

CANNABIS

INTRODUCTION

Words Used In This Book

The name 'cannabis' comes from the Hebrew *kaneh bosm*, meaning 'sweet reed'. There have been hundreds of different slang names used to describe cannabis and its effects over the years. In this book we will use the expressions 'stoned' or 'high' to describe the effects of cannabis, but in all other cases we will try to explain any slang names we use as we go along. Before we begin we have included a general guide to some of the most popular names around at the moment.

General slang names for cannabis

include: blow, budda, dope, draw, puff, smoke, pot (from the Portuguese word *potiguaya*) and wacky-backy (from Del-Boy in 'Only Fools And Horses'). The words 'marijuana' and 'weed' originally meant herbal cannabis only, but are now names used for any kind of cannabis.

Slang names for cannabis resin

include: hashish, charas, block, solid.

Slang names for herbal cannabis

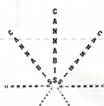
include: green, ganja, grass, bush, herb, bud, leaf, skunk.

Cannabis users are usually referred to as:

pot heads, stoners, tokers, or dope smokers.

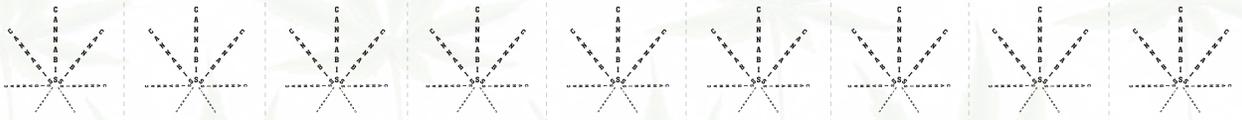
A cannabis cigarette, once called a

'reefer', is now usually known as a 'joint' or a 'spliff'.



TOKERS' TIP:

We don't recommend reading this book while stoned (you'll have probably already read this bit several times by now if you are) – if so, just look at the pictures, try not to tear up the cover for roach material and follow the Tokers' Tips.



A potted hIStory of pot

The Dawn Of Time (or maybe earlier!)

The pygmies claim to have been using cannabis since the beginning of time – however, pygmy potheads do tend to exaggerate. Most historians think that this ancient plant originated in India 8,000 years ago. As far back as 2,700 BC, the Chinese used cannabis as a medicine. The Greeks used cannabis seed oil to prevent flatulence – without much success as farting flourished in ancient Greece. Even Jesus Christ and his disciples were supposed to have used cannabis in their anointing oils.

What Did The Romans Do For Us?

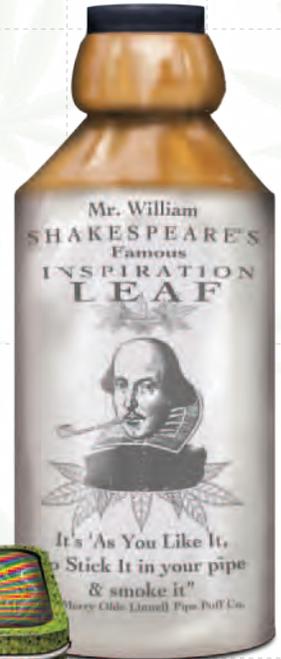
It was the Romans who first brought cannabis to Britain about 2,000 years ago, but it was the Anglo-Saxons who got serious about growing cannabis to make sailcloth and rope. Medical use of cannabis in Britain began around 500 AD, although it was not until 1839 that extracts of cannabis became an officially accepted medicine, for reducing pain and treating various illnesses, including rheumatism, fits, asthma, migraine, insomnia and period pains. It is claimed Queen Victoria used it for majestic menstrual cramps – although we don't know if she was amused by it or not.

Flower Power

Cannabis was first banned in Britain in 1928, although hardly anybody was actually using it at that time. Migrants from the West Indies (where the drug had been popular since the 17th century) brought the drug with them to Britain in the 1950s. By the 1960s the first generation of young people to seriously challenge the values of mainstream society on such issues as sex and drugs – the hippies – had adopted cannabis as the favourite drug of the flower power generation. But it has been over the last twenty years that cannabis has become so widely used, with over 10 million British people trying it at some point in their lives.

To Be Or Not To Be... what was the question?

We don't know much about the early British use of cannabis as a drug for recreation and pleasure, but traces of cannabis (along with cocaine and hallucinogenic drugs) were recently found in 16th century clay pipes belonging to William Shakespeare. Shakespeare may have been the first, but he certainly was not the last writer, artist or musician to have been inspired by the effects of cannabis.



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plANet pot plANt !

The Dumb Weed

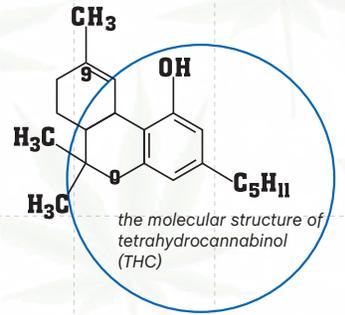
Plants are usually thought to be pretty stupid and yet despite being banned nearly everywhere, the cannabis plant – a weed closely related to stinging nettles – has still managed to ‘persuade’ people all over the world to grow, use and sell it, making it one of the most popular plants on the planet – no mean achievement for a dumb weed. There are between one and four species of the cannabis plant (experts have disagreed for centuries) – cannabis sativa, cannabis indica, and cannabis ruderalis, and a recently discovered ‘new’ species called “cannabis rasta”. In the wild the plants can grow up to 20 feet high and up to six feet wide.

Rope From Dope

More than 75% of the dried plant is cellulose (plant fibre). For thousands of years this has been used to make paper, rope, oil, canvas etc. Cannabis plants are still legally grown in some European countries just for this purpose, although special strains are used that are too weak to get you ‘high’ (have an effect) if you smoke them. Cannabis plants used for industrial products are usually called ‘hemp’.

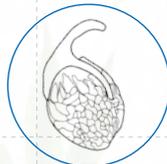
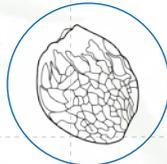
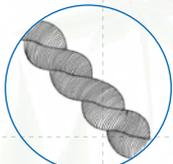
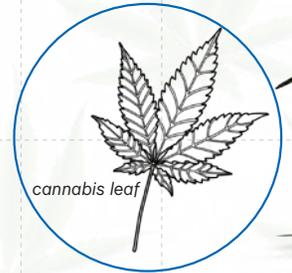
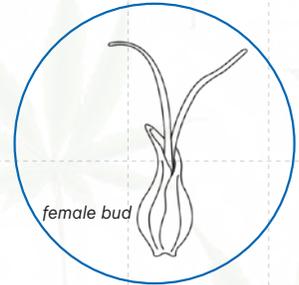
THC & Cannabinoids

The cannabis plant contains more than 400 chemicals, which when dried and smoked, are converted into more than 2,000 chemicals. The chemicals that really interest us are called **cannabinoids** and usually make up between 0.1% and 15% of the plant. There are about 60 cannabinoids, of which about a dozen affect the brain. **THC** (tetrahydrocannabinol) is the main one that gets you high, although both **CBN** (cannabinol) and **CBD** (cannabidiol) also have notable effects.



Plant Parts

Cannabis grows from seeds, which sprout roots, a stem and leaves. The cannabis leaf, with between five and nine long jaggy-edged ‘fingers’, has become an instantly recognisable icon throughout the world. Male plants have stamens (sex organs) containing pollen, while female plants develop buds – dense womb-like glands that produce seeds when pollinated by males. The buds have hair-like flowers, which turn from white to brown, and produce a sticky sweet-smelling resin. It is this resin that contains THC and other cannabinoids. When the mature female plant is cut down, it can be turned into three types of cannabis product: herb, resin or oil.

