

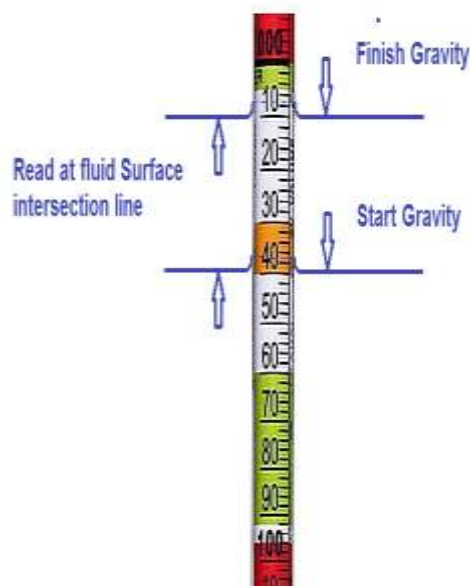
Brewing Supplies Online

When To Bottle

This is probably the question most new home brewers frequently ponder over! Brewers usually use a hydrometer and test tube to test their wort's development. It is not a good practice to float your hydrometer in the wort while still in the carboy. Other than bacteria possibly being on the hydrometer you may also expose your brew to air borne bacteria. A possible outcome is beer which tastes sour and has no kick. What a waste! Floating your hydrometer in a test tube filled from your carboy tap dramatically reduces this risk.

A brewer's hydrometer is designed to measure the specific gravity or density of fluid solutions in the wort and compare them to that of pure water. Your hydrometer is calibrated against the density of water at 20.0°C. Water density is identified on your hydrometer scale as 1 unit or 1000 points. In an ideal world as a brewer you would actually test your hydrometer in pure water at 20°C to determine if it had calibration errors and then adjust your readings accordingly. You would also adjust your reading for temperature variations unless you undertook every reading at 20°C. There are a number of web sites designed to do the calculation for you if you input the data required. Many brewers ignore the variation due to temperature.

When you first make up your wort it is rich with sugar solution so it will have a density greater than water, often 40 points or more than water. Brewers usually refer to this as the OG or "original gravity". Your beer yeast causes CO² to be produced as it converts the sugar solution into a number of compounds which include ethanol. Yeast sachets usually contain yeast culture and a calculated quantity of yeast nutrient to help the yeast multiply in the wort. During primary fermentation the density of the wort decreases until a plateau effect occurs. Brewers often call this the FG or "final gravity". The FG stated on beer kits is sometimes difficult to achieve due to a number of variables ranging from calibration error through to types of extra sugars used in the wort. Experienced home brewers apply a simple rule to their brew's FG. ***"If your hydrometer reading is the same for two days in a row then it is time to bottle or keg"***.



Flush a small amount of brew through the carboy tap to clear the sediment. Partly fill the test tube with enough beer to float the hydrometer. Let it settle so it has limited froth. Gently insert the hydrometer just in case it bottoms out. Carefully give it a spin to shake off floatation bubbles. Note the fluid in the test tube will tend to curve where it meets the hydrometer stem and climb up the stem so it is slightly above the surface of the wort. The curve of where the wort meets the hydrometer stem is the meniscus. A hydrometer reading should read across the hydrometer stem where the meniscus meets the wort's surface. If you know your hydrometer's calibration error you should mathematically adjust the reading. None the less if it's the same reading for two days in a row then it's bottling time. Don't forget to check your bubbler water level after each time you test as testing may have drained its water level.