

Guidance Note Quick Read

- Alcohol Alternatives Guidance

The Portman Group's [Alcohol Alternatives Guidance](#) introduces a set of best practice responsible marketing principles for producers of alcohol alternative products. Producers are encouraged to read the full guidance document for full advice, but an easy quick read of the key points can be found below.

Definition of an Alcohol Alternative

A drink¹ with an ABV of 0.5% and below will be considered an 'alcohol alternative' if it is marketed as such. Factors that will determine whether a product is being marketed as an alcohol alternative could include:

- The alcoholic strength by volume on packaging or used in marketing;
- A descriptor from the Department of Health and Social Care's 'Low-alcohol descriptors: guidance'²;
- Language that is consistent with alcoholic drinks including cocktail names or descriptors/references that are similar to the name of an alcoholic drink³;
- Packaging that is similar to an alcoholic drink;
- References to an absence of alcohol i.e. 'no alcohol or zero alcohol';
- Shared branding with an alcoholic drink.

The above is not an exhaustive list.

1. To minimise consumer confusion, an alcohol alternative drink should make it clear that it is below the threshold to be considered an alcoholic drink. This could be achieved by communicating the product's ABV or using a descriptor where appropriate i.e., alcohol-free.

Producers are encouraged to include the product's ABV on packaging and where possible, on accompanying marketing materials.

2. A drink, its packaging and any promotional material or activity should not, directly or indirectly, normalise or encourage irresponsible, immoderate or illegal alcohol consumption.

Pregnancy

Therefore, on a precautionary best practice basis, we would advise that products in the alcohol alternatives category do not produce marketing which depicts, or references in copy, an alcohol alternative being consumed during pregnancy or encourages this behaviour

Depiction of drink-driving

Promotional materials that seek to market on the basis of encouraging a switch to enable an individual to drive afterwards should make it absolutely clear that the intention is to encourage consumption of the alcohol alternative.

Irresponsible alcohol consumption

Guidance will not prevent marketing during sporting activities or situations that would be typically dangerous for alcohol consumption, if it is absolutely clear that the product is an alcohol alternative and there is no reference to an alcoholic drink or alcohol consumption.

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<p>3. A drink, its packaging and any promotional material or activity should not, directly or indirectly suggest an association between alcohol and social or sexual success.</p>	<p>Marketing promotions should not insinuate that sobriety or choosing not to drink in a situation is dull or questionable.</p>
<p>4. A drink, its packaging and any promotional material or activity should not, directly or indirectly, have a particular appeal to under-18s</p>	<p>As the category is intended for adult consumers, the packaging and marketing of an alcohol alternative must not have a particular appeal to under-18s. Merchandise should not have a particular appeal to under-18s. No merchandise should be intended for use primarily by under-18s, this includes children's clothing and accessories.</p>
<p>5. A drink, its packaging and any promotional material or activity should not incorporate images of people who are, or look as if they are, under 25 years of age, where there is any suggestion that they are drinking an alcohol alternative drink, or they are featured in a significant role. Images may be shown where people appear only in an incidental context.</p>	<p>Full guidance on this principle can be found here and should be applied in its entirety.</p>
<p>6. A drink's name, its packaging and any promotional material or activity should not cause serious or widespread offence</p>	<p>Full guidance on this principle can be found here and should be applied in its entirety.</p>

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Shared Branding and Cross-Promotional Marketing

Alcohol alternative products that share branding with an alcoholic drink, will not be treated as inherently cross-promotional for the purposes of this best practice guidance, but marketing must make it absolutely clear that the product is an alcohol alternative.

Producers are therefore encouraged to include clear references to the product's ABV and ideally use a recognisable descriptor such as 'alcohol-free', if applicable, to communicate the product's alcohol alternative nature in promotional materials⁴.

The presence of an alcoholic drink in an alcohol alternative promotion will be considered carefully. The positioning, language and marketing of the promotion will be key in assessing whether the promotion is captured by the Code or by best practice guidance.



For more detailed advice on all aspects of this guidance document please contact the Advisory Service (advice@portmangroup.org.uk).

1. The definition of 'drink' will be consistent with clause 2.5 of the Naming, Packaging and Promotion Code to include foodstuffs, vapours, aerosols, barrels and drink fountains.

2. [Low Alcohol Descriptors Guidance, December 2018](#)

3. Where legally permitted

4. As recommended in the [Low Alcohol Descriptors Guidance, December 2018](#)