

# Suggested Telephone 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. Each group may modify this format to better suit its needs.

## Important Information About the Meeting

Phone Bridge Number \_\_\_\_\_

Access Code/Pin \_\_\_\_\_ #

Moderator Code \_\_\_\_\_ #

**Note:** Please call in **NO** later than 10 minutes before the meeting starts. There are times when you may have trouble getting on. Earlier is better.

*[When you call in as moderator, you may be muted. Check with the conference line host for options.]*

**1.**

**WELCOME:** “Welcome to the *[day and time]* \_\_\_\_\_ phone meeting of Overeaters Anonymous.  
My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am a compulsive eater and your moderator for this meeting.”

**2.**

**SERENITY PRAYER:** “After a moment of silence, will all those who wish, please join me in the Serenity Prayer by pressing \* \_\_\_\_\_ *[usually \*1 or \*6]* to unmute?”

*[Note to Moderator: Please pause for 10 to 15 seconds to give callers a chance to unmute themselves.]*

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.

“I will now mute the line.” *[\* \_\_\_\_\_ Check with the conference host to see how this is done.]* “To unmute, please press \* \_\_\_\_\_. After sharing, please remember to press \* \_\_\_\_\_ to mute. This allows us to have a quiet meeting.”

**3.**

**DIVERSITY POLICY:** “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 trait.

“We encourage you to:

- get a sponsor to help guide your recovery;
- develop a plan of eating and, if you wish, write it down and report daily to your sponsor; and
- read OA-approved literature to develop a working knowledge of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.”

4.

**PREAMBLE: “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.

**OUR INVITATION TO YOU:** *[Ask someone to read “Our Invitation to You,” which includes the Twelve Steps of Overeaters Anonymous.]*

*[Note to Moderator: It may take some time for a volunteer to come forward to read. Please be patient; someone will volunteer to do this service. If after 20 seconds or so there is no volunteer, read the Steps or Traditions yourself.]*

6.

**READ THE TRADITIONS:** “Would someone please do service by reading the Twelve Traditions of OA?” *[Printed in the back of For Today, Voices of Recovery, or The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition; also included with this meeting format.]*

7.

**THE DEFINITIONS OF “ABSTINENCE” AND “RECOVERY” IN OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS:**

1. Abstinence: The act of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight.
2. Recovery: Removal of the need to engage in compulsive eating behaviors. Spiritual, emotional, and physical recovery is achieved through working and living the Overeaters Anonymous Twelve Step program.”

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, an action plan, anonymity, and service. For more information, read *The Tools of Recovery* pamphlet.” *[Or read The Tools of Recovery (abridged) included with this meeting format.]*

9.

**VOLUNTEER FOR CONTACT INFO:** “We now need a volunteer to take down contact information and share it after the meeting closes. Please press \* \_\_\_\_\_ to volunteer for this service.”

*[Ask the contact-info volunteer to:]* “Please give your contact information now so that if someone has to leave or misses the info they can contact you later.”

*[Reminder]* “Let us all remember to speak slowly and clearly when leaving contact information.”

10.

**TIMEKEEPER:** “We also need a timekeeper to do service and give a ‘gentle reminder’ at 3 minutes. Please press \* \_\_\_\_\_ to volunteer for this service. Try to keep your share from 2 to 3 minutes so that everyone who wishes to share will have time to do so. If you are the person sharing, please acknowledge that you heard the timekeeper.”

11.

**GUIDELINES FOR THIS PHONE MEETING:** “Please limit your comments to your experience, strength, and hope in living with the disease of compulsive overeating. We refrain from cross talk. 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. Your share is very important to us. So, if we cannot hear you clearly, we may stop you to let you know.

“We encourage those of you who are new to the meeting, or who do not often share, to do so today. If you have shared in the last week, please wait a bit today to provide a chance to others who haven’t spoken up recently. You may give your name, number, and email after you share. Please speak slowly and clearly. There is time after the meeting closes for sharing and repeating contact information. Everyone is welcome to share.”

