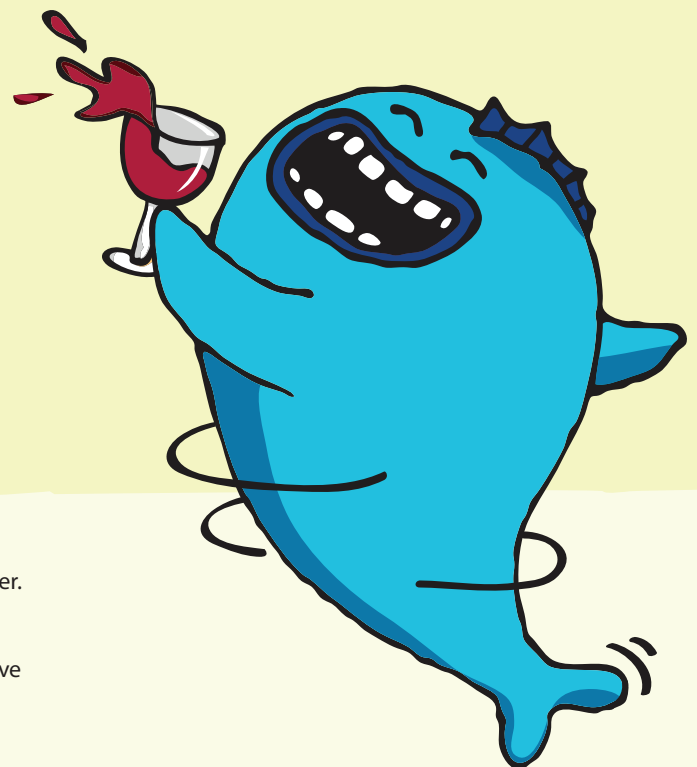


Alcohol and You

Workshop notes



Drinkaware aims to change the UK's drinking habits for the better. We promote responsible drinking and support individuals and organisations who aim to positively change their own drinking habits or those of others. We provide impartial, credible, objective facts. Among young people, we aim to focus on delaying first alcohol use where possible, but we recognise some people will drink so we also concentrate on promoting harm minimisation.

About this resource

Finding ways to talk to your class or youth group about sensible drinking can be tough, but it's essential that young people learn the facts about alcohol early on.

That's why Drinkaware has produced this easy-to-use workshop/lesson plan. Inside you'll find engaging activities designed to get 11-16 year olds working at Key Stages 3 and 4 to think about how alcohol affects their lives while developing their communication skills through group work and role play.

This workshop is designed to be run during a PSHE lesson, tutor time, or a youth workshop session.

A series of factsheets designed to complement this session are available to download at www.drinkaware.co.uk. Hand out to your group during the lesson/workshop to provide hints on the activities, or after it ends to consolidate their understanding.

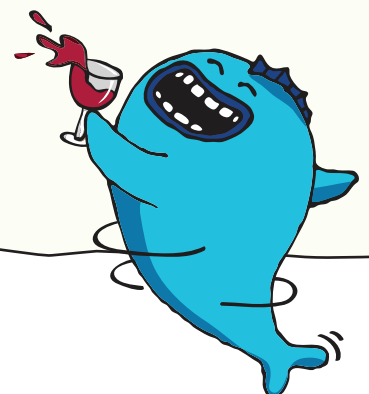
Alongside selected sections of the lesson/workshop we've supplied tips on how to differentiate activities for the 14-16 age group, or more mature learners.

The workshop will last 1 hour and includes:

- An opening activity (10 minutes)
- 2 main activities (20 minutes each)
- A plenary (5-10 minutes).

You will need:

- A whiteboard, flipchart or large piece of paper
- Sheets of A4 or exercise books
- Pens or markers
- A set of photocopied 'party cards'
- A set of photocopied worksheets.

