

Review of AABC Low Alcohol Category.

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Summary

This review provides a comprehensive solution for accommodating low alcohol and associated styles in AABC Category Format. It accurately reflects contemporary commercial examples, as well as style definitions recognized by CAMRA and in the most authoritative and up to date beer style texts.

This review recommends:

- Increasing the upper limit for the Low Alcohol category from <3.5% to <4%
- Modifying style descriptions/names for the following styles

Style	OG	FG	ABV
<i>English Bitter</i>	1.030-1.039	1.006-1.010	3.0 - 3.9%
<i>English Best Bitter</i>	1.040-1.049	1.008-1.012	4.0 - 4.9%
<i>English Extra Special/Strong Bitter</i>	1.050-1.060	1.011-1.015	5.0 - 6.0%
<i>Mild Ale</i>	1.030-1.039	1.005-1.010	3.0 - 3.9%
<i>Scottish Light Ale</i>	1.030-1.039	1.008-1.012	2.8 - 3.9%
<i>Scottish Ale</i>	1.040-1.055	1.010-1.016	4.0 - 5.5%
<i>Leichtes Weizen</i>	1.025-1.035	1.005-1.008	2.5% – 3.5%

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0. Background

Following Mike Day's ANHC presentation on English Bitter, in which he expressed disapproval of the term "Ordinary", as well as AABC entry restriction to 3.5% ABV or below, AABA has been exploring options to address these criticisms. We are in general agreement with Mike's views, but the solution of raising the ABV limit for the Low Alcohol category has proven to be less simple than at first glance.

A call for votes by AABA delegates on the central proposition generated further useful discussion, however voting now appears to have been somewhat premature, with considerable disagreement remaining amongst delegates. Oversimplification has led to hasty and piecemeal decision making, in the absence of full information.

This paper attempts to correct that situation, by providing a thorough discussion and analysis of the relevant styles. It is presented in 3 Parts, some of which has already been circulated in email form. Detailed recommendations are presented at the end of each Part, after due consideration and discussion. As such, the proposal represents a comprehensive solution which covers all bases .

1: English Bitters

1.1 Style Definitions for English Bitters

Terry Foster (Pale Ale, 1999), based on survey of 1187 English Bitters (1,043 draught, 144 bottled):

<i>Ordinary Bitter:</i>	OG: 1.030-1.039	FG: 1.006-1.010	ABV: 3.0 - 3.9%
<i>Best Bitter:</i>	OG: 1.040-1.049	FG: 1.008-1.012	ABV: 4.0 - 4.9%
<i>Strong Bitter:</i>	OG: 1.050-1.060	FG: 1.011-1.015	ABV: 5.0 - 6.0%

Foster's ABV transition points are in exact accord with CAMRA specs: "Bitter falls into the 3.4% to 3.9% band, with Best Bitter 4% upwards but a number of brewers label their ordinary Bitters as 'Best'. A further development of Bitter comes in the shape of Extra or Special Strong Bitters of 5% or more."

Foster's lower baseline for (Ordinary) Bitter is evidence based, with min. OG: 1.030, max. OG: 1.039, ave. OG: 1.037. Skewed average indicates that the bulk of examples are above 3.4% as per CAMRA spec, supporting Mike Day's contention that the current AABC limit of 3.5% fails to capture the majority of commercial examples. Nevertheless there are clearly examples down to 3.0% as well. Therefore Foster's minima of OG:1.030 and 3.0% ABV are more appropriate than CAMRA 3.4% ABV minimum.

BJCP ABV specs are at odds with Foster and CAMRA:

<i>Standard/Ordinary Bitter:</i>	3.2 - 3.8%
<i>Special/Best/Premium Bitter:</i>	3.8 - 4.6%
<i>Extra Special/Strong Bitter:</i>	4.6 - 6.2%

Most would agree that 4.6% is not truly representative of ESB, and that the CAMRA/Foster minimum of 5.0% is more appropriate. There appear to be no examples above 6.0%, even amongst 19th century "keeping Bitters", so again, the CAMRA/Foster maximum of 6.0% is more appropriate than BJCP 6.2%.

1.2 Style Nomenclature for English Bitters

Foster uses the term "Ordinary", however CAMRA do not. Neither do commercial brewers, and nor does it have currency amongst UK drinkers. It appears to be a literal term of convenience, introduced in texts to identify the style amongst the family of English Bitters. Unlike AHA NHC, it is not required to identify entries for AABC, because these are entered into a different category from the other Bitters, which is nominated on the entry form. UK parlance for the style is "Bitter", and for beer literacy purposes, Style Guideline practice is to recognize country of origin. Therefore the appropriate style name is *English Bitter*.

The appearance of the term "Special" in two different Bitter styles is known to generate confusion amongst entrants, having led to ambiguity on entry forms and incorrect registration in homebrew comps. CAMRA and Foster both list the intermediate strength style as "Best Bitter", therefore the appropriate style name is *English Best Bitter*.

Foster refers to the strongest of the Bitter styles as "Strong Bitter", however CAMRA and BJCP both include the terms "Extra" and "Special". These recognize contemporary market terminology, including the well known Fullers example. The appropriate style name is therefore *English Extra Special/Strong Bitter*, as per current AABC style list.

