

Bartending Techniques

How to build, stir, shake, strain, throw and swizzle, and when each one is right. Ice does more than chill: the water it melts into the drink is part of the recipe.

MIX AND STRAIN

Build

Fill the serving glass with ice, pour the spirit, then the mixer. Pour soda or tonic gently down the side of the glass and lift once with a bar spoon, so the bubbles stay in.
Highballs and long drinks: Gin & Tonic, Cuba Libre, Moscow Mule

Stir

Pour into a mixing glass, fill it with ice well above the liquid and stir smoothly for 20–30 seconds, the back of the bar spoon riding the inside of the glass. Strain into a chilled glass or over fresh ice.
Spirit-only drinks: Dry Martini, Manhattan, Negroni

Shake

Pour into the small tin, fill the large tin with ice, seal them with a firm tap and shake hard for 12–15 seconds, until the tin frosts. Strain into a chilled glass or over fresh ice.
Citrus, syrup, cream or egg: Daiquiri, Margarita, Whiskey Sour

Double strain

Hold the strainer on the tin and pour through a fine tea strainer held over the glass. It catches ice chips, pulp and bits of leaf, so the drink is smooth to the last sip.
Shaken drinks served up: Daiquiri, Espresso Martini, Last Word

Dump

Shake with ice as usual, then pour everything into the glass, ice and all, without straining. Top up with fresh ice if the glass isn't full.
Mai Tai: shaken with crushed ice and poured as is

FOAM, CRUSHED ICE, A GENTLER MIX

Dry shake

Shake without ice for about 10 seconds to whip egg white or aquafaba into foam, then add ice and shake again to chill. Hold the tins tight: without ice they can pop open.
Sours with egg white: Whiskey Sour, Pisco Sour, Clover Club

Reverse dry shake

Shake with ice first, strain the drink into the other tin and discard the ice, then shake again without ice and strain into the glass.
Some bartenders prefer it for a thicker foam

Whip shake

Shake with a small scoop of crushed ice, or a couple of cubes, until you can no longer hear the ice. Pour without straining into a glass packed with fresh crushed ice.
Zombie: whip-shaken, then topped with more crushed ice

Throw and roll

Pour the drink through a strainer from a tin of ice in a long arc into an empty tin held low, and back again, 5 or 6 times. Rolling is the same without the height.
Roll a Bloody Mary: shaking thins the tomato juice

Swizzle

Pour the drink over crushed ice in the glass, sink a swizzle stick or bar spoon to the bottom and spin it between your palms, moving it up and down, until the glass frosts. Top with more crushed ice.
Queen's Park Swizzle, Rum Swizzle

WHICH METHOD?

IF THE DRINK HAS...	METHOD	FOR EXAMPLE
Only spirits, vermouths, liqueurs, bitters	Stir	Manhattan, Negroni, Dry Martini
Citrus, syrup, juice, cream or egg	Shake	Daiquiri, Margarita, Sidecar
A sparkling mixer, served in its own glass	Build	Gin & Tonic, Cuba Libre, Paloma
Egg white or aquafaba	Dry shake, then shake	Whiskey Sour, Pisco Sour
Soda or Champagne on top	Shake, strain, then top	Tom Collins, French 75
Crushed ice in the glass	Whip shake, dump or swizzle	Zombie, Mai Tai, Queen's Park Swizzle
Mint or fruit to press	Muddle, then build or shake	Mojito, Caipirinha, Whiskey Smash
Tomato juice	Roll	Bloody Mary

The rule of thumb: see-through, stir; cloudy, shake.

Muddle, Layer, Rinse, Rim and Twist

Six techniques that happen before the shake or after the strain: pressing flavor out of fruit and herbs, stacking liquids, scenting the glass and dressing the drink.

INTO THE GLASS

Muddle

Press, don't pound. Push and twist the muddler a few times to release juice and oils: firmly for citrus and fruit, gently for mint and basil, whose torn leaves turn bitter. Use a flat-ended muddler in a sturdy glass or tin.

Mojito, Caipirinha, Whiskey Smash

Layer and float

Pour slowly over the back of a bar spoon held just above the surface, against the inside of the glass. The sweetest, heaviest liquid goes in first; spirits sit on top. A float is a single layer laid on a finished drink.

B-52, Pousse-Café; floats on a Dark 'n' Stormy, a New York Sour, an Irish Coffee

Rinse

Pour about 1 tsp (5 ml) of a strongly flavored spirit into a chilled glass, turn the glass so it coats the inside, then pour out the excess. The drink is strained into the scented glass.

Absinthe for a Sazerac or a Corpse Reviver No. 2

ON THE GLASS

Rim

Run a lime or lemon wedge around the outside of the rim, then roll the outside edge in salt or sugar spread on a plate. Keep it off the inside, where it would fall into the drink. Rimming half the glass lets the guest choose.

Salt for a Margarita or a Salty Dog; sugar for a Sidecar or a Lemon Drop

Express a twist

Cut a wide strip of peel with a Y-peeler, with as little white pith as you can. Hold it skin side down just above the drink and pinch it sharply, so the oils spray across the surface. Rub the rim with it, then drop it in or discard it, as the recipe says.

