



WHAT IS A WIDGET—AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

The word 'widget', like 'doofer', 'gizmo' or 'thingmabob', may be used for any object whose name you aren't sure about. But sometimes these words acquire more exact meanings. The word 'widget' is now used for some of the software used in 'smart phones' and tablet computers, but to beer drinkers it has a much more interesting meaning! A



widget is used to produce a better 'head' on canned beer. This it does by injecting microscopic bubbles of carbon dioxide into the beer, just before it is poured. Beer cans containing a widget are usually labelled 'draft', 'cream', or 'smooth'.

There are many different designs of widget, some of which float freely in the beer, and some of which are attached to the bottom of the can. However, they all work in more or less the same way. The widget is filled with carbon dioxide gas, under pressure. There is either a small hole in the widget or some sort of valve, to release the gas into the beer. When the can is filled, the gas in the widget is under the same pressure as the beer. Either the valve, or the surface tension of the beer, keeps the gas inside the widget, so long as the pressures remain the same. When the can is opened, the pressure in the beer suddenly drops to atmospheric pressure. The higher pressure in the widget then forces the gas out into the beer, in the form of thousands of tiny bubbles, which give the beer its head. Cheers!

The 'widget' from a can of Boddington's Draft Bitter

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