their unborn child, pregnant people or those planning a pregnancy should not drink alcohol.

B. For those who are breastfeeding, not drinking alcohol is safest for their baby.

Counting standard drinks can help assist people to stay within the Australian Alcohol Guidelines:

**Alcohol Guidelines**  
Australian guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol

**1: HEALTHY ADULTS**  
Drink no more than 10 standard drinks a week  
AND  
no more than 4 standard drinks on any one day  
to reduce the risk of harm from alcohol.  
The less you drink, the lower your risk of harm.

**2: CHILDREN AND PEOPLE UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE**  
Should not drink alcohol  
to reduce the risk of harm from alcohol.

**3: WOMEN WHO ARE PREGNANT OR BREASTFEEDING**  
Should not drink alcohol  
to prevent harm from alcohol to their unborn child or baby.

**What is a standard drink?**

<b>LIGHT BEER</b> 425 ml   2.7% alc/vol	<b>MID STRENGTH BEER</b> 375 ml   3.5% alc/vol	<b>FULL STRENGTH BEER</b> 285 ml   4.9% alc/vol	<b>REGULAR CIDER</b> 285 ml   4.9% alc/vol
<b>SPARKLING WINE</b> 100 ml   13% alc/vol	<b>WINE</b> 100 ml   13% alc/vol	<b>FORTIFIED WINE</b> (e.g. sherry, port) 60 ml   20% alc/vol	<b>SPIRITS</b> (e.g. vodka, gin, rum, whiskey) 30 ml   40% alc/vol

The standard drink is defined in the Australia and New Zealand Food Standards Code.

www.nhmrc.gov.au/alcohol

[nhmrc.gov.au/health-advice/alcohol](http://nhmrc.gov.au/health-advice/alcohol)

## KNOW YOUR STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Each library service in NSW has been supplied with a standard drink educational pouring & display kit (resin kit) for use in public programs, displays as part of the Know Your Standards program. The resin kit comes with an interactive activity outline which enables any facilitator to deliver an interactive and informative session regarding standard drinks. The kit can be used with small or large groups.

### Standard drink educational pouring & display kit (resin kit)



The pack contains:

- 7 plastic glasses demonstrating a standard drink of different alcoholic beverages, including light beer/heavy beer, spirits, cider, wine and champagne
- 7 x 425ml empty plastic glasses (labelled with a different alcoholic drink (heavy beer, light beer, cider, wine, champagne, scotch & tequila)
- 1 AlcoCup
- interactive activity outline
- carry bag

Additional supplies of AlcoCups are available on request (subject to availability)

The aim of the kit is to:

- increase clients' knowledge of standard drinks
- introduce clients to the different strengths of alcoholic beverages
- visually demonstrate the differences in what constitutes a standard drink for commonly used alcoholic beverages
- provide clients with engaging and interactive activities to increase sustainable learning regarding alcohol.



The resin kit is supported by the print resources held in public libraries such as the Know Your Standards pocket guides and postcards and information on the Drug Info website. The print resources reinforce learning concepts regarding standard drinks and the Australian Alcohol Guidelines.

The resin kit can be used in library displays or to deliver an educational standard drinks session. After attending a session clients will:

- understand what a standard drink is for different alcoholic beverages
- be able to use resources, such as the AlcoCup and standard drinks pocket guide or postcard, to develop a greater understanding of standard drinks
- understand the importance of knowing about standard drinks to reduce the harms and risks for themselves and others (Australian Alcohol Guidelines).

## Print support material

These items are available to support events and activities and can also be used in library displays. More information is available from the State Library website:

[sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/services-drug-info-public-libraries/know-your-standards-program](http://sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/services-drug-info-public-libraries/know-your-standards-program)

# KNOW YOUR STANDARDS

**Standard Drinks Guide**



in your public library  
& online

A standard drink contains 10 grams of pure alcohol. Alcoholic drinks which are purchased often contain more than one standard drink. Labels on alcoholic beverages display the amount of standard drinks and alcohol content (%) each specific drink contains. For further information about standard drinks visit our website:  
[www.druginfo.sl.nsw.gov.au](http://www.druginfo.sl.nsw.gov.au)

Beer		Wine		Spirits		Cider	
Light	Full Strength	Red / White	Champagne	Shot	Pre-Mix	Middy	Bottle
							
2.7% Alc./Vol	4.6% Alc./Vol	12% Alc./Vol	12% Alc./Vol	40% Alc./Vol	5% Alc./Vol	5% Alc./Vol	5% Alc./Vol
285ml	285ml	100ml	100ml	30ml	375ml	285ml	375ml
<b>0.6</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>1.5</b>

### Standard drinks pocket card

This business card sized pocket card features illustrated standard drink measurements for light beer, full strength beer, red/white wine, champagne, spirits (shots and pre-mix) and cider (middy and bottle) as well as tips for keeping safe.