Dry Martini, Old Fashioned, Negroni; the Sazerac's peel is discarded

Flame a peel

Cut a coin-sized piece of orange peel with a little pith. Hold a lit match between the peel and the drink, 2–3 inches above it, warm the skin for a second, then squeeze: the oils spray through the flame and land on the drink, toasted.

A showpiece for an Old Fashioned. Keep the flame away from bottles and guests

GARNISH CUTS

CUT	HOW	GOES ON
Wedge	Top and tail the fruit, halve it lengthwise and cut each half into 3 or 4. A slit in the flesh seats it on the rim.	Gin & Tonic, Cuba Libre
Wheel	Slice across the fruit, about ¼ inch (6 mm) thick; notch it to the center to sit it on the rim.	Daiquiri, Gimlet, Tom Collins
Twist	A strip of peel about 1 inch wide and 2–3 inches long, cut with a Y-peeler, pith left behind.	Dry Martini, Old Fashioned, Negroni
Spiral	One long ribbon of peel cut around the fruit and curled inside the glass.	Horse's Neck, Brandy Crusta
Flag	A citrus half wheel and a cherry on one pick.	Tom Collins, Planter's Punch
Mint sprig	Clap it once between your palms to wake the aroma; tuck it in by the straw.	Mojito, Mint Julep, Mai Tai



THREE HABITS

Chill the glass first: fill it with ice and water while you mix, and empty it before you strain.

Taste before it leaves: dip a straw, cap it with a finger, taste, adjust.

Fresh ice in the glass: strain over new cubes, unless the recipe says to pour everything in.

Cocktail Terms

The words on menus, in recipes and across the bar, each in a line or two.

HOW IT'S SERVED

Neat

Straight from the bottle into the glass: no ice, no mixer, room temperature.

Up

Shaken or stirred with ice, then strained into a stemmed glass without ice.

Straight up

Usually the same as up. Some guests mean neat, so ask.

On the rocks

Poured over ice, usually in a rocks glass.

Back

A separate glass to sip alongside: whiskey with a water back.

Chaser

A drink taken right after a shot, such as a beer or a soda.

Dry

In a Martini, less vermouth. On a label, not sweet.

Perfect

The vermouth split evenly between sweet and dry, as in a Perfect Martini.

Dirty

With olive brine added, as in a Dirty Martini.

MEASURES

Dash

One quick shake of a bitters bottle: about ⅛ tsp (0.6–1 ml).

Splash

A small, loose pour: about ¼–½ oz (7.5–15 ml).

Part

A unit of proportion: 2 parts gin to 1 part vermouth works at any size.

Pony

1 oz (30 ml), the small cup of a 1 oz / 2 oz jigger.



The full bar glossary

24cocktails.com/guide/glossary

DRINK FAMILIES

Highball

A spirit and a longer pour of mixer over ice in a tall glass: Gin & Tonic.

Lowball

A short drink over ice; also another name for the rocks glass.

Sour

Spirit, citrus and sugar, shaken: Whiskey Sour, Daiquiri, Margarita.

Fizz

A sour shaken, strained into a small glass with no ice and topped with soda: Gin Fizz.

Collins

A sour served tall over ice and lengthened with soda: Tom Collins.

Rickey

Spirit, lime and soda over ice, with no sugar: Gin Rickey.

Sling

Spirit, sugar and water, the cocktail's older cousin; later with citrus and soda: Gin Sling, Singapore Sling.

Flip

Spirit or fortified wine shaken with a whole egg and sugar, nutmeg on top: Brandy Flip.

Julep

Spirit, sugar and mint over packed crushed ice: Mint Julep.

Smash

A small julep, often with lemon muddled in: Brandy Smash, Whiskey Smash.

Cobbler

Wine or spirit, sugar and fruit over crushed ice, crowned with fruit: Sherry Cobbler.

Toddy

Spirit, sweetener and hot water, often with lemon and spice: Hot Toddy.

Punch

Made by the bowl: spirit, citrus, sugar, water or tea, and spice: Fish House Punch.

IN THE BOTTLE

Bitters

Concentrated botanical extracts used by the dash: Angostura, Peychaud's, orange.

Simple syrup

Sugar dissolved in water, 1:1.

Rich syrup

Two parts sugar to one of water: use about ⅔ as much as simple.

Shrub

A syrup of fruit, sugar and vinegar, sweet and tart at once.

Falernum

A Caribbean syrup or low-proof liqueur of lime, ginger, clove and almond.

Orgeat

Almond syrup, often with orange flower water: the Mai Tai's sweetener.

Proof

In the US, twice the ABV: 80 proof is 40% alcohol.

ABV

Alcohol by volume: the share of alcohol in a bottle or a drink.

BEHIND THE BAR

Well

The house spirits in the speed rail; a well drink is made with them.

Call

A drink ordered by the brand of spirit: a named gin instead of the house one.

Top shelf

The most premium bottles, and the drinks made with them.

Mise en place

French for "everything in its place": juice, garnish, tools and ice ready before service.

Build order

Cheapest ingredients into the tin first, base spirit last, so a mistake wastes the least.

86

Bar and kitchen slang for out of stock. To 86 a guest is to stop serving them.