

# CREATING A BALANCE WITH ALCOHOL

## WORKING, STUDYING, AND SOCIALISING

Many people rely on alcohol to make them feel more confident or relaxed in tense situations, or they might think they need it just to have a good night out with friends.

It may feel like an instant 'pick-me-up' but alcohol is a depressant drug. This means it slows down the way your body responds to situations and can affect your mood.

Without realising, alcohol can impact on work or study and the effects may jeopardise how well you perform.



### Arguments with friends

The way the brain processes information changes when you drink alcohol. You're more likely to misinterpret other people's behaviour, which can lead to arguments. It also lowers inhibitions, and while this might make you feel more confident, it could cause you to say or do something you don't mean.

### Trouble concentrating

Alcohol depletes the body of vitamins which help with concentration. You may have difficulty focussing on a task and your work could contain errors or be incomplete.



### Bloodshot eyes

Alcohol causes the tiny blood vessels in the eyes to dilate, which can result in bloodshot eyes. This can be very difficult to hide from an employer or teacher.

### Feeling sleepy

Many people think alcohol helps with sleep, but as the night goes on it can actually make you more restless. This could be difficult if you need to be up early for work or lessons.

### Taking risks

Alcohol reduces the ability to think straight so it becomes difficult to analyse situations appropriately. You might put yourself in a risky situation such as separating from your friends, accepting drinks from strangers, or leaving with people you don't know.



### Smelling of alcohol

It's difficult to disguise the smell of alcohol; it releases through your breath and can be smelt on your skin. It will be particularly noticeable if you go to work or into lessons the morning after a night out.

Create a balance

Know your limits and stick to them so you can enjoy socialising with friends. Don't try to catch up if someone is drinking faster than you; drink at your own pace, not someone else's.



Alcohol is estimated to cause between 3-5% of absences from work every year in the U.K.\*

School, college and university are some of the most important times in a person's life, so if you choose to drink it's vital to create a balance between alcohol and studying.



Getting enough sleep is vital for effective studying but drinking alcohol at night, (particularly just before bed), can determine if you get a good night's sleep. You may fall asleep quicker, but as the night progresses you will find yourself experiencing more restless sleep (known as the Rapid Eye Movement stage).

Employers have a responsibility under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure the welfare of their employees. This means that if a person is under the influence of alcohol and they continue to work, they may be putting themselves or their colleagues in danger.

For people who work in the transport industry there is also additional legislation which controls the use of alcohol in the workplace.

Alcohol is a diuretic, which means it encourages the body to produce more liquid than normal. Not only does this dehydrate you, but you may wake you up more frequently to use the toilet.

Both of these factors alone aren't beneficial for studying, especially if you have a test or a long day ahead of you. You may find your concentration lacking if you're tired, and you could easily lose focus.

It can take a while for the body to process alcohol (typically one hour for every unit), so if you drink before work or during your lunch break, it may take longer than you realise for that alcohol to be removed for your system.

If you drink a large amount the night before work, you may still be under the influence of alcohol the following morning. At the very least you could start to feel the effects of the alcohol wearing off, such as a headache and poor co-ordination, which will impact on your work. This is especially risky if your job involves operating machinery or driving.

**Create a balance**  
If you're drinking the night before work alternate your alcoholic drinks with water so you drink less and stay hydrated. Avoid drinking during a lunch break or accompany alcoholic drinks with a meal.

Alcohol can also have an impact on memory, which isn't helpful if you need to recall important information in certain situations such as an exam. If you drink a lot at night, you may not remember what you learnt that day. Similarly, you might be more forgetful the following day.

**Create a balance**  
If you choose to drink be sensible. Avoid drinking or limit your drinks the night before a lesson or lecture, and don't drink at all before an exam so you can perform at your best.

\*www.hse.gov.uk, 'Don't Mix It'