



FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) about Virtual Meetings

1) **How do I log in to an online meeting?**

This is like asking directions to face-to-face meetings. Different online meetings have different sign-in instructions and there are often multiple ways to get to the same meeting.

There is a meeting URL listed for each online meeting. Enter that URL into your internet browser. Then, refer to “Online Procedures” for specific instructions. There is also a telephone number if you need help or would like more information.

2) **How do telephone and online meetings work?**

Basic to any OA meeting is a meeting protocol that is agreed upon by group conscience, which will vary from group to group. Sample group protocols may be found on oa.org. They are like each other and face-to-face meetings, in that every meeting practices the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, guided by the Twelve Concepts of OA Service, and every meeting is committed to welcoming any member who has the desire to stop eating compulsively.

A major difference in protocol is how a member remains silent, and how a member may speak.

Telephone Meetings: The individual meeting description will include a meeting phone number and pin #/instructions. Dial the telephone number and when prompted, key in the pin number. The phone number is not typically a toll-free number, and each member is responsible for the long distance charges incurred (if any) while the member is attending the meeting. When calling into a phone meeting, a member’s phone is usually muted. At the start of each meeting, members are told how to mute (*1 or *6) and how to unmute a call. When it is time for open sharing, members are encouraged to unmute and say their name. The leader/moderator will acknowledge the name heard, and the member will have time to share. When a leader hears two or more names, the leader will say names in the order they were heard. “*John, please speak first; then Sue; and then Jan.*” When members have completed sharing, they are asked if they wish to leave contact information. This is a matter of group conscience. Some meetings limit how much information a member can leave. ***No member is required to leave contact information.*** After sharing, the member mutes their phone line and returns to listening to others.

Online Meetings: For online meetings, when members wish to share, they indicate so by keying an asterisk (*) and wait for the meeting leader to acknowledge that it is their turn. Again, if multiple members enter an asterisk at the same time, the leader will encourage each to share in the order the requests appeared on the screen. Note that online meetings have a different pace, in that some people key quickly, while others key slowly. What is unique to an online meeting is that previous members’ shares are still visible on the screen until the end of the meeting, so that while a person may be keying slowly, a member reading can view

the entire stream of the meeting from the start until the current share. When the share is finished, the member keys the word “Pass” to open the floor to another speaker. It may not be an advantage that the shares remain visible until the meeting is closed. This is one of the complaints about online meetings. [The shares are visible only during the meeting and are not archived.]

Each telephone and online meeting has its own meeting practices and protocols. These will become clear when you attend them.

3) Do a lot of people attend?

Some virtual meetings are large and others are small. You can attend a variety of virtual meetings to find one that you are comfortable with.

4) Are you really able to work the OA program through telephone and/or online meetings?

Yes. Many members have found recovery through virtual meetings. Many others find that a combination of virtual and face-to-face meeting attendance in the course of a week works best for them.

Fifty-one percent of members who took the Searching and Fearless Inventory Survey indicated they have used or currently use one or more of the virtual meetings. This electronic survey was distributed to the OA Fellowship by the Region Chairs Committee between mid-October 2012 and the end of January 2013.

5) What telephone company do we use for telephone meetings? Do we have the number to call?

OA, Inc. does not have a phone company that it uses for phone meetings. Indeed, to do so would be to risk not upholding the Sixth Tradition that we do not endorse outside enterprises. Each group is autonomous, and when a phone meeting is formed, those OA members starting the meeting set it up on a conference call service of their choosing. The phone number is found in the meeting information for the telephone meeting you wish to attend.

6) Are sponsors available at telephone and online meetings? How do I get one?

Many virtual meetings ask available sponsors to identify themselves, and maintain sponsor coordinators with lists of available sponsors.

Just as in face-to-face meetings, you ask someone if he or she would be willing to be your sponsor. You can ask anyone whether he or she identifies himself or herself as a sponsor.

7) Is there an 800 number for phone meetings?

Telephone meetings usually use no-cost conference call services, meaning that the company doesn't charge a fee to hold the meeting. It is not typically toll free, however. You use your personal telephone plan to attend telephone meetings, so your regular long-distance charges would apply. Members are responsible for their own long-distance charges. If it were a face-to-face meeting, you would pay the costs to get to the meeting (i.e., gas, bus or subway fares), but you do not have to pay to actually attend the meeting itself.