Pocket cards can be ordered free of charge by using the online order form:

[plsnsw.wufoo.com/forms/drug-info-promotional-material-order-form/](http://plsnsw.wufoo.com/forms/drug-info-promotional-material-order-form/)

### Resources and downloads

A range of resources are available to download from the Drug Info section of the Public Library Services website:

[pls.sl.nsw.gov.au/statewide-services/drug-info-public-libraries/know-your-standards-program](http://pls.sl.nsw.gov.au/statewide-services/drug-info-public-libraries/know-your-standards-program)

- Standard drinks guide - use this chart for your display or for a standard drinks guessing game activity
- Images of standard drinks kit and standard drinks outlines for use in social media, web and print
- Resources about the Australian Alcohol Guidelines including the Guideline Recommendation Infographic and What is a Standard Drink Infographic
- Standard drink quiz - the quiz can also be used as a handout as the answers are printed on the reverse.

## LIBRARY DISPLAYS

### Books

Use these books from your Drug Info collections in library displays:

- Alcohol, other drugs and pregnancy 5<sup>th</sup> edition
- The grog book
- A guide to coping: support for families faced with problematic drug use
- Healthy spirit healthy community: a guide to drugs and alcohol within our community
- A quick guide to drugs & alcohol 3<sup>rd</sup> edition
- Teenagers, alcohol and drugs: what your kids really want and need to know about alcohol and drugs

### Pamphlets

A list of pamphlets relating to alcohol is available on the Public Library Services website, along with information on how to order them:

[pls.sl.nsw.gov.au/statewide-services/drug-info-public-libraries/delivering-drug-info-your-library](https://pls.sl.nsw.gov.au/statewide-services/drug-info-public-libraries/delivering-drug-info-your-library)

- Alcohol: the facts
- Your guide to dealing with alcohol
- Your pocket guide to a good night out
- Your guide to dealing with teenagers and alcohol
- Your guide to dealing with teenagers and grog



## WHEN AND HOW YOU CAN USE YOUR RESIN KIT

Here are some ideas for using your Know Your Standards kits in your library:



- Hold a display or event during the Youth Week to showcase the collection and service in your local community
- Hold a standard drinks session for library/council staff
- Give a standard drinks session to library reading groups, youth groups or other client groups
- Run a stall at a local health and wellbeing expo
- Offer to deliver a standard drinks session as part of local driving workshops
- Host a presentation by local police on alcohol and young people/partying and run a Know Your Standards session
- Hold the Know Your Standards Quiz in your library. Offer a small incentive prize to each person who participates such as a Drug Info pen or use the Know Your Standards pocket guides
- Run a session with mother's groups, baby bounce groups to promote the Australian alcohol guidelines and recommendations about not drinking during pregnancy
- On-train community workers or youth groups in running a Know Your Standards session using an AlcoCup and the standard drinks activity.

### Other times of the year to promote Know Your Standards

- Seniors' Week - the age group with the greatest number of Australians who drink daily is 70+ years (National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2019 - [aihw.gov.au/reports/illegal-use-of-drugs/national-drug-strategy-household-survey-2019/contents/summary](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/illegal-use-of-drugs/national-drug-strategy-household-survey-2019/contents/summary))
- Law Week - drink driving is a factor in about one in every seven crashes in NSW where someone loses their life (Centre for Road Safety, NSW Government) [roadsafety.transport.nsw.gov.au/staying-safe/alcohol-drugs/drink-driving/index.html](https://roadsafety.transport.nsw.gov.au/staying-safe/alcohol-drugs/drink-driving/index.html)
- Science Week – team up with a local high school or your library or council youth group to run an experiment to see how different sized glasses affect how people pour a standard drink
- Host a session during “party season” – combine with a mocktail event
- Hold sessions prior to Schoolies – offer to deliver in schools or at an HSC ‘Lock-In’ event



## IDEAS FOR ACTIVITIES

A great way to engage with people is to set up a stall or a protected space which gives you a real opportunity to start a conversation. An excellent way of bringing up the subject of standard drinks and alcohol use is to engage clients with an interactive tool such as the standard drink educational pouring and display kit and the AlcoCup.



1. Ask the person if they've heard of a standard drink before. If they have heard of the term ask them what the definition of a standard drink is and what they think it is used for.

*(Key message: A 'standard drink' is the measure of alcohol used to work out safe drinking levels. A standard drink in Australia contains 10g of alcohol.)*

Ask the person what their favourite drink is and use the Know Your Standards postcard or pocket guide to show how much liquid is contained in it. You can also refer to the poster or use the glasses from the resin kit.

2. Ask the person to pour their usual amount of wine or spirits into a wine glass or tumbler glass. Ask the person about the alcohol content of the specific type of alcohol that they have poured. If incorrect provide the correct information as outlined on the AlcoCup and then display the relevant resin filled glass to compare. Use an AlcoCup Standard Drinks Measure Cup to measure the standard drinks contained in their poured serving.

