

One Less: A Guide to Support You Reduce Your Alcohol Use

Welcome to One Less: A Guide to Support You Reduce Your Alcohol Use

You likely did not pick up this Guide unless you drink alcohol and are curious about what this is. Beyond curiosity, perhaps you are concerned about your alcohol use and believe this Guide could be helpful. This Guide is intended to support students who are interested in reducing, even stopping, their alcohol use. We all know why some, even most, people drink alcohol. It is supposed to be fun, right? Many people look forward to college for the parties and fun, often involving alcohol. Somewhere along the way though, sometimes the effects of alcohol start to overshadow the fun.

Reducing alcohol use can be hard for different people for different reasons. Some common reasons may look like this:

- Have you ever thought about or tried to cut back on your alcohol use before?
- Have you noticed needing to drink more to feel the effects of alcohol?
- Do you ever drink more than you planned to?
- Have you ever done things you regret while under the influence?
- Have you ever thought, “What happened last night?” or “I don’t remember last night.”
- Do you ever drink alone?
- How much money are you spending on alcohol and alcohol-related items such as bar tabs, Ubers, late night food and delivery fees, etc.
- Do you ever drink at times that are not appropriate for drinking alcohol, for example, before class or work?
- Have any of your responsibilities (academics, employment, etc) or relationships suffered because you were drinking or hungover?
- Have you ever turned to alcohol to cope with a bad day, a problem, a mood, or to just not deal with something?

Nobody wants a problem with alcohol, and yet sometimes problems occur - some big or some small. Truthfully, alcohol use can become a serious problem, and grow into an emotional and/or physical dependency. If you notice changes in your drinking, and some of the above questions seem familiar, consider taking steps to reduce your alcohol use. This Guide can help provide you with some structure and a plan, along with resources to support you as you look more carefully at your relationship with alcohol.

How to use the guide

This Guide is intended to provide structure to monitor and reduce your drinking for 2 weeks.

Each week you will see a prompt - something to encourage you to reflect on your experiences. You will also be challenged to set goals and to examine your relationship with alcohol.

If you choose to drink alcohol, it is important to understand the risks so you can make an informed decision. So, before we start, a few important points about alcohol to understand.

A word on gender

While we know that gender identity exists on a continuum you will notice that many of the tables and charts in the guide only represent sex assigned at birth. This is because there is an enzyme in your body that breaks down alcohol called alcohol dehydrogenase. The naturally occurring concentrations of this enzyme varies based on a person's sex assigned at birth. Research shows that these levels are not impacted by gender affirming therapies, so to best understand how alcohol impacts your body you will want to look at the chart that reflects your sex assigned at birth.

A few notes about alcohol

Alcohol can affect the body, mind, and overall health and well-being in ways that might surprise you. Understanding the number of drinks according to drink sizes, blood alcohol content, and its effect on the body is important for you to be a safe consumer of alcohol.

Let's start with what counts as a drink. When counting drinks we count "standard drinks" which are based on the amount of alcohol in the beverage. Since the amount of alcohol in drinks varies based on what you are having, the standard drink sizes also vary to account for the difference in alcohol concentration. Please review the chart below to see what constitutes a standard drink.

What Is a Standard Drink?

12 fl oz of
regular beer

=

8–9 fl oz of
malt liquor
(shown in a
12 oz glass)

=

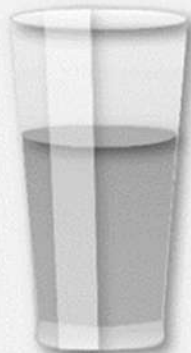
5 fl oz of
table wine

=

1.5 fl oz shot of
distilled spirits
(gin, rum, tequila,
vodka, whiskey, etc.)



about 5%
alcohol



about 7%
alcohol



about 12%
alcohol



about 40%
alcohol

Each beverage portrayed above represents one standard drink (or one alcohol drink equivalent), defined in the United States as any beverage containing .6 fl oz or 14 grams of pure alcohol. The percentage of pure alcohol, expressed here as alcohol by volume (alc/vol), varies within and across beverage types. Although the standard drink amounts are helpful for following health guidelines, they may not reflect customary serving sizes.

