

RETHINKING DRINKING

Alcohol and your health

What Is A Standard Drink?

Many people are surprised to learn what counts as a drink. The amount of liquid in your glass, can, or bottle does not necessarily match up to how much alcohol is actually in your drink. Different types of beer, wine, or malt liquor can have very different amounts of alcohol content. For example, many light beers have almost as much alcohol as regular beer – about 85% as much. Here's another way to put it:

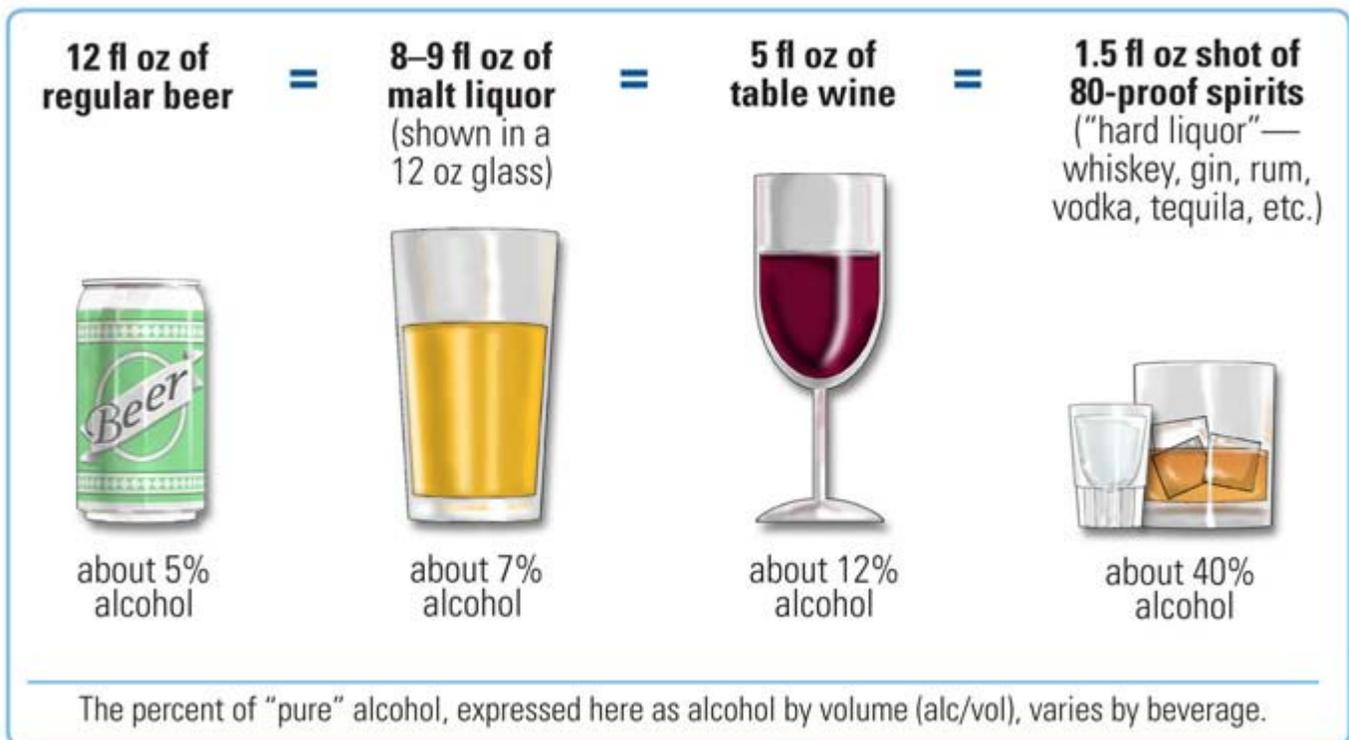
- Regular beer: 5% alcohol content
- Some light beers: 4.2% alcohol content

That's why it's important to know how much alcohol your drink contains. In the United States, one "standard" drink contains roughly 14 grams of pure alcohol, which is found in:

- 12 ounces of regular beer, which is usually about 5% alcohol
- 5 ounces of wine, which is typically about 12% alcohol
- 1.5 ounces of distilled spirits, which is about 40% alcohol

How do you know how much alcohol is in your drink?