1.3. Recommendations for English Bitters

1.3.1. Amend style nomenclature for the family of English Bitters:

- a. *English Bitter* (as per CAMRA)
- b. *English Best Bitter* (as per CAMRA and Foster)

1.3.2. Adopt Foster/CAMRA Vital Stats for the family of English Bitters:

- a. *English Bitter*: OG: 1.030-1.039, FG: 1.006-1.010, ABV: 3.0-3.9%
- b. *English Best Bitter*: OG: 1.040-1.049, FG: 1.008-1.012, ABV: 4.0-4.9%
- c. *English Extra Special/Strong Bitter (ESB)*: OG: 1.050-1.060, FG: 1.011-1.015, ABV: 5.0-6.0%

2: Mild Ale.

2.1 Style Nomenclature for Mild Ale

Classic Beer Style Series No.15 (David Sutula, 1999) is titled *Mild Ale*. Similarly, BJCP list *Mild*. As a generic term traditionally used throughout Britain, with no specific origins in England, the appearance of *English* in the style name is inappropriate. Whilst the verbal abbreviation *Mild* is certainly commonplace, it is less appropriate for Style Guideline listing, in the same way that abbreviation to *Brown* would be inappropriate for *Brown Ale*, despite finding colloquial use (eg. Newkie Brown).

Running counter to that argument is *Bitter*, from which the original suffix *Ale* has long since disappeared from both verbal and textual reference. However it is suggested here that AABC give consideration to recognizing *Mild Ale*, as the preferred term in the most authoritative text on the style. For this style it is recommended that country of origin not be recognized, as the prefix *British* would to most of us appear superfluous and/or incongruous.

2.2 Style Definition for Mild Ale

Sutula defines 3 versions of *Mild Ale*:

Pale Mild: OG: 1.030-1.040 FG: 1.005-1.008 ABV: 3.5 - 4.3%

Dark Mild: OG: 1.030-1.040 FG: 1.006-1.008 ABV: 3.5 - 4.3%

Throwback Mild: OG: 1.040-1.100 FG: 1.012-1.030 ABV: 5.5 - 12%

Pale examples appear to be quite rare, and are already accommodated under BJCP Style Description, which allows that "A few paler examples (medium amber to light brown) exist." At this stage therefore, it is not recommended that a separate style be listed for AABC.

BJCP ABV range is 2.8 - 4.5%, however this is qualified under Comments: "Most are low-gravity session beers in the range 3.1 - 3.8%, although some versions may be made in the stronger (4%+) range for export, festivals, seasonal and/or special occasions." Such characterization of stronger versions provides a strong pretext for redirection of 4% + entries to Specialty Category.

Sutula provides a list of 138 commercial examples compiled by CAMRA. Of these examples:

- 5% exceed 4.5% ABV (4.7 4.8 5.0 5.0 5.5 6.0 7.0)
- 12% exceed 4.0% ABV
- 16% exceed 3.9% ABV
- 18% exceed 3.8% ABV

At the low end, contrary to Sutula's own style definition:

- 43% are below 3.5% ABV
- 9% are listed as 3.0% ABV, however only 1 example is below 3.0%, at 2.9% ABV.

This means that an ABV range of:

- 3.0 - 4.0% would capture 88% of examples
- 3.0 - 3.9% would capture 83% of examples
- 3.0 - 3.8% would capture 82% of examples
- 3.0 - 3.5% would capture 57% of examples

Note that the current AABC range of 2.8 - 3.5% captures only 58% of commercial examples.

OG specs for the CAMRA list indicate:

- 17% exceed OG: 1.039
- 14% exceed OG: 1.040

This means that Vital Stats of OG: 1.030-1.039 and ABV: 3.0 - 3.9% would capture 83% of examples.

Sutula's FG specs for Pale and Dark Mild cover a range of 1.005-1.008. However this is lower than the major commercial examples for which he provides complete recipes. These range from 1.005 to 1.010, with most around 1.008-9. Therefore FG range of 1.005-1.010 is more appropriate.

2.3: Recommendations for Mild Ale

2.3.1. Amend Style Nomenclature:

- *Mild Ale* (as per Sutula)

2.3.2. Amend Vital Stats to capture 83% of CAMRA examples (cf. 58% currently):

- *Mild Ale*: OG: 1.030-1.039 FG: 1.005-1.010 ABV: 3.0 - 3.9%

2.3.3. Include additional information and instructions for Specialty Mild entries above 4% ABV in the style guidelines:

- Comments: Most are low-gravity session beers in the range 3.1 - 3.8% ABV, although a number of contemporary examples are in the 4 - 7% ABV range, and historical examples ranged up to 8% ABV. These stronger (4%+) versions should be entered in Specialty Category.

3: Scottish Ales

3.1 General Discussion/Analysis of Scottish Ales

The current formatting of Scottish Ales in AABC Style Guidelines is misleading, and further investigation reveals that it no longer represents the contemporary market. These are the principal reasons for our difficulties with Scottish 70/-. For Scottish Ales to work effectively in AABC Category Format, their presentation must be updated and rationalized into 2 separate styles. Following identifies the relevant issues:

3.1.1. The shilling marks are BRANDS, not styles. The shilling scale was used throughout the UK during the 19th century to denote barrel price, which correlated roughly with OG of contents. Records exist of beers ranging from 50/- to 160/-, correlating with OG: 1.063 to 1.126. Obviously enough, the existence of brands from 50/- to 160/- does not imply the existence of 12 different styles, each separated by OG: 0.005.

3.1.2. Likewise today, BJCP acknowledge that the 60/- to 80/- range are all one style - that's why they share a single Style Description. Even BJCP can't separate them on their sensory characteristics. Likewise in comps, if we judge any 2 beers to the same Style Description, then by definition they are the same style.

