When will you have had too much?
You can’t calculate your alcohol limit, so don’t try.

Any amount of alcohol affects your ability to drive safely. The effects can include:
- slower reactions
- increased stopping distance
- poorer judgement of speed and distance
- reduced field of vision

Alcohol also tends to make you feel over-confident and more likely to take risks when driving, which increases the danger to all road users, including yourself.

If you drive at twice the current legal alcohol limit* you are at least 50 times more likely to be involved in a fatal car crash compared to a driver who has not been drinking.

There is no failsafe guide as to how to stay under the legal alcohol limit or how much you can drink and still drive safely.

It depends on:
- your weight, sex, age, metabolism
- stress levels
- an empty stomach
- the amount and type of alcohol

The only safe option is not to drink if you plan to drive. Never offer a drink to someone else who is driving.

* The legal alcohol limit for driving in the UK is 80 milligrams of alcohol in 100 millilitres of blood.
Drinking and driving don't mix

3,000 people are killed or seriously injured on our roads each year in drink drive related crashes and nearly one in six of all deaths on the road involve drivers who are over the legal limit. If you plan to drink, don't risk driving:

- book a taxi
- use public transport
- stay overnight
- arrange for someone who is not drinking to drive
- don't be tempted to get into a car with anyone else who has been drinking.

Consequences of drink driving

If you think you won't get caught, you're wrong. Around 100,000 drivers are convicted every year for drink driving. You don't have to be in a crash to be breath tested. The police can ask you to take a breath test if they suspect you have been drinking, or if you commit a traffic offence. If you're convicted of drink driving:

- you'll have a criminal record
- you won't be allowed to drive for at least a year
- you could lose your job
- your lifestyle could change dramatically
- you will have higher insurance costs
- your driving licence will be endorsed for 11 years
- during that time you will find it difficult to hire a car or get a job if you are, or hope to become, a professional driver.
The morning after

If you've been out drinking you may still be affected by alcohol the next day. Even though you may feel OK when you get up, you may be over the legal alcohol limit or unfit to drive, and could still lose your licence. It's impossible to get rid of alcohol any faster. A shower, cup of coffee, or other ways of 'sobering up' will not help. It just takes time.

There are no excuses

"I had a drink but it was at lunch time"
Even a small drink at lunchtime can make you more sleepy and impair your driving.

"I feel fine to drive"
Any amount of alcohol will affect your judgement.

"I've only had a couple"
Even a single drink will affect your driving performance.

"I've had a meal"
Alcohol just takes a little longer to get into your system, your driving will still be affected.

"I can handle my drink"
You may think you can handle your drink, but you will have difficulty judging distance and speed. Your reactions are slower, so it will take you longer to stop.

"I'm only going down the road"
A large proportion of all drink drive crashes occur within 3 miles of the start of the journey.

"I'm driving slowly and carefully"
Alcohol actually makes you less alert.
## Drink Driving and the Law

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you are convicted of:</th>
<th>The maximum penalty is:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Causing death by careless driving when under the influence of drink or drugs</td>
<td>14 years’ imprisonment, an unlimited fine, disqualification from driving for at least 2 years and a mandatory extended driving test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving or attempting to drive whilst above the legal limit or unfit through drink</td>
<td>6 months’ imprisonment, a fine of up to £5,000 and disqualification from driving for at least 12 months (3 years if convicted twice in 10 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being in charge of a vehicle whilst above the legal limit or unfit through drink</td>
<td>3 months’ imprisonment, a fine of up to £2,500 and discretionary disqualification from driving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refusing to provide a specimen of breath, blood or urine for analysis</td>
<td>6 months’ imprisonment, a fine of up to £5,000 and disqualification from driving for at least 12 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further copies of this leaflet can be obtained from DfT Free Literature on 0870 1226 236.

Published by the Department for Transport. © Crown copyright November 2005.