

THE PROOF LEDGER · EVIDENCE

The Honest Number

You will not be asked to stop drinking.
You will be asked to count.

A 15-MINUTE EXERCISE · ISSUE NO. 002

What do your records show?

A familiar pour can be hard to count from memory. The glass gets topped up while you make dinner, or a bottle gets shared over more than one evening.

This exercise gives you space to look at records, measure a typical pour and estimate your own drinking. A purchase is a starting point, not proof of what you personally drank.

You are not being asked to stop drinking or reach a particular conclusion. Keep your notes private. If the numbers concern you, you can discuss them with a healthcare professional.

If you may be dependent on alcohol or have withdrawal symptoms, get medical advice before cutting down or stopping. Sudden withdrawal can be dangerous. Severe shaking, confusion, hallucinations or seizures need emergency medical help.

This exercise does not assess or treat withdrawal. Guidance: [NHS alcohol-use disorder](#).

STEP ONE

The receipts

Look back over 30 days of receipts, delivery orders and restaurant tabs. Record quantities and alcohol strength (ABV) where available. A bank charge alone may not tell you what was bought.

Include bottles, cans and drinks bought out. Note what was shared, saved for later or left unfinished. If you do not have records, keep a daily log going forward rather than turning a guess into a fact.

DATE / DRINK / QUANTITY / ABV

STEP TWO

The pour

Measure the volume of a typical pour. You can use water and the same glass; you do not need to drink alcohol to do this. Record the ABV from the label.

In the United States, one standard drink contains about 14 grams of pure alcohol: roughly 5 fluid ounces of wine at 12% ABV, 12 fluid ounces of beer at 5%, or 1.5 fluid ounces of spirits at 40%. Stronger drinks or larger servings contain more.

For a measured serving: standard drinks = fluid ounces x (ABV divided by 100) divided by 0.6. For example, 9 ounces of wine at 12% is about 1.8 standard drinks; at 14% it is about 2.1.

MY USUAL SERVING IN FLUID OUNCES

ABV ON THE LABEL

ESTIMATED STANDARD DRINKS IN THAT SERVING

Source: [NIAAA standard drink guidance](#). Definitions vary by country.

STEP THREE

Your estimate

Use the amount you personally consumed, allowing for shared drinks, unfinished portions and stock left over. Use volume and ABV rather than assuming every bottle or glass is the same.

For millilitres: standard drinks = mL x (ABV divided by 100) x 0.789 divided by 14. This estimates U.S. standard drinks. If you cannot establish the quantity or strength, label that entry uncertain.

ESTIMATED TOTAL FOR THE 30 DAYS

DIVIDED BY 30 = ESTIMATED DAILY AVERAGE

DAILY AVERAGE X 7 = ESTIMATED WEEKLY AVERAGE

WHAT IS MISSING OR UNCERTAIN?

STEP FOUR

Money and time

If useful, look at what the habit costs you. Use your own records and experience. A single month may not represent the whole year, so label any projection as an estimate.

AMOUNT SPENT ON MY ALCOHOL IN 30 DAYS

WHAT I WOULD SPEND IN A YEAR IF THAT MONTH REPEATED

MORNINGS WHEN DRINKING AFFECTED WHAT I WANTED TO DO

WHAT DID I MISS OR PUT OFF?

What surprised you?

Compare what you would have guessed with the estimate. The difference may be small, large or unclear. You do not have to turn it into a verdict.

WHAT I WOULD HAVE GUESSED

WHAT MY RECORDS SUGGEST

WHAT I WANT TO UNDERSTAND BETTER

Choose your next question

You can keep these notes, gather better information or talk with someone who can help you understand what they mean. If you are concerned about your drinking, you do not have to wait for things to get worse to ask for support.

The number is one part of the picture. What do you want from the evening? What is the drink doing for you? What still needs attention in the rest of your life?

ONE QUESTION I WANT TO EXPLORE NEXT

For seven questions about your relationship with drinking, [try the free Reassessment](#). For the other free guides, visit jointheproof.com. No paid program or challenge is required.