Knowing your blood alcohol concentration (BAC)

Using the following charts you can see what your BAC is based on how much you drink. When reviewing these charts it can be helpful to see what your BAC is on a typical night of drinking, and what it is on a heavy night of drinking.

		Estimated blood alcohol concentration for people assigned Female							
		Body weight							
# of drinks		100	120	140	160	180	200	220	240
	1	.05	.04	.03	.03	.03	.02	.02	.02
	2	.09	.08	.07	.06	.05	.05	.04	.04
	3	.14	.11	.11	.09	.08	.07	.06	.06
	4	.18	.15	.13	.11	.10	.09	.08	.08
	5	.23	.19	.16	.14	.13	.11	.10	.09
	6	.27	.23	.19	.17	.15	.14	.12	.11
	7	.32	.27	.23	.20	.18	.16	.14	.13
	8	.36	.30	.26	.23	.20	.18	.17	.15
	9	.41	.34	.29	.26	.23	.20	.19	.17
	10	.45	.38	.32	.28	.25	.23	.21	.19

		Estimated blood alcohol concentration for people assigned Male							
		Body weight							
# of drinks		100	120	140	160	180	200	220	240
	1	.04	.03	.03	.02	.02	.02	.02	.02
	2	.08	.06	.05	.05	.04	.04	.03	.03
	3	.11	.09	.08	.07	.06	.06	.05	.05
	4	.15	.12	.11	.09	.08	.08	.07	.06
	5	.19	.16	.13	.12	.11	.09	.09	.08
	6	.23	.19	.16	.14	.13	.11	.10	.09
	7	.26	.22	.19	.16	.15	.13	.12	.11
	8	.30	.25	.21	.19	.17	.15	.14	.13
	9	.34	.28	.24	.21	.19	.17	.15	.14
	10	.38	.31	.27	.23	.21	.19	.17	.16

Understanding your BAC

Now that you know what your BAC is, let's look at what those numbers actually mean. The table below highlights various behavioral effects that begin to appear as your BAC increases.

BAC	Behavioral effects
0.05	Lowered alertness, usually good feelings, lowered inhibitions (buzzed feeling)
0.09	Beginning of memory issues (blacking out)
0.10	Slower reaction time and impaired motor function, less caution
0.12	Vomiting can be induced
0.15	Large consistent increases in reaction time
0.20	Marked depression in sensory and motor capability
0.25	Severe motor disturbance, staggering, sensory perceptions
0.30	Stuporous but conscious. No comprehension of what's going on
0.35	Surgical anesthesia, minimal level causing death

Please note that if you do not experience these effects at the BAC listed, that could be due to your tolerance to alcohol. Tolerance is your body's adaptation to alcohol meaning that you need to drink more to get the effect that you felt at lower quantities. Some people have a naturally higher tolerance to alcohol due to physiological differences in muscle mass or levels of enzymes that process alcohol in their stomachs and livers. Others can develop a tolerance to alcohol due to repeated drinking. This occurs because the body starts to make more enzymes to process the alcohol which reduces the effects of alcohol. While some people view having a high tolerance as a positive thing, it is not a great accomplishment. Alcohol continues to damage the body and increases risks of injury even if you aren't feeling the effects from it due to a higher tolerance level. Without an accurate perception of how intoxicated you are, there is an increased risk of being in potentially dangerous or harmful situations. Having a high tolerance also costs you more money because you need to drink more to get the same effect. Many students find that it is more fun and cost effective to be a "light-weight."