3.1.3. BJCP Scottish Ale presentation is now well out of date. It's based on Scotch Ale (Classic Beer Style Series No.8, Noonan, 1993), in which 22 of 49 Scottish examples cited bore the shilling mark. This reflected a revival of the shilling scale, as draught ale itself was resurrected by CAMRA during the 1980's. Previously these beers were facing extinction in Scotland, where brewers had switched to pale lager far more comprehensively than in England, and had started much earlier, way back in the late 19th century.

Whilst BJCP's strong reference to the shilling scale was relevant when written, things have changed radically since 1993. All but a handful of those Noonan beers have disappeared, after massive takeovers and closures amongst the traditional Scottish breweries. Apart from the micros, the entire Scottish brewing industry is now foreign owned - by Heineken, Carlsberg, and Belgian giant InBev. Even Belhaven was gobbled up in 2005 by English giant Greene King, the UK's largest domestic owned brewer.

Consequently only ONE range of Scottish ales bears the shilling scale today - McEwans, the No1. brand. Nowadays it's just another brand name without a home, kicked from pillar to post since the historic McEwans brewery succumbed to closure in 1995, and the Scottish & Newcastle group of historic brewers was itself taken over in 2008, its assets being divvied up between Heineken and Carlsberg.

Other recent upheavals include closure of historic Maclays brewery in 1999, and takeover of historic Caledonian brewery in 2004. Caledonian is now the sole survivor of over 40 Edinburgh breweries around 1890, and is now owned by Heineken. The Heineken owned McEwans brand is marketed on draught as:

McEwans 60/- (3.2% ABV)

McEwans 70/- (3.6% ABV)
McEwans 80/- (4.5% ABV)
McEwans 90/- (5.5% ABV)

Apart from the McEwans range, only a few sundry Scottish ales bear the shilling mark today, and 5 of the 6 BJCP commercial examples of 60/- and 70/- are now obsolete.

3.1.4. Standard nomenclature for Scottish Ales today is *Scottish Ale*. Of approximately 400 examples listed on Beer Advocate site, the vast majority of which are US micro and brewpub beers, around 300 are simply branded *Scottish Ale*. The remainder use proprietary brands, eg. Scottish Terrier, Tilted Kilt, Toss yer Caber, etc. Likewise for the few Scottish examples, eg. Black Douglas Ale, Greenmantle Ale, Raven Ale, Highlander, Tartan Special, etc. Of the entire 400, only a dozen or so bear the shilling mark.

3.1.5. Another recent development in Scotland is the revival of IPA, for which Edinburgh was once famous along with Burton. At reduced gravity it's a staple amongst draught ales today, notably Caledonian Deuchars IPA (4.1% ABV). IPA also features in the Belhaven draught range: Belhaven Scottish Ale (3.9% ABV)
Belhaven Best (3.2% ABV)
Belhaven Twisted Thistle IPA (draught ABV unknown, bottled exports are 5.3 – 6.1% ABV).

3.1.6. Reviewing Noonan's 1993 examples, analysis of the 22 brands bearing the shilling mark shows:

90/- (2 examples): OG: 1.055 and OG: 1.070 (Belhaven 90/-, nowadays sold as Belhaven Wee Heavy).
80/- (9 examples): OG: 1.040-1.043
70/- (7 examples): OG: 1.034-1.038
60/- (4 examples): OG: 1.030-1.036

BJCP Vital Stats for 80/- are vastly overstated at OG: 1.040-1.054, and appear to include the 90/- brand.

Note also that some examples of 60/- and 70/- overlapped.

3.1.7. Belhaven's 1993 range included:

Belhaven 90/- Strong Ale OG: 1.070, ABV: 7.3%
Belhaven 80/- Export OG: 1.041, ABV: 3.9%
Belhaven 70/- Heavy OG: 1.035, ABV: 3.3%
Belhaven 60/- Light OG: 1.031, ABV: 2.8%

However of the 22 Noonan examples, only 1 other uses the term "Light", 1 other uses the term "Heavy", and 3 others use the term "Export". Nowadays they've all but disappeared completely. However they do appear to linger on in common parlance amongst drinkers. Whether or not they're traditional terms is difficult to say, but draught beer during the 19th century was invariably sold under the X scale, from X to XXXX, with the occasional XXXXX. The shilling scale seems to have appeared mostly on bottle labels.

Nevertheless it seems quite likely that Light and Heavy crept into common parlance some considerable time ago. After all, pub goers need to identify to the barman what they want. However the use of "Export" is likely to have been much more recent. As elsewhere in the

world it's a bottled beer term, stemming from export products which were invariably bottled, generally at higher gravity than domestic versions. Perhaps a few brands were released on draught during the CAMRA boom, and the term gained some modern currency. Belhaven retains their 80/- Export brand today as a bottled beer (3.9% ABV), occasionally available on draught. Likewise Caledonian 80/- (4.1% ABV), which is not labelled Export.

3.2 Conclusions about Scottish Ales

1. As UK beer gravity plummeted during the 20th century, the ever diminishing range of ever diminishing Scottish ales contracted to 3 brands on draught, occupying a narrow OG band of 0.013, and an ABV band of 1.3%. In the case of 1993 Belhaven range, the 3 draught brands occupied an OG band of only 0.010, and an ABV band of only 1.1%. In contrast, the 3 English Bitters enjoy a spread of 3% ABV.

2. Accordingly, BJCP recognizes this range of Scottish draught ales as a single style, describing it in a single Style Description.

3. In addition, BJCP recognizes general marketing practice at the time, by identifying the use of the shilling scale within this style.