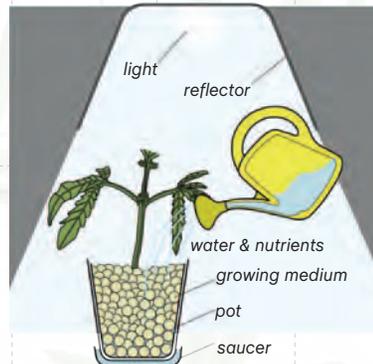




Growing Skunk

Despite its reputation as a genetically modified (GM) super weed, or the many myths about it being 'dipped' or coated in other drugs, skunk is actually just natural herbal cannabis grown using artificial methods, notably *hydroponics*. This means the plants are fed with water and nutrients, rather than planted in soil. Before the plants reach maturity any male plants are removed – this prevents the female plants from detecting any pollen, and so they produce even more sticky buds in a desperate but futile attempt to catch a speck of pollen and make some seeds. Plants without seeds are known as 'sinsemilla' (from the Spanish, meaning 'without seed'). The plants are grown using artificial lights to simulate strong sunshine (and fans to simulate wind). The lights are switched on for 18 hours a day for one or two months, and then switched to 12 hours a day for another month or two to make the female 'think' that summer has ended, so triggering flowering. Compared with natural growing conditions, skunk-related methods produce far more (THC-laden) buds – usually about one to two dry ounces per plant – in the shortest amount of time possible (about 3 months).

The hydroponic growing method



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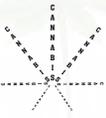
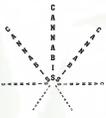
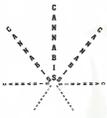
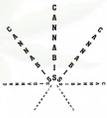
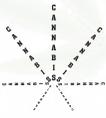
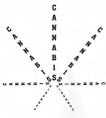
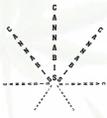
cannabis types

Just over 80% of the cannabis market in Britain now involves skunk (sinsemilla), with 15% involving cannabis resin (typically Moroccan), and about 2% involving traditional imported herbal cannabis.

Cannabis Resin (hashish)



Names for brands of cannabis resin are usually based on their country of origin, as well as their colour and shape: Lebanese Gold, Nepalese Temple Balls, Afghani Black etc. Resin is made by separating the sticky resin from the buds and leaves then drying and moulding it into a block. This is achieved by different methods in different countries. By far the most common type of resin found in Britain is Moroccan. The cheapest type is known as *soap*, *formula* or *slate*; while higher quality (uncut) Moroccan hash is (confusingly) called *pollen* or *pollum*. Traditionally Moroccan resin is made by shaking and pressing the buds through mesh screens, which produces different grades of hashish. For example, zero-zero is the name given to the best hash made with the first, finest mesh. However, Moroccan soap-bar resin (*formula*) can be cut with up to 80% adulterants, with common additives including soil, engine oil, henna, vinyl, milk powder, turpentine, disinfectant, glue and camel poo, which is why 'soap' is the cheapest cannabis available.



Skunk

Skunk gets its name from its unique smell, which is...well...unique and smelly. Although connoisseurs like the Dutch reserve the term *skunk* for a specific hybrid or strain of plants, in Britain, the label of skunk is given to any type of strong herbal cannabis. The practice of producing super-strong cannabis began in North America in the 1970s, when the best Colombian, Mexican and Afghanistan cannabis was *crossbred* to produce the legendary 'Skunk No.1'. By the mid-1980s, it was being grown in the Netherlands to supply 'coffee shops' and by the mid-1990s the seeds were being imported and grown in British 'weed farms'. There are now well over a hundred different types of skunk. On average, skunk is about three times stronger than standard cannabis resin – about 15% THC compared to 5% for resin. However, resin has far higher levels of cannabidiol (CBD) – about 3.5% compared with 0.1% in skunk. This makes resin more relaxing and sedating (dopey) compared with the 'trippier' effects of skunk. This is why new users of skunk or people smoking large amounts are also more likely to experience hallucinations or bad reactions (though most people just feel more stoned than usual).

Herbal Cannabis

Herbal cannabis is the simplest to produce, and simply involves cutting off and drying the buds and best leaves. Herbal cannabis is usually sold with small stalks (and sometimes seeds) still attached to the bud/leaf, and these have to be removed before smoking. Although there are well-known brands of natural herbal cannabis such as Thai sticks and Durban Poison, these are rarely available outside of Amsterdam's coffee shops. *Home-grown* is the name given to herbal cannabis grown in Britain using traditional methods which is why most *home-grown* is fairly weak compared to skunk.

Cannabis Oil

Cannabis oil is made by extracting a thick, sticky green syrup from cannabis resin or sometimes herbal cannabis. Oil can be 10 to 20 times stronger than herbal cannabis or cannabis resin, but is very rarely available in Britain today, so has no set price. There have been a number of reports in the last few years about very potent types of cannabis oil such as 'honey oil' cannabis, although like cannabis oil this is rarely available in the UK.

Liquid Cannabis

In U.S states where cannabis sales are permitted, commercially made cannabis liquids containing THC are sold for use in pocket sized vaporisers. In the UK, CBD liquid is on open sale in various forms including for use in vaporisers. However, CBD is thought to have a moderating effect on THC and on its own is not thought to be psychoactive (It doesn't get you high). CBD liquid is (probably) not covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act, but may be covered by The Psychoactive Substances Act (2016), nobody really seems quite sure.



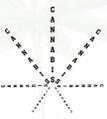
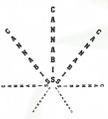
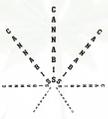
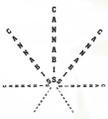
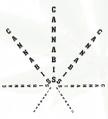
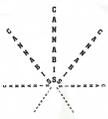
CANNABIS

SmokiN' mAttErS



TOKERS' TIP:

If you smoke spliffs with tobacco in them, reduce risks by using as little tobacco as possible; putting a filter back in it, or at least a long cardboard roach; leaving the last quarter of the joint unsmoked (don't put any pot in that bit); and avoiding holding the smoke in your lungs for more than five seconds (it's how deep you inhale, not how long you hold the smoke in for that gets you stoned).



Smoking Cannabis

THC (the cannabis chemical that gets you high) is not soluble in water, so it cannot be injected, nor be chopped up and sniffed, which is why nine out of ten cannabis users smoke it and the rest eat it. Tobacco based joints contain an average of about 10 mg of THC. However, up to two-thirds of the THC will not reach the brain, because it quite literally goes up in the smoke that comes out the end of your joint (or your mouth if you don't inhale properly). On the other hand when cannabis is eaten about 90% of the THC reaches the brain. Cannabis smoke can be harmful to the respiratory tract (your windpipe). Smoking cannabis may worsen asthma. Although recent research has shown that cannabis smoke does not cause cancer in the same way that tobacco smoke does, it still suggests that long-term cannabis smoking may increase the risks of lung cancer and bronchitis.

Eating Cannabis

Cannabis is used in traditional drinks and foodstuffs in many countries. Since it's not too pleasant to eat raw, it is often put into cakes or biscuits (known as 'space-cake' and 'hash brownies'). Because THC is fat-soluble rather than water-soluble, drinks with cannabis work best when it is brewed in hot milk (called *bhang* in India). Drinks and sweets (cannabis candy) made from the hemp plant, and on sale legally, contain either no THC or only trace amounts. However, although they are unlikely to make you high, they could make you test positive for cannabis on a drug test.

Making A Cannabis Cigarette

There are many methods of preparing a cannabis cigarette (also known as rolling a joint, building a spliff, racking a phat one, skinning up etc). Most people start with one king-size cigarette paper, or two to four small papers stuck together. These can be rolled into a variety of amusing (amusing to dope smokers anyway) shapes, the most common being 'the cone'. Ready rolled cones can be brought from shops though to the cannabis purist this is considered cheating. Cannabis cigarettes (also known as spliffs or joints) usually contain a mixture of tobacco and cannabis, but can be pure herbal cannabis. Cannabis resin has to be softened by heating and is then crumbled finely into the spliff; herbal cannabis has to have the stalks and any seeds removed first. Rolled-up cardboard (called a roach) or cigarette filter is then fitted into the end which goes in the mouth, to stop the smoke getting too hot and to prevent the end of the spliff getting soggy.



