

The facts about...

# Alcohol and **the law**

**Key things  
you need  
to know**

for the facts  
**drinkaware.co.uk**

## **The sale, purchase and consumption of alcohol in the UK is regulated by law - but some of these laws are more straightforward than others.**

Read on for the essential facts on UK alcohol laws and get the lowdown on when you can buy alcohol and the best ways to prove your age.

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## It is against the law:

- to sell alcohol to someone under 18 anywhere, and can lead to a maximum fine of £20,000 (1) for bar staff/managers or premises may eventually be shut down.
- for an adult to buy or attempt to buy alcohol on behalf of someone under 18.
- for someone under 18 to buy alcohol, attempt to buy alcohol or to be sold alcohol.

### Retailers can reserve the right to:

- refuse the sale of alcohol to an adult if they're accompanied by a child and think the alcohol is being bought for the child.

### The police have the power to:

- confiscate alcohol from someone, no matter what their age, if they believe it has been, or will be drunk by, someone under 18 in a public place.

### ID for alcohol: proving your age

Acceptable forms of ID to prove you are over 18 include:

- a photo driving licence
- a passport
- a proof of age card, such as the PASS card from the national Proof of Age Standards Scheme.

It's a criminal offence to use false or borrowed ID to gain entry to licensed premises or to buy alcohol. The maximum penalty is a £5,000 fine and up to 10 years in prison. (2)

### References

- 1 Home Office, Persistently selling alcohol to children, 2012. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/98110/selling-alcohol-to-children.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/98110/selling-alcohol-to-children.pdf)
- 2 New Guidance to help pubs, clubs and shops spot fake ID. Available at: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/media-centre/news/Fake-ID-guidance>



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## Challenge 25

Challenge 25 is a scheme that encourages anyone who is over 18 but looks under 25 to carry acceptable ID when they want to buy alcohol. Challenge 25 builds on the Challenge 21 campaign introduced by the British Beer and Pub Association, who represent the beer and pub sector, in 2005. It's now run by the Retail of Alcohol Standards Group, which represents alcohol retailers.

If you're a licensee or involved in selling alcohol to the public, you can find more information about Challenge 25 on the Wine and Spirit Trade Association (WSTA) website.

For more about the laws on alcohol, visit our [The law and under 18s](#) page and the ['Licensing Act 2003'](#) government page.



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## Drinking Alcohol in Public Places

Only people over 18 can drink in public, except in areas of towns where Designated Public Place Orders (DPPOs) (3) are in place. DPPOs give police officers special powers to order a person to stop drinking alcohol in public and confiscate it from them. Even outside of these areas, the police can take away alcohol or move on under 18s if they have been drinking. The police can also fine or arrest under 18s drinking in public places (4).

### Alcohol and public transport

In London, Transport for London (TfL) has a policy in place that bans passengers from drinking alcohol or carrying open containers of alcohol on public transport - this includes buses, trams, tubes and Docklands Light Railway (DLR) (5).

You can drink and buy alcohol on national trains in the UK. However, operators can decide to run 'dry' trains where you can't consume or carry alcohol on board, for example trains going to football matches or other sporting events. Where this happens, notices are put up in advance to warn passengers.

### References

- 3 Designated Public Place Orders. Parliament.uk website. Available at: <http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/sn04606.pdf>
- 4 Alcohol and young people - the law. Available at: [http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Yourchildshealthandsafety/Youngpeopleandalcohol/DG\\_10026211](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Yourchildshealthandsafety/Youngpeopleandalcohol/DG_10026211)
- 5 Alcohol ban comes into force. Transport for London website. Available at: <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/corporate/media/newscentre/metro/8437.aspx>



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# We've got the answers at **drinkaware.co.uk**

## Advice

The government advises that people should not regularly drink more than the daily unit guidelines of 3-4 units of alcohol for men (equivalent to a pint and a half of 4% beer) and 2-3 units of alcohol for women (equivalent to a 175 ml glass of 13% wine). 'Regularly' means drinking every day or most days of the week.

## Other useful contacts

For the facts on alcohol and to keep track of your units through our MyDrinkaware tool, visit the Drinkaware website [drinkaware.co.uk](http://drinkaware.co.uk)

Your GP can help you figure out if you should make any changes to your drinking, and offer help and advice.

If you're concerned about someone's drinking, or your own, Drinkline runs a free, confidential helpline. Call 0800 917 8282.

To find out about first aid courses in your area contact the St John Ambulance on 08700 10 49 50 or via their website [www.sja.org.uk](http://www.sja.org.uk)

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