

the **RED CUP** Q&A



separating alcohol fact from fiction
EVERY TUESDAY IN THE DAILY WILDCAT

Q Are there tricks to beating a breathalyzer?

A. We've all heard this one before. The old urban myth of stuffing your mouth with pennies, breath mints, or anything else you can think of to foil a breathalyzer, is just that – a myth. Come to think of it, this is probably just a twist on the old “put a penny in your mouth to fake a fever” trick some of us heard way back in grade school. Even if you manage to cover up the smell of alcohol on your breath with an arctic blast of peppermint, sorry – a breathalyzer will still pick up the alcohol in your system.

If you are asked to blow into a breathalyzer, you'll likely wait 15-20 minutes for the alcohol in your mouth to subside. This waiting period helps ensure that only deep lung air is obtained, which offers a truer approximation of a person's blood alcohol concentration (BAC). While breathalyzers don't directly measure BAC (only a blood draw can do that), the models used by law enforcement officials are considered to be reasonably accurate most of the time.

If you are drinking underage, an officer may not even need to use a breathalyzer if there is probable cause. In other words, if you are showing visible signs of impairment such as being loud, slurring your speech, staggering, and/or smelling of alcohol, those signs alone can be enough to get you cited.

Rather than focusing on tricks to beat a breathalyzer, why not consider some tips to help avoid them in the first place? If you are drinking, have a designated driver or take a cab. It's no secret that law enforcement tends to intervene when people and/or parties get out of hand, so evading these situations is another good way to stay in the clear. Finally, keep your BAC in check at .05 or below – you'll not only be less likely to face legal consequences, you'll probably have an all-around better night in the process.



wildfact

66% of UA students party less than one night per week. (2012 Health & Wellness Survey, n=2,406)



Got a question about alcohol?

Email it to redcup@email.arizona.edu



www.health.arizona.edu

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