

# Alcohol Labelling Guidelines

Best practice guidance for  
communicating alcohol and  
health-related information



# CONTENTS

1

## Section 1

- 2 Introduction
- 3 Background
- 4 Scope of these guidelines
- 5 Legal disclaimer

## Section 2

- 6 Presentation on primary packaging

## Section 3

- 8 Presentational Information for Minimum Content
  - Unit alcohol content
  - Pregnancy message
  - Bedrinkaware.co.uk
  - Chief Medical Officers' Low Risk Drinking Guidelines 2016

## Section 4

- 13 Further Voluntary Information
  - Calorie Content
  - Responsibility statement
  - Drink-driving message
  - Age-restricted product
- 16 Further advice
- 17 Footnotes
- 19 Appendix A - Content for packaging
- 23 Appendix B - Presentation for other platforms

# INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to provide producers and packagers of alcoholic beverages with best practice guidance on how to communicate alcohol and health-related information to consumers, across multiple channels.

This guidance has been produced in consultation with the endorsement and support of:



The alcohol drinks sector is committed to ensuring that consumers have the information they need to help them make informed choices about their alcohol consumption which includes key alcohol and health-related information. The aim of this updated voluntary best practice initiative is to increase consumers' awareness and understanding. It builds on a decade of success in improving access to information, resulting in over 99% of products containing a pregnancy warning message or logo and 94% demonstrating unit content (Portman Group, Market Review, September 2021).

It provides recommendations on how to show information on: units; the Chief Medical Officers' Low Risk Drinking Guidelines; advice on drinking during pregnancy; a responsibility statement; the promotion of Drinkaware advice; calorie content; nutritional information; drink-driving messages; and the communication that alcohol is an age-restricted product.

These guidelines supersede Portman Group's 2011 and 2017 Labelling Guidelines. Things have moved on technologically and the extent of health-related information available including the change in the drinking guidelines and the various proposals to provide nutritional and calorie information means that this update is necessary. We recognise that consumers now interact with product information across multiple channels and in different ways; and, with the widespread use of smartphones and increased connectivity, access is increasingly online.

In response to changing consumer behaviour, industry must adapt not only the information it provides, but also how and where information is made available: through apps, via websites, web-links, etc. These platforms have the capability of conveying geo-specific, accurate, comprehensive advice on responsible drinking and they are not space restricted compared to the limitations of product packaging. Labels still play an important role in conveying key information and must include certain information but they can also be utilised alongside other platforms. These platforms can be more easily updated than labels. Furthermore, there is a danger that too much information on product packaging diminishes the impact and legibility of all information, so it is crucial to strike a balance when conveying important consumer information. This document details the compulsory minimum elements that should be on product packaging and also details additional information.

Communicating alcohol and health-related information on-pack can be an important element in driving positive behavioural change. The effectiveness of messaging on pack is principally as a reinforcement device to amplify the wider consumer educational framework, which includes public awareness campaigns, promotional materials and clear signposting to further online resources.

Below we set out best practice guidelines on communicating alcohol and health-related information; starting with the minimum elements for product packaging (1), including the Chief Medical Officers' Low Risk Drinking Guidelines 2016, and how to direct consumers online to find more information. We also provide suggestions for communicating via other platforms, as described above, in Appendix B, page 10). Producers can go beyond the recommendations set out in this guidance.

All the example icons used in this document are available to download from the Portman Group's website: [www.portmangroup.org.uk](http://www.portmangroup.org.uk), and we would encourage you to contact the Portman Group's Advisory Service for free advice on how to use these icons.

## 1.3 LEGAL DISCLAIMER

This guidance is supplementary to guidance (2) Defra has produced about the information that must be given on food products for them to comply with the Retained European Food Information to Consumers Regulation No 1169/2011 (FIC). This Regulation is enacted in the UK as the Food Information Regulations 2014 (FIR). It is the responsibility of all relevant companies within the supply chain to ensure product labels are compliant with the requirements of FIC and companies are urged to contact their trade association for sector-specific advice.

## SECTION 2

# PRESENTATION ON PRIMARY PACKAGING

2.1 Overall presentation for primary packaging

2.2 Minimum content for primary packaging

For the purposes of this guidance document information as a whole, and for each individual element, should:

- be clear, legible, indelible, displayed on the primary packaging; and, not be difficult for consumers to find;
- be grouped together. Companies are encouraged, though not required, to differentiate the information from other information on the packaging, for example by use of a box, spacing, background colour, etc;
- not appear on a part of the primary packaging that is dispensed with before or immediately when the product is opened; and
- not contain anything which serves to undermine the overall health messaging.

## 2.2 MINIMUM CONTENT FOR PRIMARY PACKAGING

We recommend that producers include the following four elements on their primary packaging:

- I. Unit alcohol content per container (and optional per typical serve)
- II. Pregnancy logo/message
- III. Active signposting to [Drinkaware.co.uk](https://www.drinkaware.co.uk)
- IV. Chief Medical Officers' Low Risk Drinking Guidelines 2016

An example label can be found in Appendix A.