Even though they come in different sizes, the drinks below are each examples of **one standard drink**:



Although the "standard" drink amounts are helpful for following health guidelines, they may not reflect customary serving sizes. For example, a single mixed drink made with hard liquor can contain 1 to 3 or more standard drinks, depending on the type of spirits and the recipe.

Source: <http://niaaa.nih.gov/alcohol-health/overview-alcohol-consumption/standard-drink>

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What's a "standard" drink?

Many people are surprised to learn what counts as a drink. In the United States, a "standard" drink is any drink that contains about 0.6 fluid ounces or 14 grams of "pure" alcohol. Although the drinks below are different sizes, each contains approximately the same amount of alcohol and counts as a single standard drink.

12 fl oz of **regular beer** = 8-9 fl oz of **malt liquor** (shown in a 12-oz glass) = 5 fl oz of **table wine** = 3-4 oz of **fortified wine** (such as sherry or port; 3.5 oz shown) = 2-3 oz of **cordial, liqueur, or aperitif** (2.5 oz shown) = 1.5 oz of **brandy** (a single jigger or shot) = 1.5 fl oz shot of **80-proof spirits** ("[hard liquor](#)")



about 5% alcohol



about 7% alcohol



about 12% alcohol



about 17% alcohol



about 24% alcohol



about 40% alcohol



about 40% alcohol

The percent of "pure" alcohol, expressed here as alcohol by volume (alc/vol), varies by beverage.

The examples above serve as a starting point for comparison. For different types of beer, wine, or malt liquor, the alcohol content can vary greatly. Some differences are smaller than you might expect, however. Many light beers, for example, have almost as much alcohol as regular beer—about 85% as much, or 4.2% versus 5.0% alcohol by volume (alc/vol), on average.

If you want to know the alcohol content of a canned or bottled beverage, start by checking the label. Not all beverages are required to list the alcohol content, so you may need to search online for a reliable source of information, such as the bottler's Web site. For fact sheets about how to read wine, malt beverage, and distilled spirits labels, visit the consumer corner of the [U.S. Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau](#).

Although the "standard" drink amounts are helpful for following health guidelines, they may not reflect customary serving sizes. For example, a single mixed drink made with hard liquor can contain 1 to 3 or more standard drinks, depending on the type of spirits and the recipe. If you want to know how much alcohol is in a cocktail or a beverage container, try one of our [calculators](#).

Source: <http://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/WhatCountsDrink/WhatsAstandardDrink.asp>

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How many drinks are in common containers?

In the United States, a "standard" drink is any drink that contains about 0.6 fluid ounces or 14 grams of "pure" alcohol. Below is the approximate number of standard drinks in different sized containers of

<p>regular beer (5% alc/vol) 12 fl oz = 1 16 fl oz = 1⅓ 22 fl oz = 2 40 fl oz = 3⅓</p>	<p>malt liquor (7% alc/vol) 12 fl oz = 1½ 16 fl oz = 2 22 fl oz = 2½ 40 fl oz = 4½</p>	<p>table wine (12% alc/vol) 750 ml (a regular wine bottle) = 5</p>	<p>80-proof spirits or "hard liquor" (40% alc/vol) a shot (1.5-oz glass/50-ml bottle) = 1 a mixed drink or cocktail = 1 or more 200 ml (a "half pint") = 4½ 375 ml (a "pint" or "half bottle") = 8½ 750 ml (a "fifth") = 17</p>
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Do you drink cocktails or a beverage not listed above? If you're curious and willing to do a little homework on your drink's alcohol content, you can use *Rethinking Drinking's* [calculators](#) to estimate the number of standard drinks per cocktail or container.

Source: <http://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/WhatCountsDrink/HowManyDrinksAreInCommonContainers.asp>