EASY WHISKY QUIZ · 10 QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Easy Whisky Quiz: Beginner Trivia, Truths & Myth-Busters

A fun, accessible 10-question test separating distillery marketing from what is actually inside your glass.

HOST GUIDE & COMPLETE ANSWER KEY: Designed for pub quiz masters, whisky tastings, and society trivia nights. Questions include full multiple-choice options, marked correct answers, and 'Behind the Glass' factual explanations.

Q1. What is the classic geographical rule for spelling "Whisky" vs "Whiskey"?

[A] Scotland, Japan, and Canada spell it "Whisky" (no 'e'); Ireland and the United States spell it "Whiskey" (with an 'e').

[B] Single malts are spelled "Whisky"; blended whiskies are spelled "Whiskey".

[C] Spelling with an 'e' indicates the spirit was aged for over 10 years.

[D] Spelling without an 'e' is legally restricted to bourbon only.

CORRECT ANSWER: [A] Scotland, Japan, and Canada spell it "Whisky" (no 'e'); Ireland and the United States spell it "Whiskey" (with an 'e').

Behind the Glass: The general convention follows country of origin: Scotland, Japan, and Canada drop the 'e' ("whisky"), while Ireland and the USA typically insert the 'e' ("whiskey"). Exceptions exist (such as Maker's Mark in Kentucky using "whisky"), but geographic convention remains standard.

Q2. What does the word "Single" actually mean on a bottle of Single Malt Scotch?

[A] The whisky was drawn from a single individual oak barrel.

[B] The whisky was produced entirely at a single distillery from 100% malted barley.

[C] The spirit was distilled in a single batch on one single pot still.

[D] The bottle contains spirit made from a single harvest field.

CORRECT ANSWER: [B] The whisky was produced entirely at a single distillery from 100% malted barley.

Behind the Glass: "Single" denotes single-distillery origin, not a single barrel. A single malt is almost always a vatting of dozens or hundreds of casks from one distillery to maintain consistency. If drawn from a single barrel, it is labelled "Single Cask".

Q3. If a bottle of Scotch states "12 Years Old" on its label, what does that number legally guarantee?

[A] The average age of all whiskies blended together in that batch.

[B] The age of the oldest cask included in the bottle.

[C] The exact age of the youngest drop of whisky in the bottle.

[D] That the bottle has spent 12 years resting in a retail shop.

CORRECT ANSWER: [C] The exact age of the youngest drop of whisky in the bottle.

Behind the Glass: The age statement is a legal minimum guarantee. Even if a vatting contains 99% 25-year-old whisky and 1% 12-year-old spirit, the label can legally only state 12 Years Old.

Q4. Does whisky continue to age and improve once it is sealed inside a glass bottle?

[A] Yes, it continues slow maturation for up to 15 years.

[B] No, distilled spirits only mature through active breathing and interaction with oak wood; in inert glass, the liquid remains essentially unchanged.

[C] Yes, provided it is stored on its side like fine wine.

[D] Yes, but only if stored in direct sunlight.

CORRECT ANSWER: [B] No, distilled spirits only mature through active breathing and interaction with oak wood; in inert glass, the liquid remains essentially unchanged.

Behind the Glass: Unlike vintage wine with live yeast, distilled spirits do not mature in the bottle. Once separated from the oak barrel and sealed in glass, a 10-year-old whisky remains a 10-year-old whisky indefinitely, provided the seal remains intact.

Q5. What is the poetic term "The Angel's Share" used to describe in the whisky industry?

[A] The tip given to distillery tour guides

[B] The natural evaporation of spirit and water through the pores of the oak barrel during aging

[C] The first cut of alcohol collected from the still

[D] The tax portion collected by the government

CORRECT ANSWER: [B] The natural evaporation of spirit and water through the pores of the oak barrel during aging

Behind the Glass: Oak is naturally porous. Over years of maturation, roughly 1.5% to 2% of liquid evaporates through the wood staves every year in Scotland. Coopers poetically dubbed this lost vapour the "Angel's Share".

Q6. Under United States federal law, what cereal grain must make up at least 51% of the recipe (mash bill) for a whiskey to be labelled "Bourbon"?

[A] Barley

[B] Rye

[C] Corn (Maize)

[D] Wheat

CORRECT ANSWER: [C] Corn (Maize)

Behind the Glass: By US statutory definition, Bourbon must be made in the United States from a fermented mash of at least 51% corn (maize), distilled to no higher than 80% ABV (160 proof), and entered into brand-new charred oak containers.

Q7. Why is spirit caramel (E150a) sometimes added to commercial Scotch whisky before bottling?

[A] To add rich sweetness and vanilla flavours

[B] To achieve cosmetic colour consistency between commercial batches so bottles match on the supermarket shelf

[C] To increase the alcohol percentage by weight

[D] To prevent bottles from freezing in winter

CORRECT ANSWER: [B] To achieve cosmetic colour consistency between commercial batches so bottles match on the supermarket shelf

Behind the Glass: E150a is a flavourless, bitter, dark food colourant made by thermally caramelizing sugars. Because natural wood maturation yields varying shades across casks, mass-market brands use microscopic drops of E150a to ensure every bottle looks identically golden on the shelf.

Q8. Why does non-chill filtered whisky at 40% to 43% ABV sometimes turn cloudy when you add ice or cold water?

[A] The ice causes naturally occurring long-chain fatty acids and esters to precipitate out of solution as a cosmetic mist or haze.

[B] The glass is chemically reacting with the alcohol.

[C] It is an indicator that the bottle has spoiled and gone bad.

[D] The distillery accidentally left barley flour in the spirit.

CORRECT ANSWER: [A] The ice causes naturally occurring long-chain fatty acids and esters to precipitate out of solution as a cosmetic mist or haze.

Behind the Glass: Whisky contains microscopic fats, esters, and proteins extracted from barley and oak. When temperature drops, these fats precipitate and form a cloudy mist. Chill filtration freezes the whisky and strips these fats out for cosmetic reasons, though many connoisseurs prefer non-chill filtered drams for fuller mouthfeel.

Q9. Where does the distinct smoky, campfire, or medicinal flavour in peated single malts originally come from?

[A] Charring the inside of the oak barrels with blowtorches

[B] Drying wet, germinated malted barley over smouldering peat fire smoke in the kiln

[C] Filtering the finished liquid through crushed volcanic basalt rocks

[D] Drawing brewing water from dark bog streams

CORRECT ANSWER: [B] Drying wet, germinated malted barley over smouldering peat fire smoke in the kiln

Behind the Glass: Peat smoke flavour is infused during the malting process. When damp, germinating barley is dried on kiln floors, burning peat smoke is directed through the grain bed. Phenols in the smoke adhere to the barley husks and survive distillation into the final dram.

Q10. What is a Scottish "wee dram"?

[A] A formal government tax certificate

[B] An affectionate Scottish colloquialism for a generous pour or glass of whisky

[C] A small wooden barrel holding under 5 litres

[D] The dregs left at the bottom of the still

CORRECT ANSWER: [B] An affectionate Scottish colloquialism for a generous pour or glass of whisky

Behind the Glass: Originally an apothecary unit of fluid weight (one eighth of an ounce), "dram" became Scotland's universal term for a glass of whisky. While UK law sets commercial pub measures at 25ml or 35ml, a "wee dram" poured at home with friends is famously generous.