TOKERS' TIP:

Be especially careful if you eat cannabis – start with smaller test amounts, because amounts larger than a gram can be like a mushroom/LSD trip, or make you feel dozy or crazy all day. Eating cannabis should be avoided by people with mental health problems (see mental health section). Eating cannabis or smoking large amounts can sometimes lead to 'acute intoxication' – the cannabis equivalent of being very drunk on alcohol. About 100 to 200 people a year are treated in English hospitals for acute cannabis intoxication, but most recover within a few days to a few weeks. Imported cannabis (e.g. soap-bar) may also contain adulterants and bacteria (germs), which could give you a bad tummy at the least.

pipe LINES

Pipe Lines

Businesses selling cannabis pipes (head shops etc.) often display a notice clearly stating that their pipes are for tobacco or legal herbs only, even though the pipes often have pictures of cannabis leaves on them. This is because selling paraphernalia for preparing or using illegal drugs is an offence. There are many different types of cannabis pipe:

 **HOMEMADE PIPES.** – These are pipes adapted from everyday objects from drink-cans to potatoes. An even simpler method, known as ‘glassing’, involves just a pin, drinking glass and piece of cardboard, but is suitable for smoking hash only (think about it).

Hot knives involves heating two metal knives until they are red hot, pressing a piece of hash between the knives while holding them under a bottle with the bottom cut off, and then inhaling the sudden jet of smoke through the top of the bottle. This makes you very stoned very quickly, hurts your lungs, and is not for everyone.

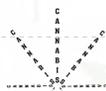
 **STANDARD PIPES** – These come in various shapes and sizes, and can be made of wood, stone, metal and/or plastic (glass pipes are for crack). Most pipes require a screen (wire mesh) to be fitted into the bowl to stop the contents being sucked down the tube when smoking.

 **CHILLUM** – This is a clay pipe, with a hole at either end, a pebble in the middle, and a cloth. Traditionally, it’s held like a chimney and lit at the top end, with the cloth wrapped round the bottom end, which goes in the mouth.

 **WATER PIPE** – Any pipe where the smoke goes through water before it reaches your lungs is called a water pipe. This has two purposes – filtering out tar etc., and cooling the smoke (crushed ice is especially cool). The **hookah or hubbly-bubbly** is an Oriental water pipe with one or more long smoking tubes attached to a water-filled bowl. It was made famous by the caterpillar in *Alice in Wonderland*, who sits smoking a hookah on a magic mushroom. These days, it is mostly used to smoke tobacco in the Middle East and North Africa.

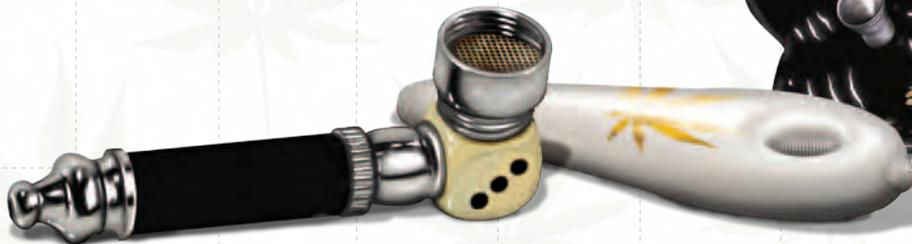
 **BONGS** – Pot-smokers more often use the modern bong, which usually has a wide vertical plastic or glass stem, fitted with a metal bowl. The most sophisticated bongs have two or more water chambers, two or more bowls, and several mouthpieces (like a hubbly-bubbly).

 **THE VAPORISER** – This is the least harmful way of smoking cannabis – an electronic device that vaporises the cannabinoids only, and leaves the rest of the material unburnt. The advent of e-cigarettes has seen the development of pocket sized vaporisers, including some which will vaporise herbal cannabis.



TOKERS’ TIP:

The safest method of smoking is the vaporiser pipe, but since they are expensive and not widely available, the next best method is a water pipe or bong, followed by a standard pipe or neat spliff, and lastly a spliff with tobacco in it.





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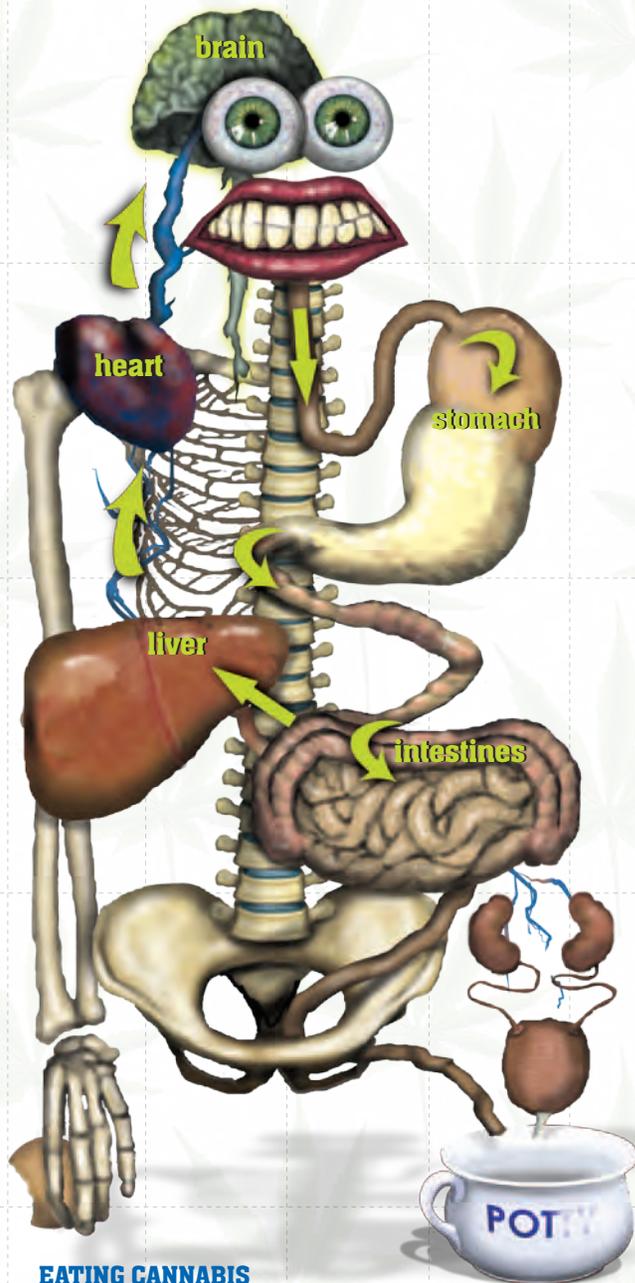
cannabis in the body & brain

Where Does All The Cannabis Go?

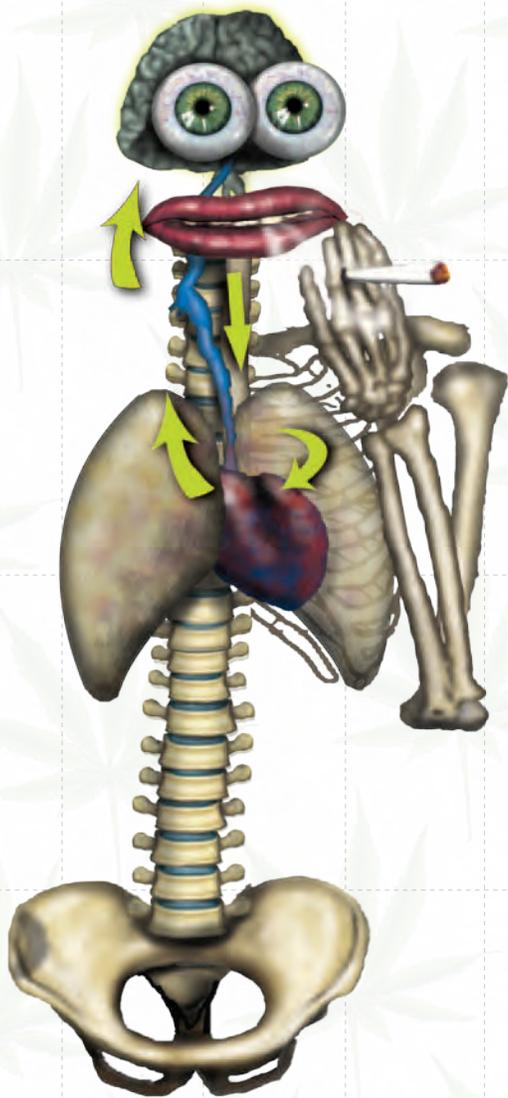
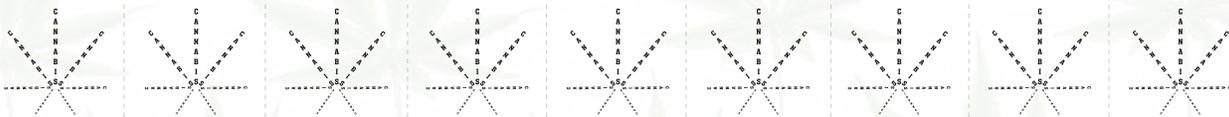
When cannabis is eaten, it passes from the mouth down the food pipe to the stomach, then through the intestines to the liver. THC is separated out in the liver, and sent via the bloodstream up to the lungs and heart where it is pumped up to the brain and round the rest of the body. When eating cannabis, it takes 1/2 to 1 1/2 hours for THC to reach the brain depending on how much food you have eaten beforehand. The effects peak after another hour or two, but don't start to wear off for several hours.