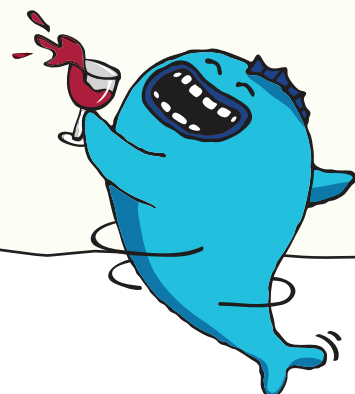


Learning objectives

- To challenge the widely held belief that you have to drink a lot of alcohol to have fun
- To understand that alcohol affects people's judgement and emotions
- To understand how alcohol can affect young people's relationships
- To help young people recognise and resist peer pressure.

During the session young people might want to draw on their own experiences. To ensure that the session never gets too personal, and depending on your own rules, you might want to encourage students to speak about experiences in the third person.

NOTE: Background information, including further scientific facts about alcohol, can be found on the Drinkaware website at www.drinkaware.co.uk



Agree or disagree? (5-10 minutes)

This exercise looks at ideas and attitudes towards why people drink alcohol.

Explain to the group that you are going to read a number of statements about alcohol. Label 1 end of the room 'strongly agree' and the other end 'strongly disagree'. Work through 4 or 5 of the statements.

Tell the group to choose where to stand according to what they think about each statement. Afterwards, ask a range of young people why they chose to stand where they did and discuss with the whole group. The notes below each statement will help you lead the discussion.

You shouldn't drink alcohol if you're under 16

The government's Chief Medical Officer recommends that children should not drink before they're 15, if at all; 15-17 year olds should only drink when they're supervised by a parent or other adult, and definitely no more than once a week.

Drinking makes you more attractive to the opposite sex

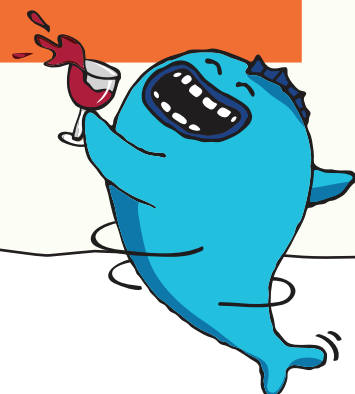
Drinking can make you more confident – but there's nothing very attractive about acting silly, falling over or being sick! Drinking is also bad for your skin and can make you put on weight. A pint of lager has 200 calories, the same as one glazed doughnut.

Drinking alcohol makes you happy

Alcohol is a depressant. In small doses alcohol can make you relaxed and happy. But too much of it increases anxiety and can make problems seem worse because it affects your judgement, sometimes leads to depression and has been linked to self-harm and suicide in young people.

Adverts, celebrities and the media glamorise alcohol

Can you give examples? E.g. adverts that suggest drinking makes you funny, sexy, one of the lads etc.



The point of drinking alcohol is to get drunk

It's possible to have a good time without drinking. And it's possible to enjoy a drink without getting drunk. You'll probably have a much better time if you watch what you drink. Why do you think people want to get drunk?

Drinking when you're young won't affect your long-term health

Drinking in under-18s can be dangerous to health. The Chief Medical Officer advises that not drinking is the healthiest option for young people. Teenagers who drink regularly are more likely to have a drinking problem later in life. They are more likely to develop liver disease and other medical complications of alcohol in early adult life.

If I don't drink, my friends will think I'm a loser

It's important not to feel pressured to drink alcohol. Remember that you may think your friends are all drinking – but this might not be true. Why would friends say you're a loser if you choose not to drink?

You're more likely to get into dangerous situations when you're drunk

Alcohol makes you more likely to take risks and do things you wouldn't normally do. It's a leading cause of accidents and is involved in nearly half of all violent incidents. Figures from the police say that 10-17 year olds who drink alcohol once a week are more likely to be involved in a criminal offence. ⁽¹⁾

⁽¹⁾ Matthews S 2004, 'Underage Drinking: Findings from the 2004 Offending, Crime and Justice Survey', Home Office



Older or more mature groups may also wish to discuss these additional statements:

Sex is better when you're drunk

Many people regret drunken sex the next day – and a lot of people who lost their virginity while drunk regret it. Even more find themselves in a sexual relationship without really wanting to – the so called 'beer-goggles effect'.

Girls are less likely to have an orgasm, and boys may suffer from 'brewer's droop' – the inability to get an erection. Both sexes are more likely to take risks and not use a condom.