4. However the separate indexing of the 3 brands in BJCP Style Guidelines gives the appearance of representing 3 different styles.

5. This impression has been reinforced by the indexing of the corresponding terms Light, Heavy, and Export, notwithstanding the extreme rarity of their use by commercial brewers themselves. Presumably this was done to recognize a degree of traditional and/or contemporary popular currency of these terms.

6. The impression of 3 separate styles has been further reinforced by BJCP attempts to replicate Scottish hair-splitting, by specifying separate and extremely narrow OG and ABV ranges.

7. In doing so, BJCP have incorrectly reported OG range for 80/- brands by a wide margin. However this gives entrants much more scope, and effectively incorporates today's 90/- brand.

8. Both the shilling scale itself, as well as the 3 corresponding terms, can now be considered extinct amongst UK and US Scottish ale brands, with the notable exception of No.1 brand McEwans.

9. With the exception of McEwans range, the branding of Scottish ales generically as "Scottish Ale", and/or with proprietary Scottish theme terminology, often with the suffix "Ale" attached, can nowadays be considered universal.

3.3 Solutions for Scottish Ales

1. Assuming 4% ABV taxonomy division, our first task is to divide the totality of contemporary Scottish ale examples at the 4% and 6% points, and name the 3 styles appropriately. The strong style has already been named *Strong Scotch Ale*, and as such presents no problem.

2. In view of point 9 above, the appropriate name for the intermediate style is *Scottish Ale*.

3. Sticking with generic terminology, the logical choice for the lighter style is *Scottish Light Ale*.

4. The next task is to develop 2 separate Style Descriptions. This can be simply accomplished by duplicating the existing one, with some cursory modification to reflect lighter body in *Scottish Light Ale*, as well as a general note differentiating the styles, derived from BJCP Cat.9 preamble. For Vital Stats we can simply use the 1993 Noonan examples, which correspond nicely with the current McEwans examples.

5. The next task is to acknowledge the past use of the shilling scale, as preserved in the McEwans range, as well as any contemporary currency of the 3 corresponding terms. This can be simply accomplished with appropriate note under "History".

3.4 Recommendations for Scottish Ales

3.4.1. Consolidate 60/- & 70/- brands:

- *Scottish Light Ale*. OG: 1.030-1.039, FG: 1.008-1.012, IBU: 10–25, ABV: 2.8-3.9%

3.4.2. Consolidate 80/- & 90/- brands:

- *Scottish Ale*. OG: 1.040-1.055 FG: 1.010-1.016 IBU: 15 - 30 ABV: 4.0 - 5.5%

3.4.3. Provide separate Style Description for *Scottish Light Ale*, as a duplicate of current Style Description with minor amendment:

- Mouthfeel: **light to medium-light body**
- Overall Impression: Cleanly malty with a drying finish, perhaps a few esters, and on occasion a faint bit of peaty earthiness (smoke). **Slightly less intense malt flavours than standard strength Scottish Ales, and slightly less hop bitterness to balance.** Most beers finish fairly dry considering their relatively sweet palate, and as such have a different balance than strong Scotch ales.

3.4.4. Incorporate reference to shilling scale and corresponding terms in the historical notes of the style descriptions.

- *Scottish Ale*. History: Traditional Scottish session beers.....Long, cool fermentations are traditionally used in Scottish brewing. **Occasionally branded 80/- and 90/- reflecting the traditional shilling scale (barrel price) used throughout the UK, although at substantially lower than 19th century gravities. 80/- and 90/- strength ales were commonly bottled as "Export" products.**
- *Scottish Light Ale*. History: Traditional Scottish session beers.....Long, cool fermentations are traditionally used in Scottish brewing. **Occasionally branded 60/- and 70/- reflecting the traditional shilling scale (barrel price) used throughout the UK, although at substantially lower than 19th century gravities. 60/- and 70/- strength ales were generally draught only products. The corresponding terms "Light" and "Heavy" are still used by Scottish drinkers.**

3.4.5. Delete obsolete commercial examples, replace with contemporary Scottish examples.

4. Leichtes Weizen

It is recommended that a new style Leichtes Weizen (Light Weizen) be introduced to replace the current AABC Style 1.2 Light Wheat Beer.

As a little known style the latter is difficult for brewers to emulate, and has consistently failed to attract competition entries. Conversely, as a low gravity version of Hefeweizen, homebrewers are already familiar with Leichtes Weizen, and as such it is likely to prove considerably more popular. This would provide much needed diversity in LA Category, and improve the representation of beers in the true low-alcohol ABV range.

The Style Description is an amended version of the current Hefeweizen Style Description, incorporating wording from GABF Style Description. Commercial examples are from Ron Pattinson doc at <http://www.xs4all.nl/~pattolro/munibrew.htm>

5. Summary

The detailed recommendations contained in this proposal cover all the necessary Style Guideline amendments to deliver a rational and functional AABC Low Alcohol Category, for which an upper entry limit of <4.0% ABV can be confidently stipulated. Unlike the present LA Category, the Style Descriptions within would faithfully reflect the contemporary beer market, in terms of accommodating and accurately depicting the vast majority of commercial examples.

In addition, style definitions and style nomenclature would concur with CAMRA as well as the most authoritative and up to date beer style texts. This would all serve to minimize potential confusion and dispute amongst entrants, as well help to promote general beer literacy.

