

R.E.A.L GoalSM: Reduce Alcohol Use

(Realistic, Easy, Attainable, Life Goals)

Example: I will reduce my alcohol intake to the recommended guidelines (up to one drink or less per day for women and up to two drinks or less per day for men).

The benefits:

- **Improved physical health:** Drinking less can reduce your risk of developing liver or heart disease and could help lower your blood pressure.
- **Improved waistline:** Alcohol is often called the hidden source of calories. Consuming 100 calories more than you burn every day can lead to a weight gain of over 10 pounds over a year!
- **Money saved:** Many people do not realize how much money they spend on alcohol. By cutting back, you could save money or spend it on something you have been wanting.
- **Improved sleep:** Alcohol can affect how well you sleep and leave you with less energy. Reducing your alcohol intake could lead to increased energy levels and improve your concentration.
- **Improved mental health:** Because alcohol is a depressant, drinking when you are anxious or stressed to improve your mood can have the opposite effect than intended.

Quick tips:

- Set a drink limit
- Keep a log of your drinking
- Choose alcohol-free days
- Try non-alcoholic options of your favorites to mix in
- Make a mocktail (a cocktail without alcohol, even add a garnish)
- Find an activity with friends that does not involve drinking
- Ask for support

The following steps will help you create your own quit plan:

Step 1: Pick a date to reduce or quit _____

- Choose a date within two weeks to allow enough time to prepare.
- Avoid choosing a date when you know you will be busy, stressed, or especially tempted to use alcohol products.
- Consider posting your quit date somewhere you will see it every day.

Step 2: Identify your reason(s) why. Make a list and keep it in a place where you can see it every day to reinforce your commitment to quit.

- I am ready for a positive change.
- I want to improve my health.
- It is too expensive and/or a waste of time.
- It is a hassle.
- It is negatively affecting my relationships.
- I am planning to have a baby.
- I feel judged by others.
- I want to be more productive/avoid hangovers.
- I want to manage and/or lose weight
- I don't want to feel dependent on something.
- I want to set an excellent example for others.
- _____

Step 3: Identify your use triggers. Identifying the situations ahead of time allows you to plan for ways to deal with them or avoid the situation.

- Socializing with friends
- Eating or going out to eat.
- Stressed/Anxious/Sad
- Smelling B.B.Q.
- Smoking
- Watching sports
- _____
- _____
- _____

Step 4: Develop coping strategies. When you stop or reduce drinking, your system could go through withdrawal as it adjusts. Having ideas to cope with withdrawal ahead of time can help!

- o Review your quit plan and delay acting on the urge to drink.
- o Depending on your drinking, talk with a doctor before quitting or cutting down to talk about potential withdrawal symptoms.
- o Call a friend/family member.
- o Do something active.
- o Go somewhere alcohol-free.
- o Drink water.
- o Deep breathe.

Step 5: Let loved ones know you are quitting. It can be hard to ask for help. Let them know exactly how they can help you quit.

- If friends are drinking, here are some suggestions:
- Plan ahead. Do you know if there will be alcohol there? Have a sober friend to check in with, have a glass of soda or water, and keep refreshing it so no one offers a refill.
- Be the designated driver: if being the sober person in the room is awkward, being the person who is responsible for getting people home safely might be easier.
- Have an emergency plan: If there is a moment where you are frustrated, hurt, etc., and are going to drink, have a plan for these situations.

Step 6: Remove reminders of alcohol.

- o Clean your spaces to freshen the area.
- o Throw away **ALL** alcohol products and accessories. Don't save anything "just in case."

Step 7: Know where to turn for immediate help. The first few weeks are the hardest. You will experience cravings, preoccupation, and temptation to drink.

- o Friends/Family
- o Spiritual Support
- o Alcoholics Anonymous: 844-334-6862
- o Talk with your doctor about medication

Learn more with the resources below:

- [Healthy.com](https://www.healthy.com) - Cut Back on Alcohol: 17 tips to drink a little less
- [Harvard Health Publishing](https://www.harvardhealthpublishing.com) - 11 ways to curb your drinking
- App: [Cutbackcoach](#), [BACtrack](#)

Explore more [Real Goals and Supplemental Resources](#)

For help translating or understanding this, please call (800) 635-9233. (TTY dial 711)