# PRESENTATIONAL INFORMATION FOR MINIMUM CONTENT

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## SECTION 3

3.1 Unit alcohol content

3.2 Pregnancy message

3.3 Drinkaware - [Bedrinkaware.co.uk](https://www.bedrinkaware.co.uk)

3.4 Chief Medical Officers' Low Risk Drinking Guidelines 2016

3.1.1 The container should state the number of units in the package and display them within an appropriate icon.

3.1.2 The number of units in the drink should be calculated by multiplying the volume of the drink (in ml) by the alcoholic strength by volume (ABV) and dividing the answer by 1000. (For example, the number of units in a 440ml can of beer with an ABV of 5% vol. is 2.2 units).

3.1.3 The number of units should be rounded to one decimal place. For example, 1.42 units becomes 1.4 and 2.65 units becomes 2.7.

3.1.4 The number of units should be calculated for the whole container rather than for a typical serving, even if it is a re-sealable, multi-serve container (for example, a bottle of spirit).

3.1.5 In the case of a multi-serve container (and this may include beer and cider containers above 500ml), companies are also encouraged to display the number of units per typical serving. For instance, the typical serving for wine could be taken as 125ml; 25ml for spirits and liqueurs and 284ml (½ pint) for beer.

3.1.6 If the unit alcohol content is optionally featured on the secondary packaging of retailed multi-packs, the individual container icon should be displayed, followed or prefixed by an indication of the number of containers within the pack.

3.1.7 Appendix A provides examples of icons of alcohol types, which can be obtained from the Portman Group.



3.2.1 The container should either display the agreed circular logo showing the silhouette of a pregnant woman holding a glass with a line struck across it; or, as an alternative to the logo, the following statement can be used 'it is safest not to drink alcohol when pregnant'.

3.2.2 Companies can choose which colourway to use, as shown below in Appendix A.

3.2.3 There should be no variation to the above logo (except the colourway) or statement.



## 3.3 DRINKAWARE

3.3.1 In 2022, the independent charity, Drinkaware, changed its brand guidelines. The Drinkaware name/logo is used to identify Drinkaware as an organisation and represent the brand.

The Be Drinkaware logo should be used across all licence holder advertising communication and packaging.

Companies should update the Be Drinkaware brand information as soon as reasonably possible, for instance, in the next available print run or update of a label. Labels which feature the previous branding of Drinkaware or the website address [drinkaware.co.uk](http://drinkaware.co.uk) will still be acceptable until it is convenient to update the label.

3.3.2 The container should state the website address as [bedrinkaware.co.uk](http://bedrinkaware.co.uk).

3.3.3 Bedrinkaware.co.uk provides accessible and engaging information for consumers interested in all aspects of their drinking and should be used as an important source for all alcohol health-related information. The website also communicates the full extent of the Chief Medical Officers' (CMO) Low Risk Drinking Guidelines (3) (see section 3.4 below); and, features an online unit and calorie calculator.

3.3.5 For information on how to present the Be Drinkaware logo or website text please contact Drinkaware for further logo guidelines.

3.3.6 Any company wishing to use the Be Drinkaware logo, 'bedrinkaware.co.uk' (4), or refer to the Drinkaware website must obtain prior consent from Drinkaware by entering into a Trademark Licence Agreement; a licence cost is payable (5). More details available on: <https://resources.drinkaware.co.uk/downloads/our-logo>

**be drinkaware.co.uk**

3.4.1 The current wording reflects the Chief Medical Officers' (CMOs') Guidelines on Low Risk Drinking 2016.

3.4.2 The guidelines set a weekly guideline for men and women if drinking regularly, advice on single occasion drinking episodes, and a guideline on pregnancy and drinking.

3.4.3 Due to the length and complexity of the guidelines, the Department of Health (DH) has produced an additional document which provides suggestions for industry as to how key points from the Guidelines might be communicated to consumers. The document 'Communicating the UK Chief Medical Officers' low risk drinking guidelines' (6), was published on Gov.uk on 24 March 2017.

3.4.4 As suggested in the DH document, companies including the guidelines should do so with the following text: 'The UK Chief Medical Officers recommend adults do not regularly drink more than 14 units per week'.

3.4.5 There should be no variation to this wording.  
An example label can be found in Appendix A.

**The UK Chief Medical Officers  
recommend adults do not  
regularly drink more  
than 14 units per week.**

## SECTION 4

# FURTHER VOLUNTARY INFORMATION

4.1 Calorie Content

4.2 Responsibility statement

4.3 Drink-driving message

4.4 Age-restricted product

4.1.1 Some alcohol producers already provide calorie content either on the packaging or via an online platform. Provision of calorie information is subject to the retained Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers (FIC) and where provided must be displayed per 100ml. However, in addition it is also optional to provide calorie information per serve size. Producers are encouraged to contact their trade association for sector-specific advice.

## 4.2 RESPONSIBILITY MESSAGE

4.2.1 The container may include a statement encouraging responsible consumption such as 'Drink responsibly', 'Drink in moderation', 'Drink sensibly' or 'Know your limits'.

