



## Quick Guide: Off-Premises Retailer Class A and B Licenses

An off-premises retailer sells alcohol in closed containers for off-premises consumption. Traditional off-premise retailers are liquor stores, beer and wine convenience stores, wine shops, and grocery stores. In general, consumption of alcohol on the premises is not permitted unless a specific permit or additional license is granted.

### PERMITTED PRODUCTS

An Off-premise Retailer's Class A License may offer beer, wine, and spirits in closed containers. An Off-premise Retailer's Class B License may offer beer and wine in closed containers and may not sell or offer spirits.

Stores in certain locations may be prohibited from selling single containers of certain alcoholic beverages in certain sizes if located in a single sale moratorium zone. Owners should check with ABRA to determine if their store operates in such a zone and whether an exception may be obtained.

### HOURS

The maximum hours for the sale, delivery, and curbside delivery of alcohol are as follows:

- 6:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m., Monday-Sunday.

### TASTING PERMITS

In order to provide samples of alcoholic beverages to customers, it is necessary to obtain a tasting permit from the Board. Complete the following form to apply:

- [Tasting Permit Application](#)

A customer may only receive samples in quantities not to exceed:

- 12 ounces of beer;
- 6 ounces of wine; and
- 3 ounces of spirits (Class A only).

A tasting may be conducted during operating hours. The permit is valid for three years and must be renewed.

## **OWNER, MANAGER REQUIREMENTS**

An owner or manager must be on the premises at all times when alcoholic beverages are sold, delivered, or consumed. A manager must obtain and carry a manager's license upon his or her person. Upon request, a license must be shown to any:

- Alcoholic Beverage Regulation Administration (ABRA) investigator
- Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) officer

## **MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS**

Licensees are permitted to enter into management agreements with third parties to permit them to manage the store on behalf of the owner. Third-party managers are still required to comply with the District's liquor laws (e.g., requirement to obtain and possess and manager's license) and liability for violations remains with the licensee. Upon entering an agreement, a copy of the agreement must be filed with the Board within 30 days of execution of the agreement. Licensees shall also notify the Board within 30 days upon the termination of the agreement.

## **IDENTIFICATION**

All licensed managers, employees, third party contractors, and agents of the licensee must possess identification when on duty and must display their identification upon the request of ABRA or the Metropolitan Police Department.

## **POSTING NOTICES**

An alcoholic beverage license must be framed under glass and made visible to the public. A licensee must post on the front window or front door of the licensed premises:

- Correct name(s) of the licensee(s); and
- Class and number of the license in plain and legible lettering not less than 1 inch nor more than 1.25 inches in height.

The following sign must be posted on the licensed premises and made visible to the public. The sign may not be covered or obscured.



If a settlement agreement is part of the license, the licensee must have a copy of the settlement agreement accessible to any: member of the public; ABRA investigator; or MPD officer.

## ADVERTISEMENTS

Alcoholic beverage advertisements can only be displayed in the window of a licensed establishment if the total area covered by the advertisements does not exceed 25 percent of the window space. Advertisements may only be posted on the interior of a window. Advertisements cannot be posted on the following:

- Exterior of any window;
- Exterior of any door; or
- Interior of any door.

Illuminated signs advertising alcoholic beverages during approved hours of sale are permitted; however, signs cannot contain intermittent flashes of light.

Advertisements relating to the prices of alcoholic beverages may be displayed in an establishment's window as long as the total area does not exceed 25 percent of window space. For additional guidance, please see ABRA's Quick Guide on [Advertisements and Promotions](#).

## INVOICES

The following documents must be maintained and filed by a licensee:

- Invoices;
- Delivery slips; and
- Canceled import permits.

All documents must show true, accurate, and complete statement of terms and conditions for each purchase made.

Permission must be requested from the Board to store original invoices outside of the District of Columbia. Duplicate invoices must be stored in the District on either the licensed premises or at a location approved by the Board.

Books and records may be stored electronically as long as the records are made immediately available to ABRA upon request.

The Keg Declaration of Receipt Form must be kept on the premises for two years following the date of purchase.

## ALCOHOL PURCHASING

A licensee is required to purchase alcoholic beverages from a wholesaler in the District. Alcohol may be purchased outside of the District if the licensee applies for an import permit.

## IMPORT PERMIT

If an alcoholic beverage cannot be provided by a District wholesaler, a retailer's import permit would be required to import the product. Complete the following form to apply for an import permit:

- [Permit to Transport Alcoholic Beverages](#)

Upon receipt of the alcoholic beverages, an import permit must immediately be marked "canceled" by the licensee.

## OFF-PREMISES STORAGE

In order to store alcoholic beverages at a facility other than the licensed establishment, a licensee must submit a letter to ABRA requesting an off-premises storage permit and obtain approval. All alcohol must be stored in the District of Columbia.

## KEG REGISTRATION

In order to sell a keg:

- A keg registration decal seal must be affixed to the keg.
- The keg registration declaration and receipt form needs to be completed.

Keg forms may be obtained from ABRA.

## GROWLERS

A growler is a reusable container that can hold up to 64 ounces of beer and must be filled and sealed on the licensed premises for off-premises consumption. For more information on the ability to sell and refill growlers, please see the following Quick Guide on [Growlers](#).

## COMPLIANCE CHECKS

The law prohibits the sale of alcoholic beverages to individuals under the age of 21. In order to enforce this law, ABRA conducts compliance checks using underage individuals as decoys. ABRA and the Metropolitan Police Department also have the right to check the IDs of customers both before and after purchases are made at an establishment. Therefore, licensees and their staff must take reasonable steps to prevent the sale of alcoholic beverages to underage individuals.

## BOARD APPROVAL

Board approval is required for the following:

- Transfer of licenses;
- Change of corporate officer(s) or corporate structure;
- Trade name;
- Hours of operation or service for premises;
- Increase use of space;
- Storage facility; and
- Substantial change to an establishment.

## REGULATORY INSPECTIONS

A regulatory inspection is generally conducted a minimum of three times per year at each licensed establishment to ensure that a licensee is compliant with alcoholic beverage laws. A regulatory inspection may be conducted at any time during an establishment's hours of operation. If a licensed establishment is open, ABRA investigators must be allowed entry and provided with all requested information. Failure to comply may result in the revocation or suspension of a license.

## GO-CUPS

A go-cup cannot be given or sold to a customer for the purpose of consuming alcoholic beverages outside the licensed premises.

## MINORS AND ABC ESTABLISHMENTS

For additional information related to underage drinking, the presence of minors, and the employment of persons under 21 years of age, please see the following Quick Guide on [Minors and ABC Establishments](#).

## COMMON VIOLATIONS

- Sale to minors;
- Failure to post warning and other required notices;
- Failure to post and carry license(s) on premises;
- Failure to maintain or store invoices and required records on the licensed premises;
- No ABC manager on duty;
- Operating after Board-approved hours;
- Transfer of ownership without Board approval;
- Violation of a settlement agreement (formerly known as a voluntary agreement);
- Violation of a Board order; and
- Trade name change without Board approval.

## OWNERSHIP LIMITATIONS

Unless an exception applies, a licensee may not hold certain licenses once the license is obtained without giving up the license. For more information, please refer to D.C. Official Code §§ 25-303 for specific limitations and exceptions.

## **ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE**

Additional guidance may be found on ABRA's websites and in other quick guides.

## **CONTACT ABRA**

For more information, visit [ABRA.DC.Gov](https://www.abra.dc.gov) or contact ABRA at 202-442-4423 or [ABRA@DC.Gov](mailto:ABRA@DC.Gov).