

# Suggested Reading and Writing Meeting Format

We have found that consistent use of this format keeps meetings focused on OA recovery, reinforces our program, and encourages unity. It also provides a reassuring feeling of continuity, an important factor in member retention. Your group may modify this format to suit its needs.

The meeting to begin at \_\_\_\_\_.

- 1.** “Welcome to the *[day and time]* \_\_\_\_\_ OA Reading and Writing Meeting of Overeaters Anonymous. My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I’m a compulsive eater and your leader for this meeting. Please silence your phones at this time.”
- 2.** “Will those who wish, please join me in the Serenity Prayer:  
  
God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,  
courage to change the things I can,  
and wisdom to know the difference.
- 3.** “As we extend the heart and hand of the OA Fellowship to those who still suffer, let us be mindful of OA’s Unity with Diversity Policy, which respects our differences, yet unites us in the solution to our common problem. Whatever problem you may have with food, you are welcome at this meeting, regardless of race, creed, nationality, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, or any other attribute.  
  
“Are there any compulsive eaters here besides myself?”
- 4.** “**The following is the OA Preamble:**  
Overeaters Anonymous is a Fellowship of individuals who, through shared experience, strength, and hope, are recovering from compulsive overeating. We welcome everyone who wants to stop eating compulsively. There are no dues or fees for members; we are self-supporting through our own contributions, neither soliciting nor accepting outside donations. OA is not affiliated with any public or private organization, political movement, ideology, or religious doctrine; we take no position on outside issues. Our primary purpose is to abstain from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors and to carry the message of recovery through the Twelve Steps of OA to those who still suffer.
- 5.** “**THE DEFINITIONS OF ‘ABSTINENCE’ AND ‘RECOVERY’ IN OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS:**  
Abstinence is the action of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight.  
Spiritual, emotional, and physical recovery is the result of living and working the Overeaters Anonymous Twelve Step program on a daily basis.”  
(Business Conference Policy Manual, 1988b [amended 2019, 2021])

6. [Ask someone to read *The Twelve Steps of Overeaters Anonymous*.]

7. [Ask someone to read *the Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*.]

8. **TOOLS:**

“The OA Tools of Recovery help us work the Steps and refrain from compulsive overeating. The nine Tools are a plan of eating, sponsorship, meetings, telephone, writing, literature, action plan, anonymity, and service. For more information, read *The Tools of Recovery* pamphlet.”

9. **MEETING FORMAT:**

“This meeting is a reading and writing format where we bring our OA literature, Step studies, or Big Book and spend self-directed time reading and writing. We write for fifteen minutes and then break to share our work with each other for fifteen minutes. We will do two rounds like this today.

“*The Tools of Recovery* pamphlet tells us, ‘Putting our thoughts and feelings down on paper, ... helps us better understand our actions and reactions in a way that is often not revealed by simply thinking or talking about them’ (p. 3).

“We read OA-approved books, including *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition*, *Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition* (the Big Book), OA’s daily readers *For Today* and *Voices of Recovery*, OA pamphlets, and *Lifeline* magazine. Reading literature daily reinforces how to live the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of OA.”

10. **MEDITATION:**

“We will now have a three-minute period of meditation to bring ourselves fully into this room and invite our Higher Power to guide us in our work.” [Set timer for 3 minutes.]

11. **READING AND WRITING PERIOD #1:**

“Our first study period starts now. If you do not have or did not bring OA literature with you today, you are welcome to look in our meeting binder under the ‘writing prompts’ tab for something to work with.” [Set timer for 15 minutes.]

12. **SHARING PERIOD #1:**

“We will now have fifteen minutes to share on what we have read and written.

“Feedback, cross talk, and advice giving are discouraged here. Cross talk during an OA meeting is giving advice to others who have already shared, speaking directly to another person rather than to the group, and questioning or interrupting the person speaking or sharing at the time.

“We ask everyone to respect this group conscience. This meeting has decided that the chair for each meeting has the discretion to suggest to anyone sharing that he or she is off-topic or speaking too long. The meeting asks you to accept this suggestion in order to keep the meeting on track.

“The meeting is now open for sharing on what you read and wrote. [Set the timer for 15 minutes and/or time shares at 2 minutes each, or whatever is equitable.]

13.

**SEVENTH TRADITION:**

“According to our Seventh Tradition, we are self-supporting through our own contributions. Expenses are \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_. We send regular contributions to our intergroup or service board, our region, and the World Service Office to help carry the message to other compulsive overeaters. Give as if your life depends on it! We encourage OA members to give as much as they are able, to help our group be self-supporting. The suggested contribution is US\$5.00 or more.

“As we do this, are there any OA-related announcements to share?”

14.

**READING AND WRITING PERIOD #2:**

“Our second study period starts now.” [*Set timer for 15 minutes.*]

15.

**SHARING PERIOD #2:**

“We will now have our second sharing period for fifteen minutes. Please remember to avoid feedback, cross talk, and advice giving and to focus your share on what you read and wrote.” [*Set timer for 15 minutes and/or time shares at 2 minutes, or whatever is equitable.*]

16.

**CLOSING:**

“In conclusion, we would like to stress the importance of anonymity to this group. The Steps are essential to our recovery; our freedom to share deeply at these meetings is important to working the Steps. There are many different types of meetings, all of which are available to support your recovery from compulsive eating. We welcome you to this meeting whenever you would care to attend. There are other face-to-face meetings and virtual (phone and technology-based) meetings that you may find helpful. Information about these meetings can be found on oa.org.

“As a reminder, the opinions expressed here today are those of individual OA members and do not represent OA as a whole.

“If you would like, as you leave here, make a note of what you would like to add to your action plan for the coming week based on what you read and wrote.”

17.

“After a moment of silence, will those of you who wish please join us in \_\_\_\_\_.” [*Select one of the following suggested closings: Serenity Prayer, Seventh Step Prayer, Third Step Prayer, or the OA Promise ‘I put my hand in yours....’*]

**OA Responsibility Pledge**

Always to extend the hand and heart of OA  
to all who share my compulsion;  
for this I am responsible.

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## The Twelve Steps

1. We admitted we were powerless over food—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to compulsive overeaters and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Permission to use the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous for adaptation granted by AA World Services, Inc.

## The Twelve Traditions

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon OA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for OA membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers.
6. An OA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the OA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every OA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Overeaters Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. OA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Overeaters Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence, the OA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television and other public media of communication.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all these Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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