When cannabis is smoked, it passes directly from the lungs to the heart, where it is pumped up to the brain and other organs, which means that the effects start far more rapidly. When smoked, the effects come on within two to ten minutes, and last for up to an hour, before tailing off for a few more hours. The initial effects are more stimulating, and the later effects more relaxing. The effects are stronger and longer when eaten rather than smoked.

Whether smoked or eaten, cannabis is stored in your body fat for up to five days, after which it is slowly released back into other parts of the body, before eventually being broken down by the liver, and excreted in urine etc. – known as *metabolisation*. A single dose of cannabis can take from seven to 30 days to be completely metabolised. In short, compared with most drugs, which clear the body in one to four days, cannabis is a bit of a “hanger on”. And when a heavy, regular user gives up cannabis, it can take two to three months for their urine to be clear of THC.



EATING CANNABIS



SMOKING CANNABIS

Cannabis In The Brain

The effects of different drugs in the brain are caused by the release of chemicals called *neurotransmitters*, which affect your mood and thinking. While most drugs affect between one and three neurotransmitters, cannabis affects over half a dozen different neurotransmitters including serotonin (also boosted by ecstasy), dopamine (also raised by cocaine), and endorphins (also triggered by heroin). This explains why cannabis has such a wide range of different effects on the mind – trippy, stimulating, pain-killing, relaxing, etc.

Physical Effects

The main physical effects include a slight increase in blood pressure, heartbeat and breathing. This could be (slightly) risky for people with heart problems (about the same risk as doing light physical exercise). Stoned people also tend to sway slightly and can be clumsy, but the telltale signs of being stoned are in the face: a dry mouth and lips; a fixed expression; staring and/or grinning; and half-closed eyelids, often with bloodshot eyes. To the unstoned, stoned people can seem distracted and vague. New users often vomit when they have taken cannabis, especially if they have been drinking alcohol. Smoking a lot can produce an effect called a 'whitey', where you feel you are about to faint or pass out, though this mostly stops just short of unconsciousness (but not always). Cannabis has also been found to reduce blushing, and can stop hiccupping.

THE BIG BLUE BOOK OF

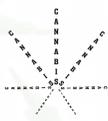
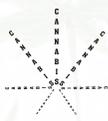
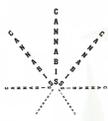
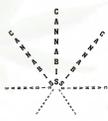
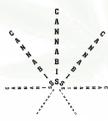
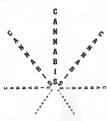
CANNABIS

the cannabis experieNce

STONED AGIN!

With respect to Robert Crumb's original 'Stoned Agin' poster of the 1970's





The Main Effects

As with any drug, the effects of cannabis depend on your personality, mood and experience, as well as when and where it's taken, how much you take, and how you take it. First time users often don't notice the effects and often claim nothing is happening as they giggle uncontrollably at the bread-bin. This is because the effects can be quite subtle, requiring experience to appreciate fully. But when asked what cannabis does for them, users always mention three main effects.

THE BUZZ: The very positive, happy and upbeat state of mind produced by cannabis has been described as a warm psychic 'buzz' or glow, as a contented state of well-being, and as a child-like daydream. Users often distinguish levels of euphoria by such terms as *mellow* (mildly stoned) and *smashed* or *wrecked* (very stoned).

CHILLING OUT: Stoned relaxation is often referred to as feeling 'chilled out' or 'laid back'. De-stressing and reducing feelings of anxiety or depression are major reasons given by cannabis users for getting stoned. Some stoners say that the fuzzy state of mind makes it difficult to focus on and worry about problems.

SOCIABILITY: Cannabis affects sociability by increasing closeness to and camaraderie with other people who are stoned, and this blends with happiness and relaxation to produce the main cannabis experience.

Other Effects

THOUGHTS: When stoned, thinking becomes more imaginative and creative, but less logical and focused – you may have better (or weirder) ideas, but you are more likely to forget them too! This is because cannabis weakens both your short-term and long-term memory. When asked something simple like, "Do you want the 10-inch or 12-inch deep pan pepperoni?" spaced-out stoners' minds can go completely blank, with a gormless, heavy-lidded look (called the 'thousand-yard stare'). Fortunately your memory and concentration are only affected while you are stoned. Unfortunately this means that exam revision or any type of learning is wasted when you are stoned. Cannabis can also make you much more aware of your own mind (self-awareness) as well as other people's thoughts and feelings (empathy). It can also make you feel paranoid – meaning that you are very self-conscious or feel that people are talking about you or are out to get you. Though hallucinations are rare and linked to large doses, perception is often enhanced in various ways – colours can look brighter, music sounds better, food can taste better, and time seems to slow down. Some users say cannabis helps them sleep, but cannabis can also make it less likely that you dream. People who stop using cannabis after a period of regular use often experience rebound dreaming – very vivid, detailed dreams.

BEHAVIOUR: Cannabis does not directly increase your sex drive (libido), but because it makes you feel happy, relaxed and sociable, it can make sex more likely to happen, as well as feel nicer. Unlike alcohol, cannabis rarely leads to aggressive or violent behaviour, so if you bump into a stoner in a dark alley, don't be afraid. They are probably just in search of a pepperoni pizza and not looking to harm you. This effect is called 'the munchies' and is caused by THC's stimulating effect on appetite receptors in the brain. When stoned, cannabis users often talk quickly and eagerly (called 'babbling'), usually about a silly or obscure topic, while going off onto other subjects, forgetting the original topic, gesturing a lot, and/or not noticing whether anyone is listening. This may be accompanied by bouts of intense giggling, usually about things that do not seem funny to unstoned people in the same situation. Though they may babble with friends, cannabis users may be quieter in the company of strangers and could even get paranoid.

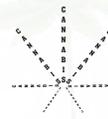
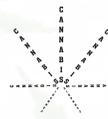
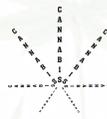
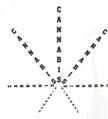
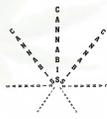
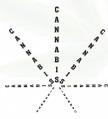
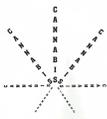
CANNABIS

the dArk Side of the leaf



TOKERS' TIP:

Reducing Risk: As a general rule of thumb, avoid using cannabis too often (everyday counts as often) and avoid using too much at any one time, particularly after drinking a lot of alcohol. Doubling the amounts which made you feel good does not always make you feel twice as good, and may just make you feel sick or confused. Lastly, be careful where you are when you use. It is best to stick to untaxing things when stoned (for example, staring at a lava lamp) – in particular avoid risky activities like driving.



