

CDC Enhanced Message Development and Testing to Prevent Excessive Alcohol Use: Creative Concept Testing Focus Group Discussion Guide

Concerned

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NOTES TO REVIEWER:

This discussion guide is not a script and therefore will not be read verbatim. The moderator will use these questions as a roadmap and probe as needed to maintain the natural flow of conversation. Question probes are *italicized*.

Moderator instructions are highlighted in yellow. Materials are highlighted in green.

Session Overview: Total time—90 minutes

SECTION I: Introduction and Icebreaker (5 min.)

The interviewer will explain the purpose of the focus group, present the ground rules, and allow participants to ask any questions.

SECTION II: Reactions to Creative Materials (45 min.)

The purpose of this section is to introduce participants to concepts regarding excessive alcohol use. This section will include a rating and ranking worksheet activity in order to facilitate discussion around perceptions of the creative materials.

SECTION III: Creative Materials Comparison (15 min)

The purpose of this section is for participants to compare and contrast concepts in regard to main concept effectiveness, memorability, etc.

SECTION IV: Communication Considerations (10 min.)

In this section, participants will complete a worksheet in which they will select a communication channel they think would best facilitate the dissemination of the concept they think is most effective. Participants will write down any words or headlines they think best fit this ad, as well as depict any imagery they associate with it.

Section V: Alcohol During COVID-19 (10 min)

In this section, participants will discuss the ways that their drinking has or has not changed due to the COVID-19 global pandemic and social distancing measures.

Section VI: Conclusion (5 min)

In this section the moderator asks participants for any final questions and gives CDC an opportunity to ask any follow-up questions before closing out the focus group.

Section I: Introduction and Icebreaker (5 min.)

Thank you so much for coming today—I appreciate you taking the time to talk to me. My name is _____, and I'll be moderating this group today. I work for Fors Marsh Group, a private research company based in Arlington, VA. Today, we would like to hear your reactions to some creative materials that may eventually be used to develop social media posts. We will have about 90 minutes for our discussion. Before we get started, I want to go over a few things:

- First, I want to emphasize that we are here today because each of you reported that you drink alcohol and the materials that you will review today all relate to alcohol in some way. There are no wrong answers in this room, and we are not here to evaluate or judge each other. The purpose of this effort is to hear your perspectives, opinions, and experiences.
- What we talk about here is confidential. That means that you will not be personally identified in any of the summary reports or other materials we might prepare based on our discussions today.
- Likewise, we want to respect the privacy of everyone in this room and would therefore ask that you please not share any of our discussions with others.
- Your participation is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the group at any time.
- You don't have to answer every question, but I do want to hear from everyone, so I might call on you at some point. Please speak one at a time and clearly so I may hear you.
- We are livestreaming our conversation (audio only) so that individuals who could not be with us can listen in and take notes. Even though people are listening in, please speak openly about your opinions and

experiences. We want to learn from you, so it is important that you share your honest opinions.

- We are also audio-recording this session. I will be speaking with people across the country for this project, and it will be impossible for me to remember everything. The audio files will be transcribed, but any information that could identify you will be removed from the transcripts. At the end of our discussion, I have to write a report and will refer to the recordings and transcripts when writing the report.
- Please turn your cellphone off or switch to silent mode.
- If you need to go to the restroom during the discussion, please feel free to do so.

Does anyone have any questions before we begin?

Okay, great. First, I'm going to have everyone introduce themselves. Please tell us your name and something you like to do in your free time. I'll go first.

[Introductions and Icebreaker]

It's wonderful to meet you all—let's get started.

Section II: Reactions to Creative Materials (45 min.)

Today we are going to look at some different draft creative concepts and get your reactions to them. These concepts are for a messaging campaign to help the CDC communicate about the effects of drinking too much. Your feedback will help the CDC determine the best starting place for the campaign.

Please keep in mind that these materials are still being developed, so don't get too caught up in the small details about how they look. We are here to get your honest feedback, which will help determine which concepts should move forward and how they can be improved.

We are going to look at each concept individually. I want you to take a few minutes to complete the Rating Worksheet **[Moderator holds up worksheet]** on your own before we discuss each ad as a group.

- For #1, jot down what you think the main message of the creative concept is – that is, what is the most important thing they are trying to tell you?
- For #2, grade the concept. Just like in school, “A” means great job, you really like the concept and “F” means it failed, you didn’t like it at all.
- For #3, answer a few questions to tell us about your reactions to the creative concept. Just check the box that answers how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

For the purposes of our conversation today, we’re going to be focusing our discussion on binge and heavy drinking specifically, not including people who have been diagnosed with an alcohol problem or dependency.

So that we are all drawing from the same reference point for the rest of today’s discussion, I want to share the CDC’s definitions of binge drinking and heavy drinking with you. If you flip over your pile, you will see these definitions listed here. Binge drinking is defined as: “For women, 4 or more drinks consumed on one occasion. For men, 5 or more drinks consumed on one occasion.” As a note, an occasion is defined as a period of two to three hours. Heavy drinking is defined as “for women, 8 or more drinks per week, and for men, 15 or more drinks per week.”

