

OA GUIDELINES



Guidelines for a Newcomers Informational Meeting

Each group may modify these guidelines to better suit its meeting's needs. Use these suggestions before or after a regular OA meeting or during an OA meeting if the newcomer would like to move to a separate room for a short informational meeting.

Purpose

Provide a warm welcome to newcomers. Give them hope and a place where they know they are accepted and understood. Provide enough information to prepare newcomers for a regular OA meeting. Let them ask questions.

Focus on the Newcomer

The meeting is informal, and questions from newcomers are encouraged at any time, even while the leader or speaker is talking. Allow newcomers to share about how they found OA, why they are here, and their history with food. Ask if they took the quiz on oa.org.

Leader Duties

- Open the meeting and explain the purpose of this meeting.
- Introduce yourself as the leader of the meeting and ask everyone to introduce themselves by their first name.
- Provide a local meeting list or explain how newcomers can find other local and virtual meetings on Find a Meeting at oa.org.
- Provide a copy of the pamphlet *Where Do I Start? Everything a Newcomer Needs to Know* or explain how to download the free PDF from the Document Library at oa.org.
- Invite members to provide newcomers with contact information. Invite newcomers to do the same.
- *Optional:* Read "Welcome Home" from the book *A Taste of Lifeline*. [[Abridged version](#) available on oa.org.]

Speaker Duties

- Speak for five to ten minutes, focusing on your experience, strength, and hope, as well as information that was helpful to you when you were a newcomer.
- Encourage and accept questions at any time during your share.

Suggested Topics of Discussion

- **Twelve Step Program:** Ask if newcomers are familiar with Twelve Step programs, and tailor your remarks accordingly. Explain that OA is a Twelve Step program patterned after Alcoholics Anonymous.
- **Anonymity:** Assure newcomers that their anonymity will be respected, and their participation and sharing will be held in confidence.
- **Tradition Three:** Emphasize that "The only requirement for OA membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively."
- **Disease:** Explain that compulsive eating is a disease. We are not immoral, weak-willed, bad, or unlovable; and we are not alone. OA welcomes all who struggle with food—overeaters, under-eaters, food addicts, anorexics, bulimics, binge eaters, overexercisers, and those with other compulsive food behaviors.
 - Our common problem (and solution) is threefold: physical, emotional, and spiritual.
 - The disease is progressive in nature, characterized by an obsession of the mind and compulsive behaviors.
 - We have found that compulsive eating cannot be controlled by willpower, but can be arrested, one day at a time. Our "prescription" for recovery is abstinence and working the Twelve Steps.
- **Abstinence and Recovery:** In OA, 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.

- OA is not a diet and calories club.
- OA members have different plans of eating and different binge foods. OA does not endorse any particular plan of eating. The *Where Do I Start?* pamphlet does provide some sample plans of eating, and we encourage you to seek guidance from your health care professional.
- We have found freedom from food obsession by working the Twelve Steps and living by their Spiritual Principles.
- The OA Tools of Recovery help us work the Steps and refrain from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors. The nine Tools are: a plan of eating, sponsorship, meetings, telephone, writing, literature, an action plan, anonymity, and service.
- **Primary Purpose:** Our primary purpose is to abstain from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors and to carry the message of recovery through the Twelve Steps to those who still suffer.
- **Sponsorship:** Explain the importance of getting a sponsor, how to find one, and the action of working the Twelve Steps with a sponsor.

Spiritual, Not Religious

The OA program of recovery is a spiritual program, not a religious one. We believe in a Higher Power to help guide our recovery.

- It is important to be open-minded, teachable, and willing to follow the OA program of recovery to the best of our ability.
- Members have a range of spiritual beliefs; some members are atheists or agnostic.

What to Expect at an OA Meeting

- Explain what cross talk during a meeting is and why it is discouraged.
- Explain what the Twelve Traditions are and why they are important. Explain what the Seventh Tradition is, and how we are self-supporting through our own contributions.
- Explain that the opinions expressed here today are those of individual OA members and do not represent OA as a whole.
- Explain the different types of OA-approved literature and how to purchase them.
- Explain that we only use OA-approved literature during our meetings.

Closing

Say, "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."

OA Responsibility Pledge

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

OA Board-Approved

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