It's OK to drive if you've only had a couple of drinks

It's not. The drink-drive limit is 80mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood. Very, very roughly this is about 3 units of alcohol – 1 pint of strong beer or a large glass of wine – but it depends on many factors – body weight, how much food you've eaten etc. Studies have shown that accidents increase dramatically at this stage of intoxication – but smaller amounts of alcohol can still affect your judgement and reactions. The safest way is not to drink at all.

Other drugs enhance the effects of alcohol

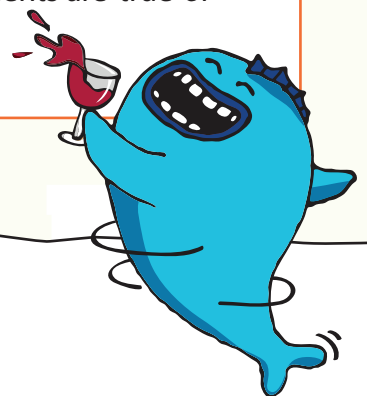
Other drugs can react badly with alcohol, leading to unpredictable results. Alcohol is a depressant which slows down your central nervous system, so it's particularly dangerous mixing it with other 'downers' – your body could shut down altogether.

Alternative ways to approach this activity

Divide the class/workshop into groups of 4. Read 1 of the statements and ask the groups to discuss whether they agree or disagree. Go round each group and ask for their answers. Repeat for each statement.

Write 5 of the statements up on the board before the session starts. As the young people arrive tell them they have 5 minutes to find out if the statements are 'true' or 'false'. The group can search online, or discuss with each other.

After 5 minutes bring the group together to discuss each point.



Activity 1: Party guests (20 minutes)

This activity looks at the way alcohol affects people's behaviour and emotions.

Explain that alcohol can make people behave in ways they wouldn't when they are not drinking.

Scientists say that this is because alcohol is a depressant that affects your judgement, and lowers your inhibitions.

Call 5 young people to the front of the class. Explain that they are at a party where some of the guests will be drinking. Nominate 1 person as the host of the party, the rest are guests.

Two of the guests are given a **party card** with details of how to act each time they have an alcoholic drink.

SET THE SCENE AND ASK PEOPLE TO GET INVOLVED IN PARTY ACTIVITIES, SUCH AS CHOOSING MUSIC AND CHATTING. AFTER A MINUTE ASK THE GUESTS TO MIME HAVING THEIR FIRST DRINK AND REPEAT UNTIL THE NOMINATED GUESTS HAVE HAD 5 DRINKS.

DISCUSS THE SCENE AS A WHOLE GROUP. HOW DID THE GUESTS' BEHAVIOUR CHANGE AFTER THEY HAD EACH DRINK? HOW DID THE OTHER GUESTS FEEL? WAS THERE ANYTHING THEY COULD HAVE DONE AT EACH STAGE TO CHANGE THE GUESTS' BEHAVIOUR?

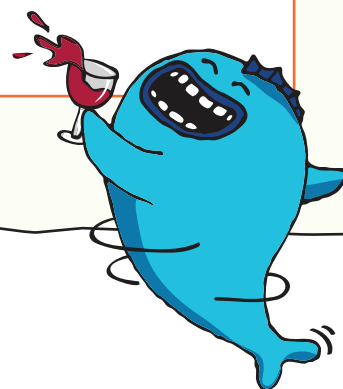
Repeat until the whole group has had a turn.

Alternative ways to approach this activity

Go through the behaviour of each guest with the whole group. Ask the group how the rest of the guests will feel at each stage. Ask each young person to write a comic strip illustrating the behaviour of 1 guest – and the consequences of their actions.

Ask each group to perform the role play at the same time. Freeze the action every 3 minutes and ask the group to explain to the rest how the guests' behaviour is changing.

After the first run ask the whole group how the guests felt – and how the situation could have been different.



Activity 2: Peer pressure (20 minutes)

Explain to the whole group that they might face peer pressure to drink alcohol in their everyday lives.

Younger or less able learners may need to be given a definition of peer pressure. Ask if anyone in the group can explain what the term means.

