

Tee-totally acceptable

By [Kate Marshall](#)

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Image: [Adrian Scottow](#)

I don't drink. Now, I'm pretty fortunate – nobody at university has ever had a problem with this statement, whether it be in gentle deflection to the offer of a round, or a straight response to a direct question. Often, amusingly, the response is a commendation of my wisdom and a general acknowledgement that drinking is bad for your health and leads to questionable life choices. These aren't my reasons for passing on the alcohol, but often I am not asked for them. The statement, especially as it is given matter-of-factly, is accepted.

However, I am aware that staying sober carries a certain stigma, so let me assure you: I'm not judging you. While some people are teetotal on principle, there are a plethora of other reasons, whether religious, medical, or through simple dislike. I am a mixture of the latter two.

Booze is not for me, but we're all adults capable of making our own decisions, and I have no interest in infringing on someone else's right to get merry.

Barring health risks, such as if you're on certain antidepressants, it's your night as well as mine and I won't get in your way. Why would I? I want my friends to have fun.

Someone I knew once texted me after a night out to say that he had, for the first time in his life, gone clubbing sober. He was horrified: he'd suddenly realised how bad the music was, how sweaty everybody was, how filthy clubs are and how loud it all is. I gave him a little sympathy, but honestly, I like clubbing with good people. I don't enjoy pub crawls, and yes, I do wish fewer socials were about drinking, but some

music and awful dancing is fun.

I'm lucky to be happy to dance without needing to lower my inhibitions with a few shots and, without drinking, I'm actually able to go out more often. I don't suffer hangovers, I don't need to watch my intake, and I rarely spend more than a tenner.

My only requirement is that I'm not expected to look after someone else if they get plastered. I am useful in a crisis, naturally, but I'm not your designated caretaker.

I've never been the only capable person in a group. Very rarely is everybody incapacitated, and there are always a couple of people capable of sobering up in an instant. I just pick my company wisely: I like most of my friends' drunken quirks, so there's never a problem.

Student stereotypes mean that I am, to strangers, a drinker by default, but that's not my issue. People are surprised when I say I don't drink, but it's easier to disprove the stereotype if you don't drink at all than if you drink responsibly.

I was told before coming to university that my avoidance of alcohol wouldn't last, but since I have shown that I'm sticking to sobriety, those voices have piped down.

So I'm neutral over your choice to drink, but for some, alcohol interacts with health problems, dredges up horrible memories, risks a relapse of addiction, triggers anxiety, reacts badly with medication, and all sorts of other things.

So, in case there was anyone still unclear: pressuring someone to drink is low, and often has a bigger impact than you might realise. For my part, I'll just think you're a bit of an ass, but for some it's not a boundary you should push.

Ultimately, there are countless different reasons to not drink, but I promise, I cross my heart, we're not all doing it because we think we're better than everyone else.



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