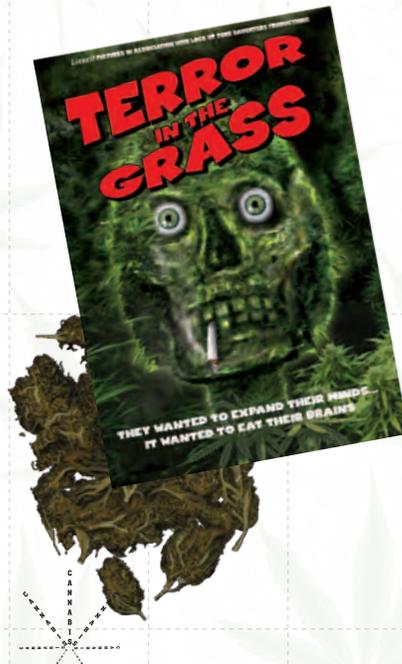
Pot Propaganda

"The first effect is sudden, violent, uncontrollable laughter; then come dangerous hallucinations – space expands – time slows down, almost stands still...fixed extravagances... leading finally to acts of violence, ending often in incurable insanity".

The quote above is from the 1936 American film 'Reefer Madness'. Although drug education tends to be a bit more sophisticated these days, it is still the case that in an attempt to scare people, the risks from using cannabis are often exaggerated and distorted so like 'the boy who cried wolf', the real risks are not taken seriously. One example is the 'gateway' theory claiming that using cannabis leads to the use of 'hard drugs' like heroin. While it's true that 95% of heroin addicts used cannabis before heroin, its also true that 95% of cannabis users do not go on to use heroin. The first drug used by heroin addicts is actually tobacco but you won't see 'heroin addiction' listed among the warnings on a packet of fags. That's because the risks from using tobacco are clear – it kills 100,000 people a year in the UK, whereas the moderate use of cannabis by adults is not associated with any serious risks to physical health. Overdose is almost unheard of, and although cannabis may be a factor in deaths involving other drugs – cannabis on its own won't kill you. Even frequent or heavy cannabis use is far less harmful compared with just about any other kind of drug use.

Cannabis doesn't kill people, but that doesn't mean it's harmless or that there aren't real risks involved in using the drug. It just needs to

be kept in perspective. Cannabis use should be avoided by pregnant women, as there are similar risks to cigarette smoking. We have already covered the risk from cannabis smoke, so in this next section we look at the other risks of using cannabis.



TOKERS' TIP:

Most people can give up using just a little bit of willpower. Finding some other interest or activity to replace all the time you spent stoned will help. If willpower is in short supply you can contact your local drug service which will offer help and support in staying off or cutting down.

Too Much – Too Young

Using any drugs, legal or illegal, at an early age can increase the chance that you will develop problems later in life. A recent study suggests that those young people 'dependent' on cannabis before the age of 18 may have lower scores on IQ tests later in life – in other words heavy cannabis use when young might make you 'dumber' when older. This effect seems to be permanent, even for those who stop using, however, like most cannabis research the findings have been disputed. **But, it is still the case that the younger you are when you use cannabis the more risks you run.**

Addiction & Habit

Although cannabis is not physically addictive in the same way that alcohol and tobacco are, it has long been recognised that some people develop a cannabis habit and can have trouble stopping. Mobile phones are not physically addictive, but imagine how lost some people would be without one. Some people have an overwhelming compulsion to get stoned on cannabis, morning, noon and night. The constant use of any drug, even drugs like caffeine, present in coffee and chocolate, can lead to unpleasant effects when you suddenly stop taking it. Most people stop taking cannabis without any real difficulties or even really noticing it, whilst some find it very hard to stop using, and can get mild stress-related withdrawal symptoms when they stop – like trouble sleeping, sweaty hands, loss of appetite and bad moods. It is also the case that if you smoke joints with tobacco, and try to give the two up at the same time, the withdrawal from tobacco is mixed up with that of cannabis.

CANNABIS

cannabis & meNtAl heAlth



The relationship between mental health and cannabis is complex, difficult to understand and there is much that we simply don't know.

The 'Regular' Effects Of Cannabis

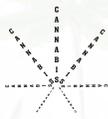
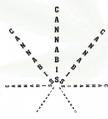
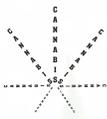
When you are high on cannabis you can become paranoid, think strange thoughts and even hallucinate, but these effects disappear when the cannabis wears off and are not a sign of mental illness, just the regular effects of using cannabis.

Mental Health & Mental Illness

Just as **physical health** describes the state of our bodies, **mental health** describes the state of our minds. It is quite normal for a mentally healthy person to feel sad and upset when unpleasant or difficult things are going on in their life. However, the way some people respond to these 'life events' and experiences can become extremely disturbing to themselves and those around them. This can lead to a doctor diagnosing them as suffering from a **mental illness**.

It is estimated that one in four people will have a mental illness at some point in their life. There are lots of different types of mental illnesses, from relatively minor ones to more serious ones. Doctors don't know everything about the causes of mental illness, but they know that some people are more likely to become mentally ill than others which is called being *predisposed* to mental illness.

"IF YOU BUY MY LAMP,
YOU WON'T NEED TO BUY DRUGS."
CRAVEN WALKER -
INVENTOR OF THE LAVA LAMP



Cannabis & Mentally Ill People

We have known for many years that people experiencing certain mental illnesses and who smoke cannabis (or use other drugs like alcohol, amphetamine or even cigarettes) take more time to recover from their illness than those who don't use the drug. It is also thought that cannabis can 'trigger' (start off) mental illness in those people predisposed to it, but it can be difficult to be sure as people who start to feel mentally ill often say they are using cannabis to cope with how they are feeling.

Psychosis & Schizophrenia

One group of mental illnesses is called **psychosis**. The symptoms of a psychosis include disordered thoughts and strange beliefs (like believing you are receiving secret messages through your television), hallucinations and hearing strange 'voices'. Many people (up to one in five) may experience these 'psychotic symptoms' for short periods at some point in their lives. If these symptoms become severe, last for a significant period of time, or keep recurring, it can lead to a doctor diagnosing a very serious mental illness called **schizophrenia**. Schizophrenia can require treatment in a hospital. Some people experience many episodes of schizophrenia over their lives, while others have just one episode of the illness. Although we know that the illness tends to run in families, we are still a long way from understanding all of the causes of schizophrenia.

Cannabis & Schizophrenia

Because of concerns raised in the media, the government asked its expert panel of advisors on drugs (the ACMD) to look at the evidence about the link between cannabis and mental disorder. They found that there was no clear evidence that cannabis causes mental illness which would not otherwise have occurred. But they noted that the risk of developing schizophrenia was increased for some individuals who inherit a particular pair of genes (one copy from each parent), if they smoked cannabis before the age of 18 and before 15 in particular. However, they also noted that out of the many things that increase the risks of developing schizophrenia, cannabis played a very minor role.

"the use of cannabis makes (at worst) only a small contribution to an individual's risk of developing schizophrenia." ACMD 2005

Cannabis & Depression

Some experts think cannabis use could lead to a mental illness far more common than schizophrenia – depression, although this link has not been proven. In fact, there is evidence that cannabis may help reduce unpleasant symptoms for some people suffering from depression.



TOKERS' TIP:

