

- 1 Make a decision to cut down and make a written contract with yourself to try your hardest to do so. Then tell others about that decision.
- 2 Make three lists. First, list all the problems that you have that might be associated with drinking too much eg, poor health, problems at work, damaged relationships. Second make a list of all the reasons why you like drinking. You need to recognise these in order to be able to tackle changing your lifestyle. Third, list all your reasons for wanting to cut down eg, I want to be a better father.
- 3 Keep a weekly drinking diary. Record times of drinking, how much you drank, where and who with. Total your consumption in units of alcohol for the week. (Remember one unit = one half-pint of beer, one glass of wine, or one measure of spirits.)
- 4 Identify your most vulnerable high risk times of the day or week and who you are likely to be with. See if there is any pattern to your drinking. For example, mood states, feeling good or bad, rows or conflicts, or social situations.
- 5 Work out a set of drinking rules for yourself and write them down.
Examples
I will never drink before 8pm.
I will never drink for more than three hours at a time.
I will stop drinking with Tony.
I will stop drinking strong lager.
- 6 Keep at least two separate days of the week alcohol free and try to make these routine. This gives your body a chance to offset some of the impact of drinking.
- 7 Have a daily cut-off point. Set yourself a rule that you will not drink more than, say, seven units of alcohol on any one day. It is important to recognise that once you have drunk over 3 or 4 units it becomes increasingly difficult to say 'no'.
- 8 Slow down. Pace your drinking; if you are going to be in a pub for three hours and you only want to have three pints, then that is one every hour, perhaps interspersed with non-alcoholic drinks. Take smaller sips. Always put your glass down between sips. Occupy yourself (eg, play darts or dominoes).
- 9 Reward your successes. If you achieve your goals, go out and buy yourself a special present.
- 10 Look for alternatives to alcohol. This involves looking at why you drink. Is it to reduce anxiety or boredom, to increase confidence, or to beat feelings of depression? Do something else about these problems.
- 11 If you get a craving, delay your drinking for as long as possible. Distract yourself. Challenge your thoughts: 'I really need a drink', 'Rubbish, I don't *need* a drink. I want a drink because I feel tense'.
- 12 Expect occasional relapses and don't be devastated by them. Old habits are hard to break. A lapse does not have to mean a full relapse. Keep trying.