[The moderator will introduce the first concept and allow time for participants to complete the Rating Worksheet, at least a couple of minutes. The moderator will then lead a group discussion about the concept.]

<p>Initial Reactions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your initial thoughts about this creative concept? • What did you like about it? • What did you dislike about it? 1. Did anyone have any negative reactions to this? [make note if participant mentions any potentially triggering reactions such as feeling hopeless, depressed, belittled, etc.] • What do you think about the look/design? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do you like about the design?
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	2. What do you dislike about the design?
Main Message	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think this creative concept is trying to say? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Probe: Do you consider this a benefit/risk of drinking? (if this isn't clear)</i> • Is there anything confusing or unclear about the message presented in this creative concept? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How might the message in this creative concept be improved so that the main message could be made more clear?
Relatable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the creative concept speak to you? • Does this resonate with your experience of drinking too much? • Do you feel that this creative concept was created for people like you? • IF NO: How could we change it to make it better connect with you?
Believable/ Compelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this concept convincing? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Why/why not? ▪ <i>What, if anything, would you change to make this ad more compelling?</i>
Concept-Specific Probes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Appendix A for Concept-Specific Probes
Intentions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you click/engage with this creative concept? Would you share it? • Does this creative concept motivate you to reduce your drinking? • Did anyone find that they wanted to drink MORE after viewing this creative concept? • What would be some of your next

	steps to reduce your drinking?
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Section III: Creative Materials Comparison (15 min.)

Now, I'd like for us to compare the different concepts that we walked through together. Before we discuss as a group, I'd like to ask you to complete a quick ranking worksheet.

- The first question asks which concepts you think would be the most relatable or applicable to you.
- The second asks which concepts would make you think about how drinking too much affects your life? For each question, please select the concept and write a brief reason why you selected it.

[Review Responses] Who would like to share which concept they selected for...?

Section IV: Communication Considerations (10 min)

To help us with the task of communicating about drinking too much, I'd like your input on how we could bring these concepts to life. As you may have guessed from the concepts that we walked through, our goal is to understand how to better communicate about drinking too much with people that drink. We'd like your input on where these concepts should live and how they were executed. We want this campaign to be as effective as possible, so any feedback you can provide us about how to make these concepts more effective is especially helpful.

- What information would be helpful to include so that those who drink alcohol are more informed about the risks of drinking too much?
- What information would be most helpful to include so that those who drink alcohol are motivated to reduce their consumption?
- Where would the **most effective** channel for these concepts be?
[example channels include: television, podcasts, radio, social media, CDC website, etc.]
 - How effective do you think these concepts would be if you heard them on the radio?

- How effective do you think these concepts would be on social media?
 - On what social media platforms would you be most likely to interact with them?
- How effective do you think these concepts would be if you heard them during a popular podcast?
 - What are some podcasts you listen to regularly?
- What channels would NOT be effective places for these concepts?
- Who would you want to hear from in a creative concepts about reducing your drinking? [e.g., expert, someone like you, someone who has successfully reduced their drinking, someone who has been hurt by drinking?]
 - What would your initial impression be if you saw that this concept was from the CDC?
- Tell me about the times and situations that hearing this message would be most likely to influence your thinking or behavior [If participants are confused, tell them that this could refer to time of day, a situation that they are in, a season, a time of year, etc.]
- Are there words or phrases, images, or visuals that we should use that would grab your attention the most?
- What about words, phrases, images, or concepts that we should use that would hit home the most for you?
- Any words or phrases images, or concepts that we should avoid using because they will immediately turn you off?

Section V: Alcohol During COVID-19 (10 min)

To help us make these materials as effective as possible, I'd love to know a bit about if and how your drinking has changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing

- How, if at all, has your drinking changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - o If participant mentions increased drinking...
 - Can you describe to me what your drinking behaviors look like now versus before the pandemic/social distancing?
(drink more often, drink more at a time, drink at different

times during the day, consume different types of alcohol, etc.)

- Tell me some of the reasons your drinking increased during this time.
 - [If participants mention stress or concerns, probe more on the types of stress (financial, health, childcare, etc) and how that affected their drinking.
- How, If at all, do you think your drinking will be different a year from now [than it was during the COVID-19 pandemic]

Section VI: Closing (5 min.)

This has been a very helpful session. Thank you so much for taking time out of your day to be with me and share your perspectives and experiences. Before we wrap up, is there anything else that you would like to share or that we might have missed?

We've talked about some things today that are sensitive so please be reminded to not discuss this session with others who did not attend.

Ok, thank you again for your time. Are there any final questions? If not, you are free to go. Please leave behind your worksheets and writing utensils. Have a wonderful evening!

Appendix A: Probes for Ads Based on Frame H

H. Reducing your alcohol consumption can improve your health.