A word on blacking out:

You may be familiar with phrases such as, “browning out” and “blacking out.” When your BAC reaches 0.09 the brain starts to have difficulty making memories. Blacking out is when you wake up and have no idea what happened. While blacked out you can still talk, move, and be active; however, your brain is not able to make a memory. Browning out is when you wake up and remember bits and pieces of the night before, and when you see a picture or talk to a friend about what happened the memory comes back to you. The memory formed but the recall mechanism did not. When you black or brown out you give yourself a concussion with alcohol, and it takes the brain 30 days (about 4 and a half weeks) to recover. Consequently, after blacking or browning out your ability to retain or recall information is impaired.

What about withdrawal?

If you have concerns about how much you drink, you may wonder about withdrawal and what it looks like. When someone stops using a substance used regularly, withdrawal is possible. The easiest way to think of withdrawal is that it is the opposite of what the substance does. It is important to know that alcohol withdrawal differs from other substance withdrawals because it can be fatal. The symptoms of alcohol withdrawal are:

- Tremors (shakiness)
- Hallucinations (auditory, visual, or tactile)
- Delusions (i.e., paranoid beliefs not connected to reality)
- Seizures

If you experience any of these symptoms after you stop drinking it is important to seek immediate medical attention. Call TUPD at 410-704-4444 or 911 to get to the closest emergency room. Going through withdrawal without medical supervision can be fatal, please get help.

How do you feel about your drinking?

Whether you are aware of it or not, you are in a relationship with alcohol. Like most relationships there may be things that you like and things that you dislike. Use the following sections to list the things that you like and dislike about alcohol and its effects.

Likes	Dislikes

The cost of drinking

As we already mentioned, drinking can become expensive. Sure, in the moment spending a few dollars for a drink or to split something with friends does not seem like a lot, but over time it will add up. The table below can help you get an idea of how those small amounts add up over a month and a semester.

Amount spent in dollars									
Per week	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45
Per month	20	40	60	80	100	120	140	160	180
Per semester	80	160	240	320	400	480	560	640	720

If you spend more than what is on this chart and want to know how much your drinking is costing you, figure out how much you spend per week on alcohol. Multiply this number by 4 to see how much you spend per month (there are 4 weeks in a month), finally multiply that number by 4 again (there are 4 months in a semester) and you will have a rough idea of how much your drinking is costing you.

On the lines below, write down 3 things that you could purchase or use that money toward if you did not drink.

Getting Started

If you have come this far, congratulations on taking a step towards becoming healthier, and having a healthier relationship with alcohol. Reducing alcohol use can be challenging without structure and a plan; we hope you find this guide helpful.

If you are interested in taking a self-assessment and receiving personalized feedback before you get started, consider taking E-CHECKUP To Go to learn more about your drinking patterns. You can access the screening at the following link or by scanning the QR code:

echeckup.sdsu.edu/usa/alc/coll/towson/



Whether you are interested in reducing your alcohol use, stopping drinking altogether, or are curious about sobriety, whatever your goal is, let's get started!