6. Amendments to Style Descriptions

The following pages show the recommended amendments to the AABC style descriptions for:

- English Bitter (formerly Standard/Ordinary Bitter)
- English Best Bitter (formerly Special/Best/Premium Bitter)
- English Extra Special/Strong Bitter (ESB) (formerly Extra Special/Strong Bitter)
- Mild Ale (formerly English Mild)
- Scottish Light Ale (formerly Scottish Light 60/- and Scottish Heavy 70/-)
- Scottish Ale (formerly Scottish Export 80/-)
- Leichtes Weizen (Light Weizen) (formerly Light Wheat Beer)

~~Standard/Ordinary Bitter~~ English Bitter

Aroma: The best examples have some malt aroma, often (but not always) with a caramel quality. Mild to moderate fruitiness is common. Hop aroma can range from moderate to none (UK varieties). Generally no diacetyl, although very low levels are allowed.

Appearance: Light yellow to light copper. Good to brilliant clarity. Low to moderate white to off-white head. May have very little head due to low carbonation.

Flavour: Medium to high bitterness. Most have moderately low to moderately high fruity esters. Moderate to low hop flavour (earthy, resinous, and/or floral UK varieties). Low to medium maltiness with a dry finish. Caramel flavours are common but not required. Balance is often decidedly bitter, although the bitterness should not completely overpower the malt flavour, esters and hop flavour. Generally no diacetyl, although very low levels are allowed.

Mouthfeel: Light to medium-light body. Carbonation low, although bottled and canned examples can have moderate carbonation.

Overall Impression: Low gravity, low alcohol levels and low carbonation make this an easy-drinking beer. Some examples can be more malt balanced, but this should not override the overall bitter impression. Drinkability is a critical component of the style; emphasis is still on the bittering hop addition as opposed to the aggressive middle and late hopping seen in American ales.

History: Originally a draught ale served very fresh under no pressure (gravity or hand pump only) at cellar temperatures (i.e., “real ale”). Bitter was created as a draught alternative (i.e., running beer) to country-brewed pale ale around the start of the 20th century and became widespread once brewers understood how to “Burtonize” their water to successfully brew pale beers and to use crystal malts to add a fullness and roundness of palate.

Comments: The lightest of the bitters, **Also** known as just “bitter.” Some modern variants are brewed exclusively with pale malt and are known as golden or summer bitters. Most bottled or kegged versions of UK-produced bitters are higher-alcohol versions of their cask (draught) products produced specifically for export. This style guideline reflects the “real ale” version of the style, not the export formulations of commercial products.

Ingredients: Pale ale, amber, and/or crystal malts, may use a touch of black malt for colour adjustment. May use sugar adjuncts, corn or wheat. English hops. Characterful English yeast. Often medium sulfate water is used.

Vital Statistics:

OG	FG	IBU	ABV
1.030 - 1.039	1.006 - 1.010	25 - 35	3.0 - 3.9%

Commercial Examples: Fuller's Chiswick Bitter, Adnams Bitter, Young's Bitter, Greene King IPA, Oakham Jeffrey Hudson Bitter (JHB), Brains Bitter, Tetley's Original Bitter, Brakspear Bitter, Boddington's Pub Draught

Special/Best/Premium Bitter English Best Bitter

Aroma: The best examples have some malt aroma, often (but not always) with a caramel quality. Mild to moderate fruitiness. Hop aroma can range from moderate to none (UK varieties). Generally no diacetyl, although very low levels are allowed.

Appearance: Medium gold to medium copper. Good to brilliant clarity. Low to moderate white to off-white head. May have very little head due to low carbonation.

Flavour: Medium to high bitterness. Most have moderately low to moderately high fruity esters. Moderate to low hop flavour (earthy, resinous, and/or floral UK varieties). Low to medium maltiness with a dry finish. Caramel flavours are common but not required. Balance is often decidedly bitter, although the bitterness should not completely overpower the malt flavour, esters and hop flavour. Generally no diacetyl, although very low levels are allowed.

Mouthfeel: Medium-light to medium body. Carbonation low, although bottled and canned commercial examples can have moderate carbonation.

Overall Impression: A flavourful, yet refreshing, session beer. Some examples can be more malt balanced, but this should not override the overall bitter impression. Drinkability is a critical component of the style; emphasis is still on the bittering hop addition as opposed to the aggressive middle and late hopping seen in American ales.

History: Originally a draught ale served very fresh under no pressure (gravity or hand pump only) at cellar temperatures (i.e., “real ale”). Bitter was created as a draught alternative (i.e., running beer) to country-brewed pale ale around the start of the 20th century and became widespread once brewers understood how to “Burtonize” their water to successfully brew pale beers and to use crystal malts to add a fullness and roundness of palate.

Comments: More evident malt flavour than in an ordinary bitter, this is a stronger, session-strength ale. Most bottled or kegged versions of UK-produced bitters are higher-alcohol versions of their cask (draught) products produced specifically for export. This style guideline reflects the “real ale” version of the style, not the export formulations of commercial products.

Ingredients: Pale ale, amber, and/or crystal malts, may use a touch of black malt for colour adjustment. May use sugar adjuncts, corn or wheat. English hops. Characterful English yeast. Often medium sulfate water is used.

Vital Statistics:

OG	FG	IBU	ABV
1.040 - 1.049	1.008 - 1.012	25 - 40	4.0 - 4.9%

Commercial Examples: Fuller's London Pride, Coniston Bluebird Bitter, Timothy Taylor Landlord, Adnams SSB, Young's Special, Shepherd Neame Masterbrew Bitter, Greene King Ruddles County Bitter, RCH Pitchfork Rebellious Bitter, Brains SA, Black Sheep Best Bitter, Goose Island Honkers Ale, Rogue Younger's Special Bitter

Extra Special/Strong Bitter English Extra Special/Strong Bitter (ESB)

Aroma: Hop aroma moderately-high to moderately-low using any variety of UK hops. Medium to medium-high malt aroma, often with a low to moderately strong caramel component (although this character will be more subtle in paler versions). Medium-low to medium-high fruity esters. Generally no diacetyl, although very low levels are allowed. May have light, secondary notes of sulfur and/or alcohol in some examples (optional).

