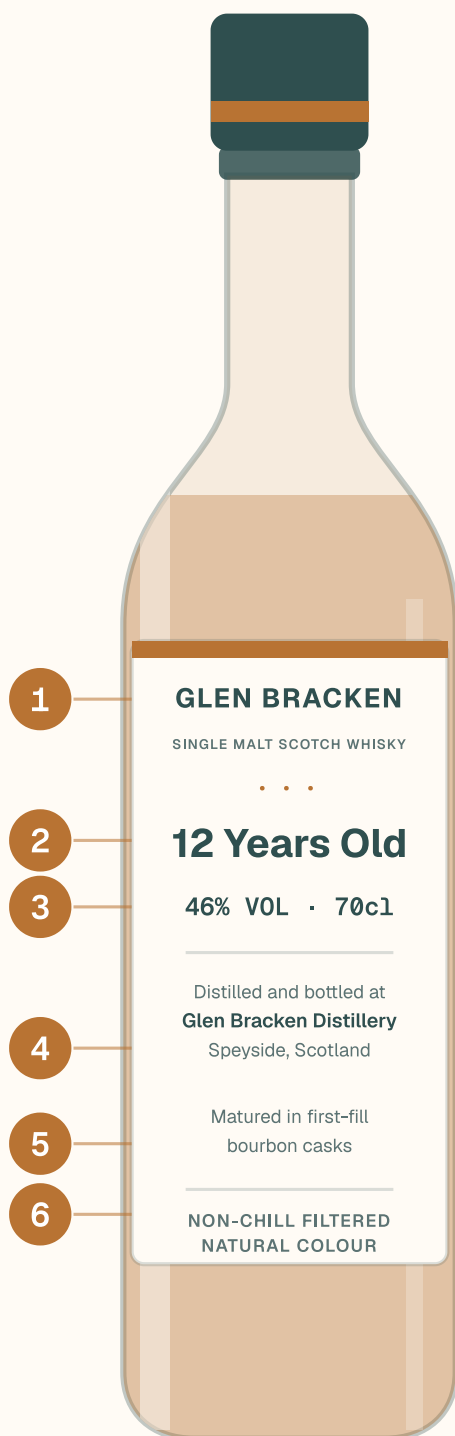




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# Label Decoder

Twenty seconds at the shelf: read this bottle, then that bottle, predict the glass, decide buy or walk.



**1 Single Malt Scotch Whisky**

The category. One distillery, malted barley. It does not mean single cask.

**2 12 Years Old**

The age of the youngest whisky in the bottle. No number means NAS.

**3 46% VOL**

The strength. 40% is the legal minimum. 46% and up usually means non-chill-filtered.

**4 Distilled and bottled at...**

Distillery and bottler are the same. A different name means an independent bottler.

**5 Matured in first-fill bourbon casks**

Matured means the whole time in that cask. Finished means a short second cask at the end.

**6 Non-chill filtered · Natural colour**

The small print. NCF means nothing was stripped out; natural colour means no caramel added.

## BUY / MAYBE / WALK

### Buy

Age, cask, ABV and NCF all stated, price fair

### Maybe

One red flag, or a finish sold as full maturation

### Walk

A pretty story with no facts, "limited" with no batch number, age worship



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# Read It, Then Buy It

Two labels, one choice — then the words you will meet again and again.

## TWO BOTTLES, ONE CHOICE

### LEFT

#### Glen Bracken 12 Year Old

40% · sherry finish

### RIGHT

#### Glen Bracken 10 Year Old

46% · NCF · first-fill bourbon

Which is sweeter?

☐ Left ☐ Right

You want fruit — buy which?

☐ Left ☐ Right

Answer key — sweeter: left · stronger: right · fruit: left · vanilla: right.

Which is stronger?

☐ Left ☐ Right

You want vanilla — buy which?

☐ Left ☐ Right

## IF YOU SEE X, EXPECT Y

|                       |                                                                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Bourbon cask</b>   | Vanilla, honey, coconut                                             |
| <b>Sherry matured</b> | Dried fruit, nuts, dark chocolate                                   |
| <b>Sherry finish</b>  | A short sherry note over the base spirit — not a full sherry whisky |
| <b>NAS</b>            | No age claim. Judge by cask and ABV, not a number                   |
| <b>40%</b>            | The legal minimum. Lighter, often chill-filtered                    |
| <b>Cask strength</b>  | 55–65%, undiluted. Add water yourself                               |

## THE WORDS ON THE BOTTLE

|                            |                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>NAS</b>                 | No age statement. The distillery chose not to print an age — not automatically worse. Some of the best whisky made carries no number. |
| <b>NCF</b>                 | Non-chill-filtered. Nothing stripped out before bottling. Look for haze at low strength — that is flavour, not a fault.               |
| <b>Natural colour</b>      | No caramel (E150a) added. The whisky is the colour the cask gave it. A pale whisky can be old and excellent.                          |
| <b>Finish vs matured</b>   | Matured means the whole time in that cask. Finished means a short second cask at the end — weeks or months, not years.                |
| <b>Cask strength</b>       | Undiluted from the cask, usually 55–65%. Add water yourself, drop by drop, until the spirit opens.                                    |
| <b>Single cask</b>         | One cask, one bottle run. Not the same as single malt. Small batch means a few casks married together.                                |
| <b>Independent bottler</b> | A company that buys casks and bottles them under its own label. The distillery name may appear, but the bottler is different.         |
| <b>Chill filtration</b>    | The whisky is chilled to strip fats and esters so it stays clear when cold. It strips flavour too. NCF skips this.                    |

## RED FLAGS — TICK BEFORE YOU BUY

- ☐ No age, no cask, no ABV detail — just a story
- ☐ Finish sold as if it were full maturation
- ☐ Limited edition with no batch or bottle number
- ☐ Age worship: high number, high price, no cask info
- ☐ Added colour not declared as natural colour

### The one-line test

If you cannot tell what is in the bottle from the label alone, the distillery does not want you to know. Walk.

Check the expression  
[drammaster.academy](https://drammaster.academy)