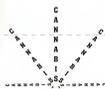
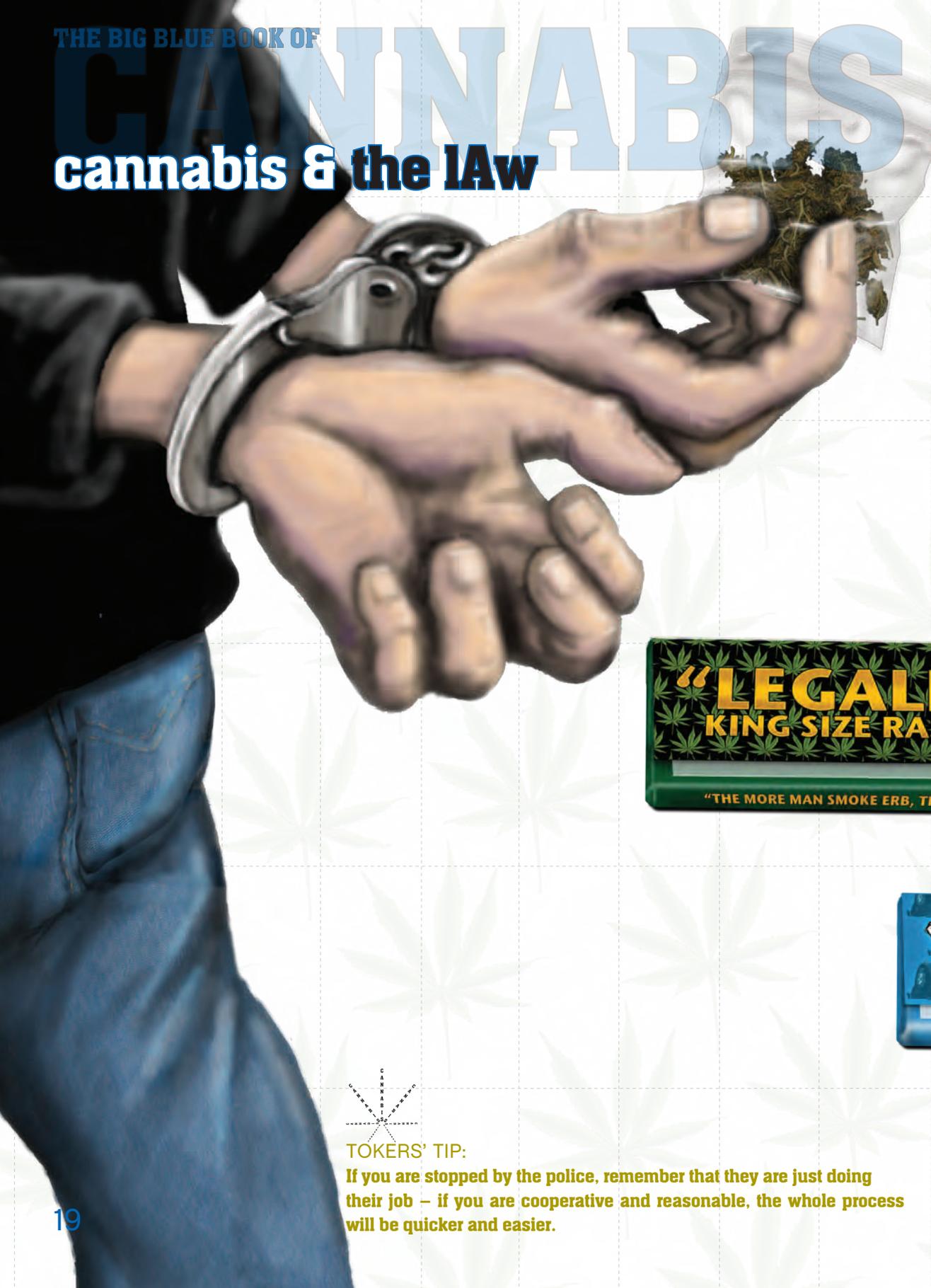
As there is presently no practical way of knowing if you have the risky genes, the only way to reduce the risk is to not use cannabis or certainly not to use it while you are a teenager.

People with mental health problems and those with a history of it in their families are always advised not to use cannabis although many people with mental health problems ignore this advice as they say cannabis helps them cope with their condition (and they like the effects). Monitor the effects on yourself – and on your friends – look out for signs of becoming too paranoid, moody or withdrawn etc. If this happens, stop smoking cannabis; if things don't improve ask for help. Be particularly careful about eating cannabis, as this can be risky for people with mental health problems.



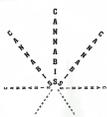
CANNABIS

cannabis & the law



TOKERS' TIP:

If you are stopped by the police, remember that they are just doing their job – if you are cooperative and reasonable, the whole process will be quicker and easier.



Cannabis was first banned in 1928 and despite rumours is still against the law – illegal, outlawed, criminal, banned, forbidden and prohibited. It is illegal to possess cannabis, attempt to possess it, sell or give it away, grow it, import it, export it or drive while stoned – even allowing it to be smoked in your home is a crime.

Cannabis is a Class B Drug,

C is for Confusion

The main law on drugs is called the Misuse of Drugs Act. This divides drugs into three classes A, B and C depending on how harmful they are thought to be. Cannabis was originally placed into class B of the Act in 1971. The government took a decision to reclassify cannabis from class B to class C in 2004. And yet, despite a fall in the number of people using cannabis, they ignored their own advisory committee and changed it back again in January 2009.

Cannabis is now a class B drug. The maximum penalty for possession is five years imprisonment, while the maximum penalty for cannabis trafficking offences remains 14 years. However, maximum penalties are rarely if ever given. (see below).

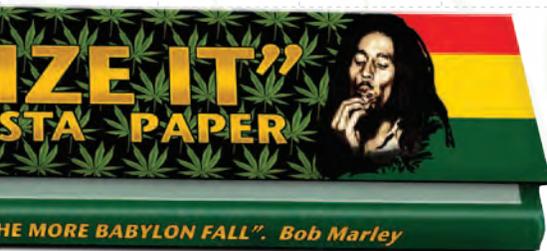
Police Stop and Search

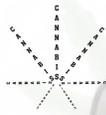
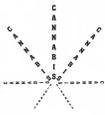
The police have the power to stop and search you if they think you have drugs on you. They can search your pockets, bag, car, house etc. Police officers (of the same sex) can strip search in private (usually at a police station), but officers cannot do an intimate search (only a police doctor can look in your front or back bottom). Intimate searches can only be carried out for Class A drugs.

Adults caught with 'small' amounts of cannabis.

Getting caught with a 'small' amount of cannabis is known as '**possession**'. If you are aged 18 or over and you are caught with a 'small' amount of cannabis, in most cases (provided you admit to it) the police simply take your name and address, confiscate your cannabis, and send you on your way with a Cannabis Warning. But you can still be arrested and charged with possession if you are caught near a school, or with a 'large' amount or you are uncooperative. If you are caught in possession of cannabis for a second time, you will receive a 'penalty notice for disorder' (PND) – which means that the police will issue you with an £90 spot-fine (a bit like getting a parking ticket). People caught in possession of cannabis more than two times will either be cautioned at a police station (a formal written warning) or prosecuted in court (where they will most likely receive a fine).

In Scotland, the police can also deal with minor cannabis offences by a 'fiscal fine' rather than the law courts.





Under-18s caught with 'small' amounts of cannabis

If you are under the age of 18 and you are caught with a 'small' amount of cannabis, you may be arrested and locked in a police cell. Your parents or carers will be contacted and either they or an 'appropriate adult' will be present while you are interviewed, charged, photographed, fingerprinted, etc. – a process which usually takes several hours. For those under 18, being caught in possession usually means either the police will issue a Youth Caution (the equivalent of a caution) or a Youth Conditional Caution. This means you have to attend a Youth Offending Team for up to three months.

If you get caught with a 'larger' amount of cannabis

If you are caught with an amount of cannabis which the police think is greater than you would need for your own use – particularly if it is cut up into smaller deals, or you have weighing scales or wads of cash – you could be charged with **possession with intent to supply**.

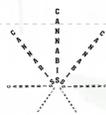
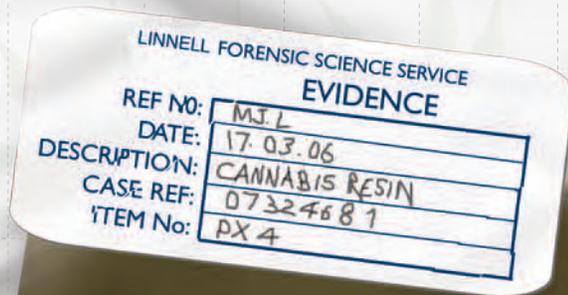
If the police have evidence that you actually gave or sold cannabis to someone else you will be charged with **supplying class B drugs**. Both these dealing charges can lead to a prison sentence. Most young people buy cannabis from people that they know, who are either dealing to pay for their own cannabis use or simply doing their friends a favour by buying enough for both of them. Although 'social supply' as this is called can be taken into account by the police

and courts, you don't have to sell cannabis to be charged with supply.

If you are caught growing (cultivating) cannabis – even one plant – you will be charged with the offence of cannabis production. If found guilty of growing cannabis, you are only likely to be given a prison sentence if you are growing enough plants for commercial sale rather than a few plants for personal use.