Appearance: Golden to deep copper. Good to brilliant clarity. Low to moderate white to off-white head. A low head is acceptable when carbonation is also low.

Flavour: Medium-high to medium bitterness with supporting malt flavours evident. Normally has a moderately low to somewhat strong caramelly malt sweetness. Hop flavour moderate to moderately high (any UK variety, although earthy, resinous, and/or floral hops are most traditional). Hop bitterness and flavour should be noticeable, but should not totally dominate malt flavours. May have low levels of secondary malt flavours (e.g., nutty, biscuity) adding complexity. Moderately-low to high fruity esters. Optionally may have low amounts of alcohol, and up to a moderate mineral/sulfury flavour. Medium-dry to dry finish (particularly if sulfate water is used). Generally no diacetyl, although very low levels are allowed.

Mouthfeel: Medium-light to medium-full body. Low to moderate carbonation, although bottled commercial versions will be higher. Stronger versions may have a slight alcohol warmth but this character should not be too high.

Overall Impression: An average-strength to moderately-strong English ale. The balance may be fairly even between malt and hops to somewhat bitter. Drinkability is a critical component of the style; emphasis is still on the bittering hop addition as opposed to the aggressive middle and late hopping seen in American ales. A rather broad style that allows for considerable interpretation by the brewer.

History: Strong bitters can be seen as a higher-gravity version of best bitters (although not necessarily “more premium” since best bitters are traditionally the brewer’s finest product). Since beer is sold by strength in the UK, these beers often have some alcohol flavour (perhaps to let the consumer know they are getting their due).

Comments: More evident malt and hop flavours than in a special or best bitter. Stronger versions may overlap somewhat with old ales, although strong bitters will tend to be paler and more bitter. Fuller’s ESB is a unique beer with a very large, complex malt profile not found in other examples; most strong bitters are fruitier and hoppier. Judges should not judge all beers in this style as if they were Fuller’s ESB clones. Most bottled or kegged versions of UK-produced bitters are higher-alcohol versions of their cask (draught) products produced specifically for export.

Ingredients: Pale ale, amber, and/or crystal malts, may use a touch of black malt for colour adjustment. May use sugar adjuncts, corn or wheat. English hops.. Characterful English yeast. “Burton” versions use medium to high sulfate water.

Vital Statistics:

OG	FG	IBU	ABV
1.050 - 1.060	1.011 - 1.015	30 - 50	5.0 - 6.0%

Commercial Examples: Fullers ESB, Adnams Broadside, Shepherd Neame Bishop's Finger, Young's Ram Rod, Samuel Smith's Old Brewery Pale Ale, Bass Ale, Whitbread Pale Ale, Shepherd Neame Spitfire, Marston's Pedigree, Black Sheep Ale, Vintage Henley, Mordue Workie Ticket, Morland Old Speckled Hen, Greene King Abbot Ale, Bateman's XXXB, Gale's Hordean Special Bitter (HSB), Ushers 1824 Particular Ale, Hopback Summer Lightning, Great Lakes Moondog Ale, Shipyard Old Thumper, Alaskan ESB, Geary's Pale Ale, Cooperstown Old Slugger, Anderson Valley Boont ESB, Avery 14'er ESB, Redhook ESB

English Mild Mild Ale

Aroma: Low to moderate malt aroma, and may have some fruitiness. The malt expression can take on a wide range of character, which can include caramelly, grainy, toasted, nutty, chocolate, or lightly roasted. Little to no hop aroma. Very low to no diacetyl.

Appearance: Copper to dark brown or mahogany colour. A few paler examples (medium amber to light brown) exist. Generally clear, although is traditionally unfiltered. Low to moderate off-white to tan head. Retention may be poor due to low carbonation, adjunct use and low gravity.

Flavour: Generally a malty beer, although may have a very wide range of malt- and yeast-based flavours (e.g., malty, sweet, caramel, toffee, toast, nutty, chocolate, coffee, roast, vinous, fruit, licorice, molasses, plum, raisin). Can finish sweet or dry. Versions with darker malts may have a dry, roasted finish. Low to moderate bitterness, enough to provide some balance but not enough to overpower the malt. Fruity esters moderate to none. Diacetyl and hop flavour low to none.

Mouthfeel: Light to medium body. Generally low to medium-low carbonation. Roast-based versions may have a light astringency. Sweeter versions may seem to have a rather full mouthfeel for the gravity.

Overall Impression: A light-flavoured, malt-accented beer that is readily suited to drinking in quantity. Refreshing, yet flavourful. Some versions may seem like lower gravity brown porters.

History: May have evolved as one of the elements of early porters. In modern terms, the name “mild” refers to the relative lack of hop bitterness (i.e., less hoppy than a pale ale, and not so strong). Originally, the “mildness” may have referred to the fact that this beer was young and did not yet have the moderate sourness that aged batches had. Somewhat rare in England, good versions may still be found in the Midlands around Birmingham.

Comments: Most are low-gravity session beers in the range 3.1 - 3.8% ABV, although some versions may be made in the stronger (4%+) range for export, festivals, seasonal and/or special occasions a number of contemporary examples are in the 4 - 7% ABV range, and historical examples ranged up to 8% ABV. These stronger (4%+) versions should be entered in Specialty Category.