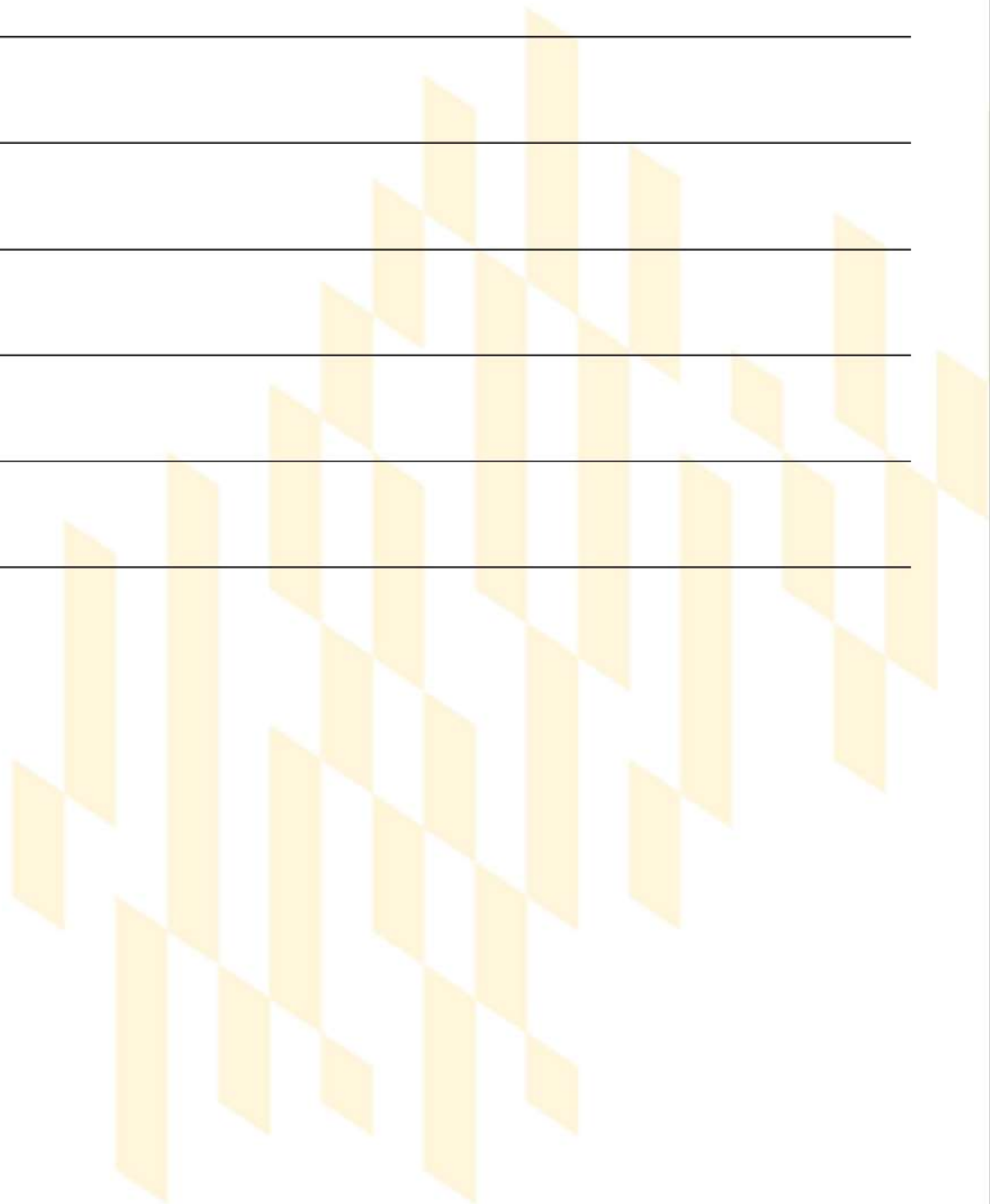
What does One Less look like for you?

Now that you are thinking about a change and may be ready to take the first step, it can be helpful to specify what you want that change to be. Feel free to check off or write in the strategies that you want to try to reduce or to stop with your drinking.

- Have one less drink per occasion
- Drink one less night per week
- Set a drink limit and stick to it
- Set a budget for how much you spend per: night/week/month
- Only drink when there is food
- Switching from 'harder stuff' to 'lighter stuff'
- Avoid drinking games
- Alternate alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks
- Pace your drinking to one drink per hour
- Avoid drinking to cope with emotions
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

The benefits of change

Now that you have identified what One Less looks like for you, let's think about the benefits of making those changes. Maybe it is feeling better the next day, or remembering what happened the night before, or maybe it is to save money. Whatever you think the benefits will be from making a change go ahead and write them on the lines below.



Making the change

As we said earlier, we developed this guide to help you make a change. To help you on that journey we to ask you to implement your plan for two weeks while tracking your drinking for each day of that week. At the start of each week we will provide prompts to think about in preparing for your change. Additionally, we will provide prompts at the end of each week to help you reflect on your experience and to plan for what is next.

We know making any change is difficult, especially if you do it alone. If you would like additional support there are two resources on-campus that we encourage you to check out.

