



Know Your ABVs

What is ABV?

Alcohol By Volume: The measurement of alcohol content in a standard drink, which is determined by the percentage of ethanol in the total volume.

Now, let's first make sure we are all on the same page with what a drink is.

- **What is a standard drink?**
 - A *standard drink* is any beverage that contains $\frac{1}{2}$ an ounce of ethanol.
 - ✓ 12 ounces of beer (4.5 percent average ABV)
 - ✓ 12 ounces hard seltzer/cider (5 percent ABV)
 - ✓ 4 ounces of wine (11.6 percent average ABV)
 - ✓ $1\frac{1}{4}$ ounces of 80 proof hard alcohol (40 percent ABV) **NOT RECOMMENDED**

- **Why is hard alcohol NOT RECOMMENDED?**
 - More and more campuses and inter/national organizations are restricting the use of hard alcohol at functions. The North American Interfraternity Conference passed a resolution requiring all member fraternities, which includes Sigma Nu, to implement a policy prohibiting the presence of alcohol products above 15% ABV in any chapter facility or at any chapter event, except when served by a licensed third-party vendor. The trend for college students to decreasingly choose a beverage with less than 15 percent ABV is one we hope continues. *Less ABV = Less Risk*

- **Why the push for drinks with less than 15 percent ABV?**
 - Studies have shown drinks poured by students are typically stronger than standard drinks*, so it's important to know strength of what you're consuming. Look at it this way:
 - Six beers/cider or hard seltzer = **72 oz.** Six shots of hard alcohol = **7.5 oz.**
 - Six beers, coming in at 72 ounces, is a lot when you think of simply the volume. However, six shots (7.5 ounces), that's less than a juice box. You can consume a dangerous amount of hard alcohol in a short period of time while thinking it was only "one or two drinks."
 - The higher the concentration of alcohol in the beverage, the faster it is absorbed into your bloodstream. The faster you drink, the faster the alcohol gets absorbed. Again, *Less ABV = Less Risk*

Do the math

To enjoy responsibly, remember the facts. Standard sizes of different drinks all contain equal amounts of alcohol. Keep in mind, the strength of the alcohol matters, but equally important is how much you're drinking and at what rate you are consuming it.

It is becoming more and more common for members or guests at sorority and fraternity functions to drink to dangerous levels of intoxication then claim they only had “a few drinks.” While this might be true in the number of physical cups consumed, the number of “standard drinks” in those cups could be double, triple or more. It’s important to know how much alcohol you’re actually consuming in order to have a safe, responsible and legal time when choosing to consume alcohol.

Tips for Moderating Your Drinking

- **Do you often drink alcoholic beverages that are more than 15 percent ABV? If so, what alternatives can you try?**
 - ✓ Set your drinking limit before a social drinking occasion.
 - ✓ Keep track of how much you drink.
 - ✓ Space your drinks.
 - ✓ Only drink mixed drinks made by a bartender.
 - ✓ Do not do shots.
 - ✓ Alternate alcoholic drinks with nonalcoholic beverages. Alcohol can dehydrate you. Alternating with water can help offset that effect.
 - ✓ Drink for quality, not quantity.
 - ✓ Avoid drinking games.
 - ✓ Learn drink-refusal skills.
 - ✓ Find other things to do.
 - ✓ Don’t accept a drink if you don’t know what is in it.

Any steps toward reduced risk are steps in the right direction.

Be Safe. Be Responsible. Be Legal.

Remember: If you are under 21 years old, it is illegal to drink. If those of legal age do make the choice to drink, they should develop a personal plan to do so in a less risky way. Help each other to do this.

Resources

GREEKLIFEEDU

[HTTP://WWW.SIGMANU.ORG/COLLEGIATE-MEMBERS/RISK-REDUCTION/GREEKLIFEEDU](http://www.sigmanu.org/collegiate-members/risk-reduction/greeklifeedu)

LEAD, PHASE I, SESSIONS 5 (RISK REDUCTION) AND 7 (ALCOHOL MISUSE PREVENTION)

[HTTP://WWW.SIGMANU.ORG/COLLEGIATE-MEMBERS/LEAD-PROGRAM/PHASES/PHASE-I](http://www.sigmanu.org/collegiate-members/lead-program/phases/phase-i)

BYSTANDER STRENGTHS WORKSHOP

[HTTP://WWW.SIGMANU.ORG/FILE/COLLEGIATE-MEMBERS/CONSULTATION/BYSTANDER-STRENGTHS-WORKSHOP-OVERVIEW.PDF](http://www.sigmanu.org/file/collegiate-members/consultation/bystander-strengths-workshop-overview.pdf)

References

¹White et al. (submitted). College students define standard drink volumes inaccurately. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*.