Ingredients: Pale English base malts (often fairly dextrinous), crystal and darker malts should comprise the grist. May use sugar adjuncts. English hop varieties would be most suitable, though their character is muted. Characterful English ale yeast.

Vital Statistics:

OG	FG	IBU	ABV
1.030 - 1.039	1.005 - 1.010	10 - 25	3.0 - 3.9%

Commercial Examples: Moorhouse Black Cat, Gale’s Festival Mild, Theakston Traditional Mild, Highgate Mild, Sainsbury Mild, Brain’s Dark, Banks’s Mild, Coach House Gunpowder Strong Mild, Woodforde’s Mardler’s Mild, Greene King XX Mild, Motor City Brewing GhettoBlaster

~~Scottish Light 60/-~~ + ~~Scottish Heavy 70/-~~ = Scottish Light Ale

Aroma: Low to medium malty sweetness, sometimes accentuated by low to moderate kettle caramelization. Some examples have a low hop aroma, low diacetyl, and/or a low to moderate peaty aroma (all are optional). The peaty aroma is sometimes perceived as earthy, smoky or very lightly roasted.

Appearance: Deep amber to dark copper. Usually very clear due to long, cool fermentations. Low to moderate, creamy off-white to light tan-coloured head.

Flavour: Malt is the primary flavour, but isn't overly strong. The initial malty sweetness is usually accentuated by a low to moderate kettle caramelization, and is sometimes accompanied by a low diacetyl component. No fruity esters. Hop bitterness is low to moderate, but the balance will always be towards the malt (although not always by much). Hop flavour is low to none. A low to moderate peaty character is optional, and may be perceived as earthy or smoky. Generally has a grainy, dry finish due to small amounts of unmalted roasted barley.

Mouthfeel: ~~Medium-low to medium body.~~ Light to medium-light body. Low to moderate carbonation. Sometimes a bit creamy, but often quite dry due to use of roasted barley.

Overall Impression: Cleanly malty with a drying finish, and on occasion a faint bit of peaty earthiness (smoke). ~~Slightly less intense malt flavours than standard strength Scottish Ales, and slightly less hop bitterness to balance.~~ Most beers finish fairly dry considering their relatively sweet palate, and as such have a different balance than strong Scotch ales.

History: Traditional Scottish session beers reflecting the indigenous ingredients (water, malt), with less hops than their English counterparts (due to the need to import them). Long, cool fermentations are traditionally used in Scottish brewing. ~~Occasionally branded 60/- and 70/- reflecting the traditional shilling scale (barrel price) used throughout the UK, although at substantially lower than 19th century gravities. 60/- and 70/- strength ales were generally draught only products. The corresponding terms "Light" and "Heavy" are still used by Scottish drinkers.~~

Comments: The malt-hop balance is slightly to moderately tilted towards the malt side. Any caramelization comes from kettle caramelization and not caramel malt (and is sometimes confused with diacetyl). Although unusual, any smoked character is yeast- or water-derived and not from the use of peat-smoked malts. Use of peat-smoked malt to replicate the peaty character should be restrained; overly smoky beers should be entered in the Specialty Beer category rather than here.

Ingredients: Scottish or English pale base malt. Small amounts of roasted barley add colour and flavour, and lend a dry, slightly roasty finish. English hops. Clean, relatively un-attenuative ale yeast. Some commercial brewers add small amounts of crystal, amber, or wheat malts, and adjuncts such as sugar. The optional peaty, earthy and/or smoky character comes from the traditional yeast and from the local malt and water rather than using smoked malts.

Vital Statistics:

OG	FG	IBU	ABV
1.030 - 1.039	1.008 - 1.012	10 - 25	2.8 - 3.9%

Commercial Examples: McEwan's 60/- (3.2% ABV), McEwan's 70/- (3.6% ABV), Orkney Raven Ale (3.8% ABV), Broughton Greenmantle Ale (3.9% ABV), Belhaven Scottish Ale (3.9% ABV), Tennents

~~Special (3.5% ABV) Belhaven 60/-, Maclay 60/- Light (all are cask only products not exported to the US) Caledonian 70/- (Caledonian Amber Ale in the US), Belhaven 70/-, Maclay 70/-~~

Scottish Export 80/- Scottish Ale

Aroma: Low to medium malty sweetness, sometimes accentuated by low to moderate kettle caramelization. Some examples have a low hop aroma, low diacetyl, and/or a low to moderate peaty aroma (all are optional). The peaty aroma is sometimes perceived as earthy, smoky or very lightly roasted.

Appearance: Deep amber to dark copper. Usually very clear due to long, cool fermentations. Low to moderate, creamy off-white to light tan-coloured head.

Flavour: Malt is the primary flavour, but isn't overly strong. The initial malty sweetness is usually accentuated by a low to moderate kettle caramelization, and is sometimes accompanied by a low diacetyl component. No fruity esters. Hop bitterness is low to moderate, but the balance will always be towards the malt (although not always by much). Hop flavour is low to none. A low to moderate peaty character is optional, and may be perceived as earthy or smoky. Generally has a grainy, dry finish due to small amounts of unmalted roasted barley.

Mouthfeel: Medium-low to medium body. Low to moderate carbonation. Sometimes a bit creamy, but often quite dry due to use of roasted barley.

Overall Impression: Cleanly malty with a drying finish, and on occasion a faint bit of peaty earthiness (smoke). Most beers finish fairly dry considering their relatively sweet palate, and as such have a different balance than strong Scotch ales.