The first is the One Less group that meets every Friday at 11am in the Counseling Center. It is a free, drop-in group meeting that you can come to whenever you want or need some extra support; no sign up needed. The group is a place for students to find support from others who are also trying to make changes to their drinking.

If you prefer to meet with a counselor instead of going to a group, you can call the Counseling Center at 410-704-2512 and ask to make an appointment with an ATOD counselor. All counseling sessions are free and confidential.

Now that you know about some extra supports, let's get to week 1.

Welcome to Week 1

Questions for planning the week ahead:

- What is my goal for this week?
- If I am going to drink this week, which days am I going to drink?
- How much will I drink on each occasion?
- How long will I drink for?
- What are other activities I could do that do not involve drinking?
- Can I go out and not drink while still having fun?
- What could hinder my goal?
- Who or what could support my goal?

A few thoughts:

Sometimes when we make a change to our drinking we worry that others may notice, or we will miss out on something by not going out or not being as drunk as the people around us. If you think or feel this way we encourage you to think about the following questions:

- How much do I notice what/ how much other people are drinking when I am also drinking?
- Is everyone actually at the same level of intoxication?
- By missing out on something, what am I creating opportunities for?

Day	# of drinks	# of hours spent drinking	Amount of money spent on drinking	Change attempted/made
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

Week 2

Congratulations, you made it through your first week! Whether you achieved your goals or not, the important thing to remember is you are taking steps towards making a change to improve your life. It is also helpful to remind yourself of the saying, “progress not perfection.” Any change or attempt at change is a step forward. Before you start week two, think about the following questions:

- Did I accomplish my goals?
- Did my plan for change work? Why or why not?
- What helped me achieve my goals?
- What hindered my goals, or what did I have to overcome that I was not expecting?
- What surprised me about making this change?
- How did I feel before, during, and after drinking as a result of my change?

Now that we have reflected on last week, let's start thinking about week 2.

- What is your goal for this week?
- Do you want to keep the same plan or make changes?
- What lessons have you learned from last week that you want to take into this coming week?
- What extra supports may you need this week?
- What may hinder your goal this week?

Day	# of drinks	# of hours spent drinking	Amount of money spent on drinking	Change attempted/made
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

Congratulations! You made it to the end of your second week! How did you do? If you were successful, great job! If you were not able to meet your goal or make your change, please do not be discouraged.

Now that you completed the 2-week process, you may wonder what is next. The answer to that question is up to you.

- Will you continue on your change journey?
- Do you have a new goal you want to achieve?
- Has this experience helped you find a way of drinking that works better for you?

If you are still unsure of what to do next the following questions could help.

- What have been the benefits of making this change?
- Have you felt differently mentally and/or physically? In what ways?
- How has this impacted your relationships with others?
- What areas of your life have been impacted as a result of this change?
- How did your friends react to you making this change?
- How do you feel about the work you have done?

No matter what you decide to do next you can always revisit this guide as needed. If you want to continue with this change, or believe there are more changes you wish to make and want to track your behaviors, we have included 4 additional tracking charts in this booklet. If you decided you no longer want to drink there are resources that the ATOD counselors on-campus can connect you with.

Final thoughts

We again want to congratulate you on trying to make a change to your drinking. It takes a lot of courage to reflect on your drinking and even more to do something about it. We also want to thank you for letting us help you in this process and remind you of several resources on-campus if you would like additional support.

The following QR code will guide you to on-campus resources for support including the ATOD Prevention Center, Counseling Center, and the Tigers in Recovery program. For direct questions about this guide, please contact atod@towson.edu



Day	# of drinks	# of hours spent drinking	Amount of money spent on drinking	Change attempted/made
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

Day	# of drinks	# of hours spent drinking	Amount of money spent on drinking	Change attempted/made
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

Day	# of drinks	# of hours spent drinking	Amount of money spent on drinking	Change attempted/made
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

Day	# of drinks	# of hours spent drinking	Amount of money spent on drinking	Change attempted/made
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				