



Making the Link

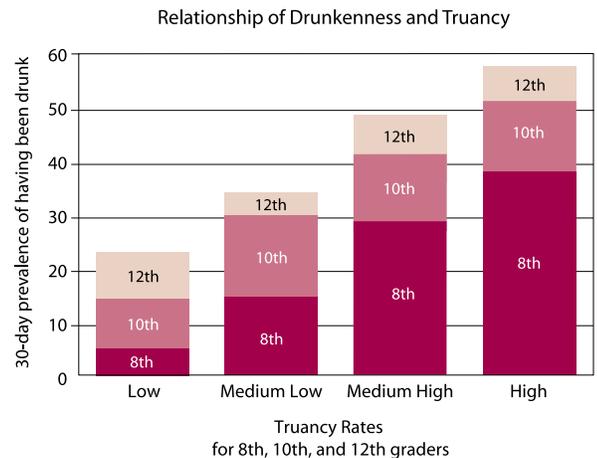
Underage Drinking and Academic Performance

Research shows that drinking alcohol impairs brain function and adolescent memory.

- Studies indicate that alcohol-dependent teens showed impaired memory, altered perception of spatial relationships, and verbal skill deficiencies.¹
- It takes less alcohol to damage a young brain than to damage a fully mature one, and the young brain is damaged more quickly.²

Drinking alcohol negatively affects students' academic performance.

- Students with high truancy rates were far more likely than students with low truancy rates to be drinkers or to get drunk.³
- Heavy drinkers and binge drinkers ages 12 to 17 were twice as likely to say their school work is poor than those who did not drink alcohol in the past month.⁴
- High school students who use alcohol or other drugs frequently are up to five times more likely than other students to drop out of school.⁵
- Among eighth graders, students with higher grade point averages reported less alcohol use in the past month.⁶
- Students drinking alcohol during adolescence have a reduced ability to learn, compared with those youth who do not drink until adulthood.⁷
- In a national survey of over 55,000 undergraduate students from 132 two and four-year colleges in the United States, 23.5 percent of students reported performing poorly on a test or assignment, and 33.1 percent said they had missed a class due to alcohol use in the previous 12 months.⁸
- College students who were frequent binge drinkers were eight times more likely than non-binge drinkers to miss a class, fall behind in schoolwork, get hurt or injured, and damage property.⁹



Levels of truancy are as follows: low = skipped 0 days and 0 classes in the past 4 weeks; medium low = skipped 1 day or 1 to 2 classes in the past 4 weeks; medium high = skipped 0 days and 3 to 10 classes, or 1 day and 1 to 5 classes, or 2 days and 0 to 2 classes, or 3 days and 0 classes in the past 4 weeks; and high = more than medium high.

Source: Monitoring the Future (1998).

- Initiative Partners**
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIH)
 - The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
 - Office of Research on Women's Health (NIH)
 - National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIH)
 - Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (DOJ)
 - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (DHHS)
 - National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (DOT)

¹ Brown SA, Tapert SF, Granholm E, et al. Neurocognitive functioning of adolescents: effects of protracted alcohol use. *Alcohol Clin Exp Res* 24(2):164-171, 2000.
² Swartzwelder HS, Wilson WA, Tayyeb MI. Age-dependent inhibition of long-term potentiation by ethanol in immature versus mature hippocampus. *Alcohol Clin Exp Res* 19(6):1480-1485, 1995.
³ O'Malley PM, Johnston LD, Bachman JG. Alcohol use among adolescents. *Alcohol Res Health* 22(2):85-93, 1998.
⁴ Greenblatt JC. Patterns of alcohol use among adolescents and associations with emotional and behavioral problems. Office of Applied Studies Working Paper. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2000.
⁵ The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. *Malignant Neglect: Substance Abuse and America's Schools*. New York: Columbia University, 2001.
⁶ O'Malley, et al. Alcohol use among adolescents.
⁷ Swartzwelder, et al. Age-dependent inhibition.
⁸ Core Institute. 2000 Statistics on Alcohol and Other Drug Use on American Campuses. Carbondale II: Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, 2000.
⁹ Wechsler H, Dowdall G, Maenner G, et al. Changes in binge drinking and related problems among American college students between 1993 and 1997: Results of the Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study. *J Am Coll Health*, 47(9):57-68, 1998.