*(Props required: wine glass, tumbler glass, resin kit glasses, AlcoCup, coloured water in a jug or old bottle of wine or spirits)*

3. Ask the person to pour what they think is 1 standard drink of wine, beer or spirit into a wine glass or tumbler glass or plastic cup. Ask the person about the alcohol content of the specific type of alcohol that they have poured. If incorrect provide the correct information as outlined on the AlcoCup Standard Drinks Measure Cup and then display the relevant resin filled glass to compare. Use an AlcoCup to measure the number of standard drinks contained in the serving.

*(Props required: wine glass, tumbler glass, plastic cup, resin kit, AlcoCup, coloured water in a jug or old bottle of wine or spirits)*

4. Run a guessing game quiz. Ask people to guess the number of standard drinks contained in a range of alcoholic beverages e.g. a bottle of whisky, a shot of tequila, a cask of wine. Use empty bottles/containers or print out a page of pictures. People could note down their name and the number of standard drinks they think are on the table or sheet, with a prize going to the winner.
5. Collect a range of empty bottles of alcohol e.g. beer, wine, champagne and spirits. Write down the number of standard drinks each bottle contains on a separate sticky note and put to one side. Cover the labels with sticky notes to hide the standard drink labels from view. Display the bottles in a row.

Ask people to match the labelled sticky notes to the bottles according to the number of standard drinks they believe each one contains. Once all bottles have been matched with a sticky note reveal the standard drink labels to the participants to compare their answers. This activity can also be used in a group setting.

*(Props required: empty alcohol bottles, sticky notes)*



## PROMOTION AND REPORTING

### REPORTING

IMPORTANT! Don't forget to report your event or activity to Drug Info using our event activity reporting form. Please use the online form to report every Know Your Standards event or activity you undertake at your library: [plsnsw.wufoo.com/forms/event-and-activity-report-drug-info-and-fla](https://plsnsw.wufoo.com/forms/event-and-activity-report-drug-info-and-fla)

### Social Media

Twitter, Facebook and other forms of social media are effective methods of communication. You could use these channels to provide links to useful online resources in order to reinforce the messages and to support people to make informed decisions and choices about drinking.

Use the following hashtags on Twitter (and Instagram/Tumblr):

#knowyourstandards

#nswpubliclibraries

#druginfoibsnsw

#### Sample tweets:

*Do you know how many standard drinks are in your favourite drink? #knowyourstandards @druginfoibsnsw*

*Do you know how much wine (beer/scotch/tequila/champagne etc) is in a standard drink? Visit XX Library to find out #knowyourstandards #nswpubliclibraries*

### Images

Post your Know Your Standards images to the Drug Info Facebook page or email images to [drug.info@sl.nsw.gov.au](mailto:drug.info@sl.nsw.gov.au) for inclusion on Facebook.

Please note that any images received will be attributed to your library and include a caption of the event. We understand most libraries now have consent to release photos for use in print and social media. When you send your photos you are agreeing to them being used in print and social media (online). If you do not want photos to be used online please do not send them. We look forward to receiving and sharing your photos.

## REFERENCES

### Guidelines and standards

[Australian guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol](http://nhmrc.gov.au/health-advice/alcohol). National Health and Medical Research Council  
<nhmrc.gov.au/health-advice/alcohol>

[Standard drinks guide](http://health.gov.au/health-topics/alcohol/about-alcohol/standard-drinks-guide). Australian Government. Department of Health.  
<health.gov.au/health-topics/alcohol/about-alcohol/standard-drinks-guide>

[Labelling of alcoholic beverages](http://foodstandards.gov.au/consumer/labelling/Labelling-of-alcoholic-beverages). Food Standards Australia  
< foodstandards.gov.au/consumer/labelling/Labelling-of-alcoholic-beverages >

### Articles and reports

"My drink is larger than yours"? A literature review of self-defined drink sizes and standard drinks. Devos-Comby L, Lange JE. *Curr Drug Abuse Rev*. 2008 Jun; 1(2):162-76.

My cup runneth over: young people's lack of knowledge of low-risk drinking guidelines. de Visser RO, Birch JD. *Drug Alcohol Rev*. 2012 Mar; 31(2):206-12. Epub 2011 Nov 3.

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Awareness of guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking. [Annual Alcohol Poll 2020](http://fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/ALCPOLL-2020.pdf), Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE)  
<fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/ALCPOLL-2020.pdf>

### Statistics

Alcohol is the most widely used drug in Australia.

- The age group with the greatest number of Australians who drink daily is 70+ years.
- Around 1 in 4 (25%) people aged 14 years or older consumed more than 10 standard drinks per week on average.
- Around 1 in 3 (31%) people aged 14 and over consumed alcohol in ways that put their health at risk.
- Around 1 in 5 (21%) people aged 14 and over in 2022–2023 were verbally abused, physically abused, or put in fear by someone under the influence of alcohol in the previous 12 months.
- Around 3 in 10 (31%) people aged 14-17 consumed alcohol in the previous 12 months.

Source: National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2022-23

< [aihw.gov.au/reports/illicit-use-of-drugs/national-drug-strategy-household-survey/](http://aihw.gov.au/reports/illicit-use-of-drugs/national-drug-strategy-household-survey/) >