Socialising sober

Simple words, clear boundaries and room to enjoy yourself

Suggest something you want to do

Try: "Fancy breakfast instead?" or "I would love to catch up. How about a walk or a film?" Choose a setting that feels comfortable for you. You can spend time with friends in different ways.

Keep your drink response simple

Try: "No thanks, I am not drinking," "Sparkling water for me, please," or "I feel better without it." You can share more if you want to, but you do not owe anyone your recovery story.

Respond to pressure with a clear boundary

Try: "I have said no. Please stop offering," or "I want to spend time with you, but I need you to respect this." You do not have to win a debate. If the pressure continues, move away, contact support or leave.

Leave when you need to

Try: "Thanks for tonight. I am heading home now." Arrange your own safe way home and tell a trusted person your plan if helpful. If alcohol-free drinks that resemble alcohol bring up cravings, choose something else. A good evening can be short and quiet.

Before you change your drinking

If you drink heavily or regularly, need alcohol to feel steady, or have had withdrawal before, speak with a doctor before stopping or sharply reducing. Alcohol withdrawal can be life-threatening. Shaking, sweating or feeling unwell after cutting down needs prompt medical advice. Call 000 for seizures, severe confusion or hallucinations.

Australia: Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline 1800 250 015 (free, confidential advice). Lifeline 13 11 14 (24/7 crisis support). Call 000 if there is immediate danger or a medical emergency.

Make it personal

Write a few words. You can leave questions blank or talk them through with someone.

A social activity and setting I would feel comfortable with...

The invitation I could send...

My words when someone offers me alcohol...

My boundary if someone keeps pushing...

My leaving words, safe transport and support contact...

You do not have to do this alone.

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Adapted from The Freedom Room article: How to Have Fun Sober and Build a Rewarding Alcohol-Free Life (supplied text). Safety and support sources: healthdirect.gov.au/alcoholism; adf.org.au/insights/safely-withdrawing-alcohol/; lifeline.org.au/131114; medicarementalhealth.gov.au/provider/national-alcohol-and-other-drug-hotline-16469. Checked 1 October 2026.