

Alcohol and the Law in Scotland



Consuming alcohol in licensed premises

It is against the law for someone who is under 18 to consume alcohol in a licensed premise, with the exception of 16 and 17 year-olds, who are allowed to drink beer, wine or cider during a meal with adults (but they may not buy the alcohol themselves).

Alcohol restriction zones

It is an arrestable offence to fail to comply with a police officer's request not to drink alcohol in a designated Alcohol Restricted Area. The police also have the power to take away and dispose of any alcohol and containers in the persons possession.

No ID no sale

Even if someone is over 18, shopkeepers and licensed premises can refuse to serve them if they don't have ID and look younger.

Buying alcohol for yourself

It is illegal for licensed premises to sell alcohol to someone under 18. It is illegal to sell alcohol to a person who is drunk.

Buying alcohol for someone else

Police have the power to charge anyone over 18 who knowingly buys alcohol for someone under 18 (buying by proxy).



Underage drinking in public places

Police have powers to confiscate alcohol from under 18s drinking in public spaces (e.g. on the street or in parks).

Drinking and driving

In Scotland, it's against the law for an adult to drive with more than 50mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood. Throughout the UK, those who break the law can face a minimum 12-month driving ban, be sent to prison for up to 6 months or get an unlimited fine - or both. An offence stays on the driving licence for 11 years.

Causing death by careless driving while under the influence of alcohol carries a penalty of up to life imprisonment.

For more information, visit roadsafety.scot/road-user-advice/drink-driving/