8) How do I get the conference call telephone number?

The phone number is listed on oa.org under “Find A Meeting” with the meeting description. Dial the phone number then follow the prompts to enter the pin instructions. If any meeting is not registered on oa.org, then it is NOT an OA meeting, and it has not agreed to practice OA’s Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, guided by the Twelve Concepts of OA Service. It is an outside enterprise and per our Traditions we do not endorse nor have an opinion on outside enterprises.

9) Is the telephone meeting format different from the face-to-face meeting format?

Most virtual meeting formats are like face-to-face meeting formats. Although meeting formats vary, the differences between telephone and face-to-face meetings are not significant.

There is a Suggested Telephone Meeting Format available on oa.org under Documents, Meeting Formats. The Suggested Meeting Format is also available and adaptable for online meetings.

10) Do we need a group secretary?

This is recommended. The secretary is the principal service volunteer for a stated period of time. The secretary should be abstinent and actively working the Twelve Step program of recovery. The secretary is the liaison between the group and the World Service Office. They may coordinate group activities and call group conscience meetings for the good of the group as decided by the group conscience of that meeting.

11) May I share at my first meeting?

Yes. There are no requirements for sharing at any OA meeting, face-to-face or virtual.

12) How much does OA membership cost?

There are no required membership fees in OA. Our program is open to all who have a desire to stop eating compulsively, regardless of personal financial condition. While virtual meetings have no direct expenses, our Seventh Tradition reminds us of the importance of supporting our Fellowship as a whole.

For more information, refer to the pamphlet *Questions and Answers* (Item #170).

13) How does OA support itself?

We are self-supporting through member contributions. Sale of OA literature provides funds to support OA and its primary purpose to carry the message of recovery that is possible through the Twelve Steps of Overeaters Anonymous. The World Service Office maintains the oa.org and provides a worldwide meeting list so people can find our meetings.

Groups are encouraged to remind members to help maintain the financial health of the group and OA as a whole by contributing regularly.

14) Online and telephone meetings have no expenses. So, why should I contribute money to OA?

Even though your virtual meeting may have no direct costs, OA's World Service Office (WSO) does. The WSO produces and distributes OA-approved literature, media and specialty items; maintains oa.org; offers worldwide meeting location contacts and information on virtual groups through the web site; publishes *Lifeline* magazine; produces *A Step Ahead* newsletter; sends starter kits for new groups; registers service bodies and groups, including virtual groups; holds the annual World Service Business Conference (WSBC); puts on World Service Conventions (WSC); handles OA's media and public relations contacts; and reaches out to professionals.

OA members honor the Seventh Tradition by contributing financially and by doing service in their group.

It's simple to make an online contribution to OA. The home page on oa.org has a "Contribute" link at the top of the page. OA has an option for recurring contributions that makes it is easy to give routinely to OA. Your generosity allows OA to continue to pursue its primary purpose to carry the OA message of recovery.

15) What is the parking lot?

This is not an official OA meeting. The "parking lot" is like what happens after a face-to-face meeting is closed and members gather informally to chat in the parking lot. It is a term used to describe what happens when members stay after a virtual meeting to chat. They may share about recovery, but they may also share about outside issues. It is no longer an official OA meeting and therefore members may not adhere to the meeting protocols and uphold the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts of OA Service.

16) Where do I find official OA telephone and online meetings?

The OA website, oa.org, has a link to meetings on the main page. Click on "Find a Meeting" and select the type of meeting you are looking for. You may select face-to-face, telephone, online, or non-real-time meetings. You can search by day, time of day, language, open or closed, special topic, and special focus. For virtual meetings, because they are not geographic, be sure to select your time zone before you hit the search key. The meeting may then be sorted by day and time by hitting the Day icon.

Only meetings listed on the OA website are registered OA groups. A registered OA meeting has agreed to comply with Tradition Three (*The only requirement for OA membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively.*) and OA, Inc. Bylaws, Subpart B, which defines a group. The definition states that as a group they meet to practice the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions guided by the Twelve Concepts; all who have a desire to stop eating compulsively are welcome; no member is required to practice any action; and as a group they have no affiliation other than OA.

Be alerted to the fact that some members stay past the designated meeting and share like a "parking lot" gathering of members after a face-to-face meeting. These gatherings are NOT affiliated with OA. Attend at your own risk.