Criminal Records

One of the main harms arising from being busted isn't the fine or community sentence – it's the discrimination that comes from having a criminal record. This can affect your future work, education, travel, housing, finances, and other areas of life. Reprimands and final warnings are kept on record for 5 years or until you are 18. Cautions are kept for 5 years, and your name remains on the National Police Computer for 20 years.



TOKERS' TIP:

Adults have to admit the offence to be given a 'cannabis warning' or a caution. This is often the best option. If you are unsure it is always best to say nothing until you have had advice from a solicitor. These are provided for free at police stations.

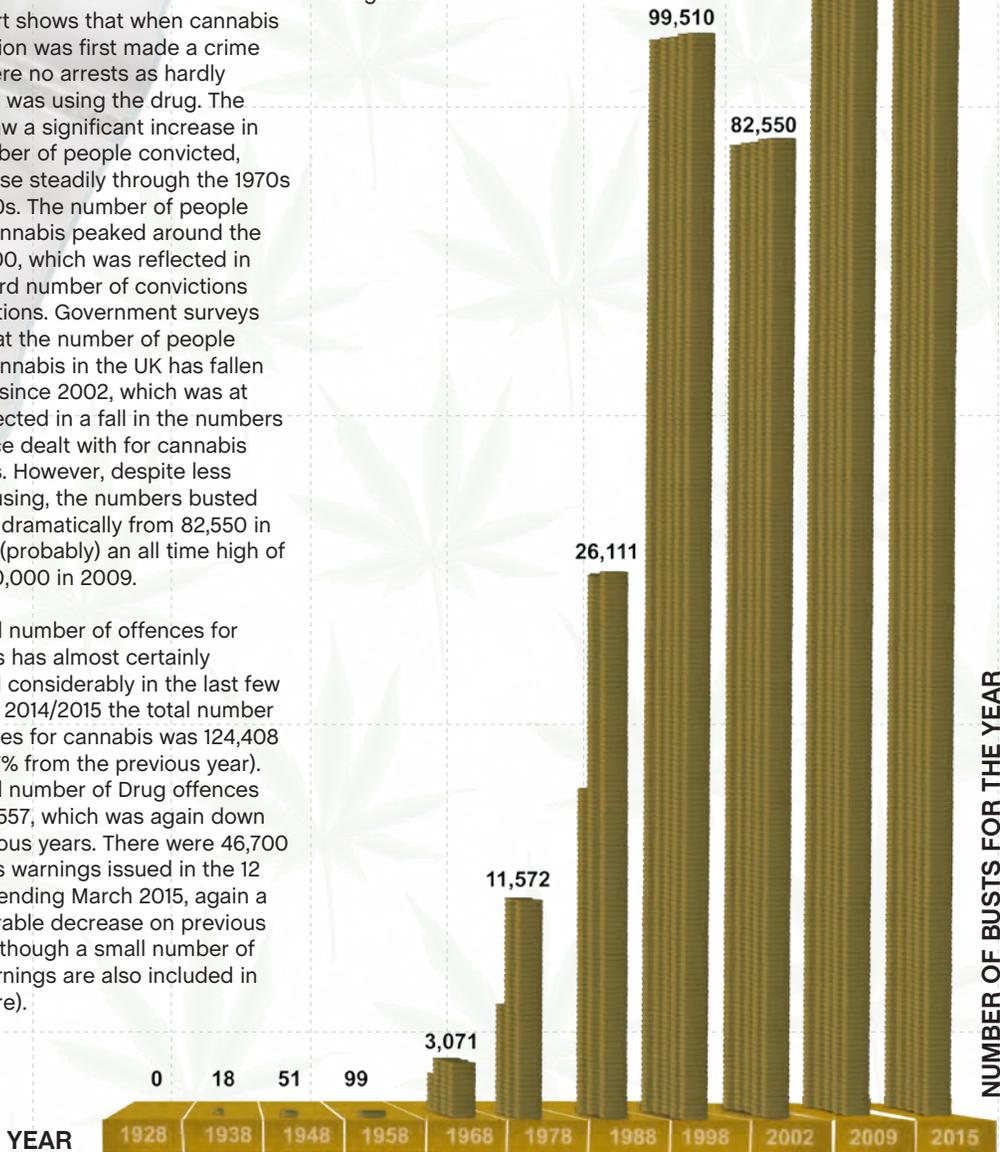
Annual Number Of UK Cannabis Busts*

The way drugs offences are dealt with and recorded has changed over time, so it is difficult to make direct comparisons, but hey, this is not a text book and it makes the chart look nicer if you do.

The chart shows that when cannabis possession was first made a crime there were no arrests as hardly anybody was using the drug. The 1960s saw a significant increase in the number of people convicted, which rose steadily through the 1970s and 1980s. The number of people using cannabis peaked around the year 2000, which was reflected in the record number of convictions and cautions. Government surveys show that the number of people using cannabis in the UK has fallen steadily since 2002, which was at first reflected in a fall in the numbers the police dealt with for cannabis offences. However, despite less people using, the numbers busted climbed dramatically from 82,550 in 2002 to (probably) an all time high of over 200,000 in 2009.

The total number of offences for cannabis has almost certainly dropped considerably in the last few years. In 2014/2015 the total number of seizures for cannabis was 124,408 (down 17% from the previous year). The total number of Drug offences was 147,557, which was again down on previous years. There were 46,700 cannabis warnings issued in the 12 months ending March 2015, again a considerable decrease on previous years (although a small number of Khat warnings are also included in this figure).

What all this shows is that although the number of cannabis busts is not directly related to the numbers using and the numbers using and getting caught are both currently falling, there are still a lot of people caught with cannabis in the UK.



*Note: These figures are for prosecutions (i.e. they include guilty and not guilty verdicts) from 1928 to 1948, for convictions from 1958 to 1968, and for convictions and cautions from 1978 onwards. Since 2003, statistics on the annual number of drug offences have been reported separately for England & Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland; and breakdowns for individual drugs are no longer routinely provided. However, it can be estimated that in 2009 the number of people dealt with for cannabis offences in the UK was at least 200,000.

CANNABIS

SNiffING & teStING

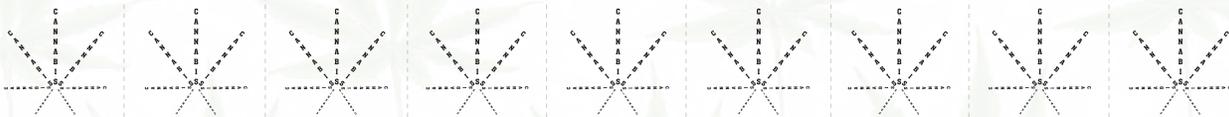
Getting caught by your parents is still as hazardous as it always been, but parents and the police are not the only people trying to catch cannabis users. Drug testing at work, while driving, at college and school is becoming more common in Britain today, while some schools have even introduced sniffer dogs into the playground.



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FOR IN-VITRO
 IMMEDIATE USE



Drug Testing

A drug test is simply a way of taking small samples of your blood, wee, sweat or saliva and using various chemical tests to see if you have used drugs. Unless you are locked up in prison, or driving a car or other vehicle (e.g. flying a jumbo jet), testing positive for cannabis or any other drug is not a criminal offence. You may get the sack from your job (depending on your company's policies), but you won't be arrested. The most common tests are the saliva test (swab in mouth), sweat test (swipe on skin), and urine test (pee in bottle). Though most drugs show up for just one to three days after their last use, a single joint of cannabis can show up for a week or more and regular or heavy use can lead to a positive test for between one and three months after last use. The drug test only indicates that you took the drug not how you took it, not how much you took, or when or where you took it (except some time in the last month with cannabis). But drug tests are not totally reliable. Tests can show that you've used cannabis when you haven't, either because the testers make mistakes or because something causes a false result. For example, eating hemp-seeds (which are legal), taking certain medicines, or passively breathing in other people's spliff smoke (an hour in a room where weed is being smoked will do it). Test results are also messed up by using mouth washes (saliva test) and skin-cleaning wipes (sweat test).