4.2.2 The brand name may be included in the responsibility statement (e.g. 'Please drink Brand X responsibly') provided this is not done in a way that might undermine the sentiment of the statement.

4.3.1 The container may include a 'don't drink and drive' logo or feature a statement to that effect; see Appendix A, page 9 for icon.

## 4.4 AGE RESTRICTED PRODUCT

4.4.1 The container may include the logo to highlight that alcohol is an age-restricted product; see Appendix A, page 9 for icon.





5.1 Companies are encouraged to contact the Portman Group's Advisory Service for a view as to whether any additional statements are suitable.

5.2 The following appendices present examples featuring the above information. All the example labels or individual icons can be downloaded from [www.portmangroup.org.uk/marketing-toolkit/](http://www.portmangroup.org.uk/marketing-toolkit/) or available by contacting the Portman Group's Advisory Service at [advice@portmangroup.org.uk](mailto:advice@portmangroup.org.uk)



1 Small drinks containers with a volume of 50ml or below are exempt from featuring this information on pack on the grounds of practicality but would be encouraged to consider online or app based spaces as an alternative larger platform to demonstrate a commitment to transparency and information provision.

2 Food Labelling: Giving food information to consumers.  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/food-labelling-giving-food-information-to-consumers>

3 UK Chief Medical Officers' Low Risk Drinking Guidelines:  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/545937/UK\\_CMOs\\_report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/545937/UK_CMOs_report.pdf)

4 Companies cannot use the logo or refer to the url unless they sign a licence agreement

5 Funders of Drinkaware also enter into a Trademark Licence Agreement and are permitted to use the logo

6  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/602132/Communicating\\_2016\\_CMO\\_guidelines\\_Mar\\_17.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/602132/Communicating_2016_CMO_guidelines_Mar_17.pdf)

## MINIMUM ELEMENTS

Example label presenting the minimum elements on-pack with active signpost to [bedrunkaware.co.uk](https://www.bedrunkaware.co.uk).



Units must be displayed per container, and optionally per serve

An alternative to the logo: "It is safest not to drink alcohol when pregnant"

## ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS

Example label featuring minimum elements and other icons.



## PROTOTYPES OF UNIT LABELS

All calculations are based on typical container sizes.

The labels may state either “UNITS” or “UK UNITS”.

The number of units has been calculated by multiplying the declared volume (in ml) by the declared alcoholic strength (ABV) and then dividing by 1000.

<p>700ml bottle of spirits (alc 40% vol)</p>  <p>28 UK Units</p>	<p>750ml bottle of table wine (alc 12.5% vol)</p>  <p>9.4 UK Units</p>	<p>750ml bottle of fortified wine (alc 20% vol)</p>  <p>15 UK Units</p>
<p>275ml bottle of beer/cider/RTD (alc 4.2% vol)</p>  <p>1.1 UK Units</p>	<p>330ml bottle of beer/cider/RTD (alc 4.2% vol)</p>  <p>1.4 UK Units</p>	<p>440ml can of beer/cider/RTD (alc 4.2% vol)</p>  <p>1.8 UK Units</p>
<p>multi-pack of 24 x 440ml cans of beer/cider/RTD (alc 4.2% vol)</p> <p>24 x</p>  <p>1.8 UK Units</p>	<p>(optional) 125ml glass of wine (alc 12.5% vol)</p>  <p>1.6 UK Units</p> <p>Per 125ml serving</p>	<p>(optional) 25ml glass of spirit (alc 40% vol)</p>  <p>1 UK Unit</p> <p>Per 25ml serving</p>

Prototypes of pregnancy logos, drink drive and age restriction. Companies can choose which one to use.

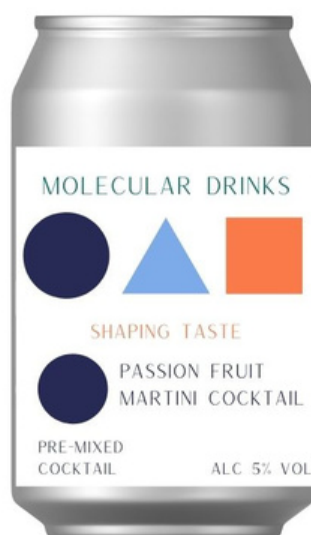


## SAMPLE ON PACK



Front

Back



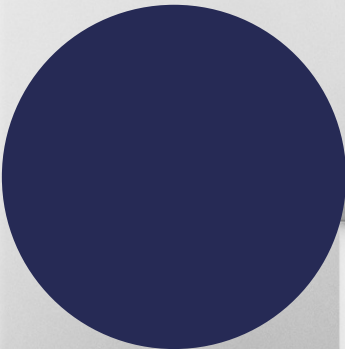
This appendix provides suggestions for how some of the information above could be presented via other platforms. These are illustrative examples only and not intended to indicate binding assessment or use of the Drinkaware logo; Drinkaware's brand guidelines set out the usage of its logo (see section 3).







SHAPING TASTE





For more information on the application of  
this guidance please contact

[advice@portmangroup.org.uk](mailto:advice@portmangroup.org.uk)



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