Divide the group into pairs or small groups. Hand out copies of **Worksheet 2**.

Ask the group to discuss and record their responses to **Worksheet 2**.

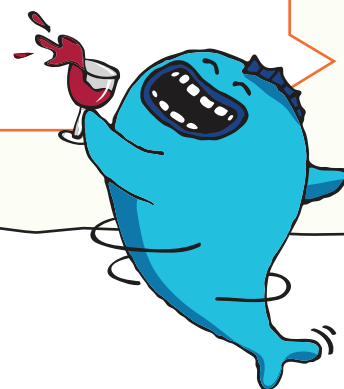
Discuss their answers with the whole class. What consequences might the different courses of action have? Does anybody have any better suggestions for how to act? Would people make the same decisions if they were drinking alcohol?

Older or more able groups could also invent some situations of their own, in a multiple choice format, for everyone else to answer.

Notes to Worksheet 2

Use some of the following points to help prompt further discussion.

- 1) Would Callum's friends think any worse of him if he doesn't drink anything? How strong is vodka? (The answer is 40% abv, making vodka about 10 times stronger than beer. Point out that young people who're not used to drinking alcohol could easily drink a dangerous amount without realising it.)
- 2) If Hannah decides to drink moderately or go home early, will she be able to stick to it once she's begun drinking? Are people looked down on if they 'can't handle' their alcohol?
- 3) Is alcohol a necessary part of having fun? Should parents buy alcohol for teenagers? Do you talk to your parents about alcohol?
- 4) Talk about how drinking affects people's judgement. It can make you lose your inhibitions, but you can also lose control and do things you wouldn't do if you were sober. Young people are more likely to have unprotected sex if they're drunk. What are the consequences of this?



Notes to Worksheet 2 continued

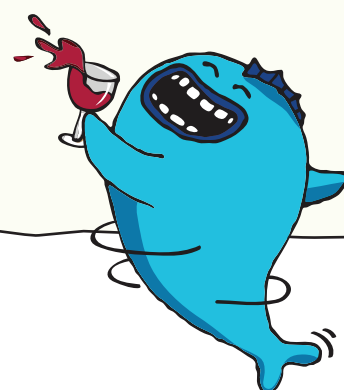
Are young people who drink more likely to be sexually active, or more likely to be pressured into sex? Why?

- 5) What do you think Rob's parents would prefer him to do?
What can you do to avoid this situation happening in the first place?
(i.e. by planning how to get home before you go out)
Is it safe to drink any amount of alcohol and drive?

Alternative ways to approach this activity

Assign each corner of the room as a, b, c or d. Read out each statement and ask the group to go to the corner they think represents the best answer. Record the most popular answer for each. Then, lead a group discussion about the consequences of the most popular answers. Has anyone changed their mind? Why?

Go through 3 or 4 questions as above. Ask pairs, or individuals, to create a poster illustrating 1 of the situations and explaining to other young people what the consequences of each action might be.



Plenary (5-10 minutes)

Ask the group to write down 3 things they have learnt from the session. If there is time, ask 3 or 4 people to share what they have learnt with the rest of the group.

Explain to the group that the best ways to stay safer when drinking are:

Know your limits Find out the alcohol content of your favourite drinks and work out your sensible limits.

Drink smarter If you choose to drink alcohol, make sure you make room for soft drinks too. This will keep you hydrated and help you avoid drinking too much alcohol.

Eating before and during drinking Eating snacks between drinks, or having a meal before you go out, will help slow down the absorption of alcohol to stop you feeling out of control.

Looking out for friends Make sure your friends stay safe and they'll do the same for you.

Visit www.drinkaware.co.uk for more workshop plans, factsheets and other useful tips, tools, publications and resources about alcohol.

Special thanks to youth workers and young people at The Cupboard Project in Leeds, plus media studies teacher Carla Taylor, who helped us develop this pack.

We would also like to thank Sunderland YMCA, Optionz Youth Centre in Gloucestershire, YPDP in Hammersmith & Fulham and Earlesfield Youth Centre in Lincolnshire for their help and advice.