History: Traditional Scottish session beers reflecting the indigenous ingredients (water, malt), with less hops than their English counterparts (due to the need to import them). Long, cool fermentations are traditionally used in Scottish brewing. [Occasionally branded 80/- and 90/- reflecting the traditional shilling scale \(barrel price\) used throughout the UK, although at substantially lower than 19th century gravities. 80/- and 90/- strength ales were commonly bottled as "Export" products.](#)

Comments: The malt-hop balance is slightly to moderately tilted towards the malt side. Any caramelization comes from kettle caramelization and not caramel malt (and is sometimes confused with diacetyl). Although unusual, any smoked character is yeast- or water-derived and not from the use of peat-smoked malts. Use of peat-smoked malt to replicate the peaty character should be restrained; overly smoky beers should be entered in the Specialty Beer category rather than here.

Ingredients: Scottish or English pale base malt. Small amounts of roasted barley add colour and flavour, and lend a dry, slightly roasty finish. English hops. Clean, relatively un-attenuative ale yeast. Some commercial brewers add small amounts of crystal, amber, or wheat malts, and adjuncts such as sugar. The optional peaty, earthy and/or smoky character comes from the traditional yeast and from the local malt and water rather than using smoked malts.

Vital Statistics:

OG	FG	IBU	ABV
1.040 - 1.055	1.010 - 1.016	15 - 30	4.0 - 5.5%

Commercial Examples: [McEwan's 80/- \(4.5% ABV\)](#), [McEwan's 90/- \(5.5% ABV\)](#), [Orkney Dark Island \(4.6% ABV\)](#), [Caledonian 80/- Export Ale \(4.1% ABV\)](#), [Belhaven 80/- \(Belhaven Scottish Ale in the US\)](#), [Southampton 80 Shilling](#), [Broughton Exciseman's 80/- \(4.6% ABV\)](#), [Broughton Black Douglas Ale \(5.2% ABV\)](#), [Belhaven St. Andrews Ale \(4.6% ABV\)](#), [McEwan's Export \(IPA\)](#), [Inveralmond Lia Fail \(4.7% ABV\)](#), [Arran Dark \(4.3% ABV\)](#)

Leichtes Weizen (Light Weizen)

Appearance: Pale straw to pale amber in colour. A thick, moussy, long-lasting white head is characteristic. The high protein content of wheat impairs clarity in an unfiltered beer, although the level of haze is somewhat variable. A beer “mit hefe” is also cloudy from suspended yeast sediment (which should be roused before drinking). The filtered Krystal version has no yeast and is brilliantly clear.

Aroma: Low to medium phenols (usually clove) and fruity esters (usually banana). The balance and intensity of the phenol and ester components can vary but the best examples are reasonably balanced. Noble hop character ranges from low to none. A light wheat aroma (which might be perceived as bready or grainy) may be present but other malt characteristics should not. No diacetyl or DMS. Optional aromatics can include a light, citrusy tartness, a light vanilla character, and/or a low bubblegum aroma. None of these optional characteristics should be dominant, but often can add to the complexity and balance.

Flavour: Low to medium banana and clove flavour. The balance and intensity of the phenol and ester components can vary but the best examples are reasonably balanced. Optionally, a light vanilla character and/or low bubblegum notes can accentuate the banana flavour, sweetness and roundness; neither should be dominant if present. The soft, somewhat bready or grainy flavour of wheat is complementary, as is a slightly sweet Pils malt character. Hop flavour is very low to none, and hop bitterness is very low to moderately low. A tart, citrusy character from yeast and high carbonation is often present. Well rounded, flavourful palate with a relatively dry finish. No diacetyl or DMS.

Mouthfeel: Light to medium-light body. Suspended yeast may increase the perception of body, however this should never reach medium. The texture of wheat imparts the sensation of a fluffy, creamy softness that may progress to a light, spritzy finish aided by high carbonation. Always effervescent.

Overall Impression: A light, easy drinking, very refreshing, pale wheat-based ale. Diminished mouthfeel relative to Hefeweizen, and noticeably lighter in body. The phenolic and estery aromas and flavors typical of Hefeweizen are more subdued, and the overall flavour profile is less complex due to decreased alcohol content. Best examples will display a light, well-balanced weizen character.

History: Modern low-alcohol version of traditional Hefeweizen, developed in response to growing demand for “light” beers during late 20th century. Produced by all major Munich breweries, as well as regional breweries throughout southern Germany.

Comments: Leichtes Weizen is a true low-alcohol style, with leading brands all in the 2.9-3.3% ABV range. As such these are “light” beers and the style should be judged accordingly. Full-flavoured examples should be considered out of style.

Ingredients: By German law, at least 50% of the grist must be malted wheat, although some versions use up to 70%; the remainder is Pilsner malt. A traditional decoction mash gives the appropriate body without cloying sweetness. Weizen ale yeasts produce the typical spicy and fruity character, although extreme fermentation temperatures can affect the balance and produce off-flavours. A small amount of noble hops are used only for bitterness.

Vital Statistics:	OG	FG	IBU	ABV	SRM
	1.025 - 1.035	1.005 - 1.008	6 - 12	2.5 - 3.5%	2 - 8

Commercial Examples: Weihenstephaner Hefeweissbier Leicht, Schneider Weisse Leicht, Paulaner Hefeweissbier Leicht, Erdinger Weissbier Leicht, Hacker-Pschorr Leichte Weisse, Munchner Kindl Weissbier Leicht, Wolfenstetter Leichtes Weizen.