Getting Caught In School

Let's face it, cannabis users can be easy to spot in school. If they don't give themselves away by bragging about it, or the smell on their hair, clothes and breath, pink eyes and silly grin are not enough of a clue, they also helpfully gather in small groups and send up smoke signals. Teachers can search bags and lockers, and ask pupils to empty their pockets and if it is suspected that drugs are hidden elsewhere on their person, they can call in the police to do a fuller search. To add to all this (and despite any evidence that it works) some schools are still spending money on sniffer dogs and drug testing.

Sniffer Dogs

In *Drug Advice for Schools* (2012) the Department of Education say that schools may choose to make use of drugs dogs if they wish, however, the *Association of Chief Police Officers* (ACPO) recommend that they should only be used where there is evidence of drugs on the school premises. By 2005, over 100 secondary schools were using sniffer dogs – from once or twice a year to more than once a month. The dogs are usually brought in by the police and one dog is stationed at the school entrance to intimidate pupils as they go into school whilst another dog sniff-searches classrooms, students and their bags. You know the game is up when the dog sits down and looks at you – they don't bark or gesture at you with their paws, they just quietly point you out with their body and eyes. Mistakes by the dog or objections by pupils to being sniffed by an animal that licks its own bum – which is either very clean or very dirty, depending on how you look at it – will just lead to the pupil being searched anyway.



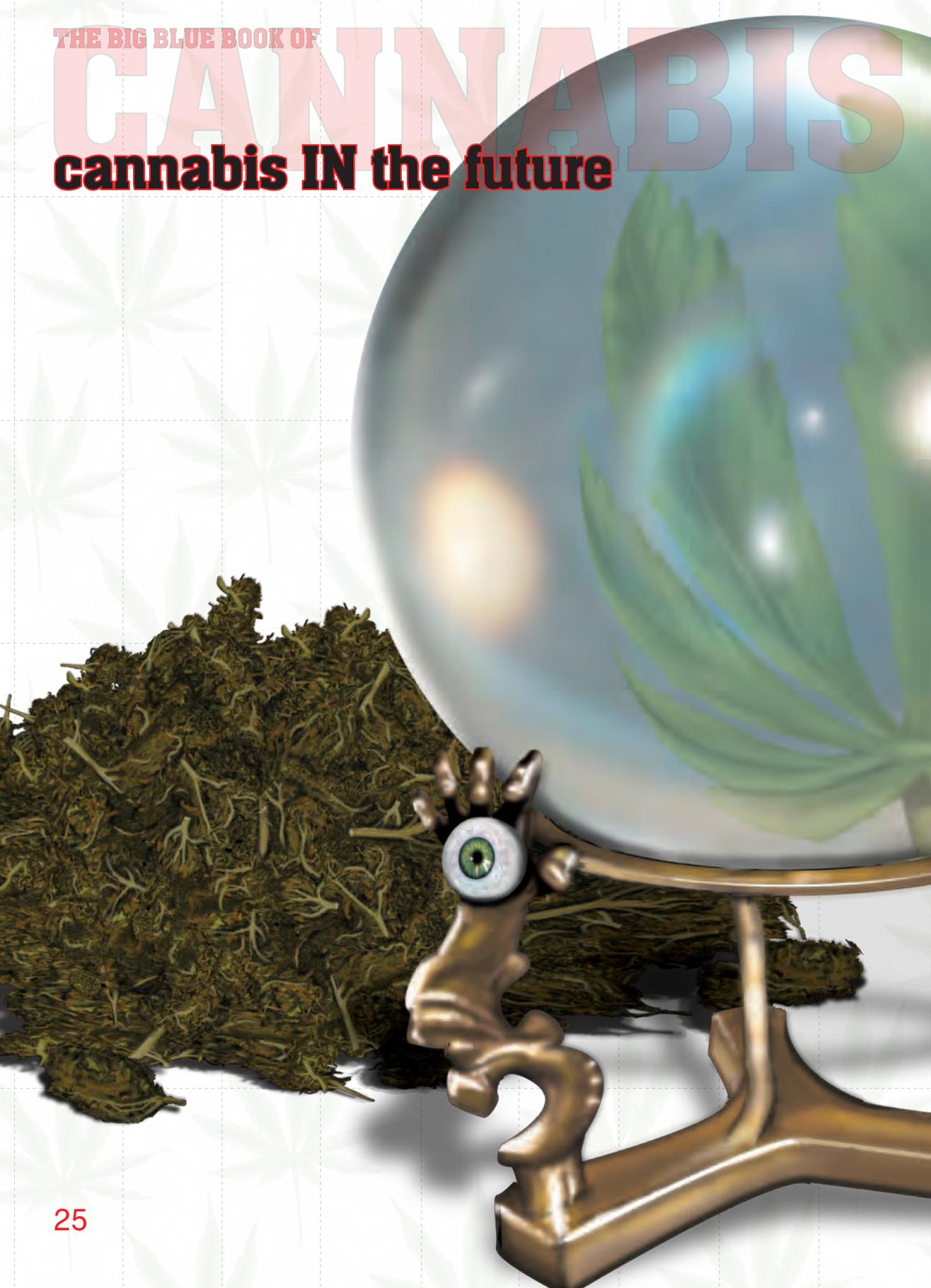
To use dogs or to drug test, schools must have the permission of your parents or carers, though even with it, the school cannot force you to take the test or to be sniffed but they may exclude you for refusing. Responses to positive tests vary. Your parents or carers will be informed, and you may get anything from a dose of drug education to temporary or permanent exclusion. If you are caught in possession of cannabis you may be handed over to the police. Just like the drug laws, dealing is taken more seriously than using and possession in schools.



THE BIG BLUE BOOK OF

CANNABIS

cannabis IN the future





Cannabis In The Future

Cannabis has been used as a folk medicine for thousands of years, but over the past few years, pharmaceutical companies have been legally growing cannabis in Britain as they think it will turn out to be a useful (and profitable) medicine in the future. From 2006, a cannabis medicine *Sativex* can be imported from Canada. But the main reason millions of people use cannabis is for pleasure – they use it to relax and enjoy themselves, to get high or simply because doing nothing is slightly more interesting when you are stoned.

There are risks involved in using any drug, but those risks are different from drug to drug. Cannabis use doesn't lead to violence and mayhem like alcohol; you won't die from an overdose of cannabis as you could with heroin; it's not physically addictive like cigarette smoking, although some people do develop a habit. Like cigarette smoke, cannabis smoke is harmful, although most users don't smoke anywhere near as often as cigarette smokers. Cannabis can make some existing mental health conditions worse and according to the government's experts may make a 'small' contribution to an individual's risk of developing schizophrenia. "Dependent" cannabis use in young people aged under 18 and under 15 in particular may make people 'dumber' in later life.

The reason for banning cannabis in 1928 was to deter people from using it. Given the enormous rise in the numbers using the drug and at

younger ages, while the drug has become cheaper and more easily available, it is difficult to see how this has worked. Many people now believe that adults should have the right to smoke cannabis if they wish and that legalising the drug would make it less likely that young people would get hold of it.

During 2013, Uruguay and the U.S states of Colorado and Washington made cannabis legally available to adults, while at the other extreme several countries still use the death penalty for cannabis dealing (e.g. Malaysia, Thailand). However, cannabis remains illegal in Britain and is likely to stay so in the near future. For the vast majority of cannabis users, getting caught is still the most likely harm they face.

Cannabis use may have declined since 1998, but shows no signs of disappearing – it is still by far the most popular illegal drug. If we look in our crystal ball at the world of tomorrow what can we expect to see? More synthetic cannabis type drugs; More medical uses for cannabis; stronger types of weed appearing on the streets; more laws; more fiendish ways of catching users and the same old hysterical reactions to people smoking a plant, as we have seen for the last century. In the distant future who knows ... perhaps the pygmies will have figured it all out by then.



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Print date 08/2016

[>] aims
To present the facts about cannabis in a realistic, down-to-earth way, so as to encourage an informed debate around its social and personal implications. This includes coverage of the legal, historical, cultural, policy and health issues that surround cannabis and cannabis use.

[>] audience
Reading age 13+ If you are old enough to use cannabis, you are old enough to read this.

[v] content
No swearing. No explicit sexual imagery. Explicit images of cannabis.

[£] funding
Self-financed.



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