**12.**

**TYPE OF MEETING—STATE THIS MEETING’S CHOICE:** *[Some meetings vary or combine options, as decided by group conscience. Sample options are listed below. Time for member sharing may vary depending on the group conscience of the meeting.]*

**Step and Tradition Meetings:** “This is a Step meeting. We are reading Step \_\_\_\_\_ and/or Tradition \_\_\_\_\_.” *[Moderator begins reading from The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition. Members share about the Step or Tradition.]*

**Topic Meetings:** “This is a topic meeting. Today’s OA program topic is \_\_\_\_\_.” *[Members are invited to share for 3 to 5 minutes on the topic.]*

**Speaker Meetings:** “This is a speaker meeting.” *[Leader describes his or her story for about 15 to 20 minutes and shares experience, strength, and hope. Members are invited to share for 3 to 5 minutes.]*

**Literature Meetings:** “This is a literature meeting. Today we are reading \_\_\_\_\_.” *[Choose from any OA-approved literature. Members may read and share, or read and then share at the end.]*

**13.**

**SHARING:** “The meeting is now open for sharing. Press \* \_\_\_\_\_ to unmute and press \* \_\_\_\_\_ again when you are done speaking; this allows us to have a quiet meeting. Who would like to share?”

*[Note: If people aren’t muting after sharing, you can press \* \_\_\_\_\_ to mute everyone. This is also useful when there is lots of background noise. Please remember that if you have noise on the line, it is usually because callers are unmuted.]*

**14.**

**HALF TIME:** *(Halfway through meeting) [Note: Some conference lines have the capability to check the number of callers. If that is possible, mute, check the number of callers, unmute, and announce the number of callers.]*

**15.**

**SEVENTH TRADITION:** “According to our Seventh Tradition, we are self-supporting through our own contributions. Our group number is \_\_\_\_\_. Please use the group number when making your contribution. While this meeting has no direct expenses, our Seventh Tradition reminds us of the importance of supporting our Fellowship as a whole. Our World Service Office needs our support to help carry the message to other compulsive overeaters. The World Service Office maintains the OA website, oa.org, and provides a worldwide meeting list so people can find our meeting. They print and distribute OA literature. They also assemble a quarterly e-newsletter and have an email distribution of important information for members. 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. You can go to oa.org and set up a recurring contribution or a single contribution, or you can mail in a contribution. Please remember to mention our group number \_\_\_\_\_ when you do.”

16.

**INTRODUCTIONS:** “If you are new to this meeting, returning, or new to OA, we would like to welcome you. Please give us your first name only and your contact information if you care to do so. Press \* \_\_\_\_\_ to unmute and \* \_\_\_\_\_ to mute after speaking. We invite you to join us after the meeting to discuss any questions you may have.”

17.

**SPONSORS:** “Sponsorship is one of our keys to success. Sponsors are OA members committed to abstinence and to living the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions to the best of their ability. If you are an available sponsor, or are willing to help someone get started in the program, now is the time to identify yourself. Please give us your name and contact information slowly and clearly. Please also share your time in program, length of abstinence, and relief from food obsession. Press \* \_\_\_\_\_ to unmute and \* \_\_\_\_\_ to mute after speaking.”

18.

**LITERATURE:** “Only OA-approved literature is discussed at this meeting. Many OA members find that reading our literature on a daily basis further reinforces how to live the Twelve Steps.”

19.

**REPORTS:** “A group conscience will be held on a \_\_\_\_\_ basis and will be announced two weeks prior so all members may attend. If there is a need for a group conscience sooner, please ask and we will then hold that meeting after two weeks’ notice has been given.”

20.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:** “It is now time for announcements.

“We encourage you to download a complete list of phone meetings at [oa.org](http://oa.org). If you do not have access to a computer, you may call the OA World Service Office at 1-505-891-2664 and they will send you a list.”

“Our group conscience meeting is held on \_\_\_\_\_, immediately following our regular meeting. You are invited to stay on and participate.

“We are always looking for moderators and backup moderators for this meeting. If you are interested in this rewarding service, please give our moderator coordinator, \_\_\_\_\_, a call at \_\_\_\_\_ [give time zone] or you may email him/her at \_\_\_\_\_.

“Are there any announcements related to this meeting or this line?”

21.

**REOPEN MEETING:** *[for all to share]*

22.

**CLOSING** *[5 minutes before close of meeting]:* “By following the Twelve Steps, attending meetings regularly, and using the OA Tools, we are changing our lives. You will find hope and encouragement in Overeaters Anonymous. To the newcomer, we suggest attending at least six different meetings to learn the many ways OA can help you.

“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 virtual (phone and technology-based) and face-to-face meetings that you may find helpful. Information about these meetings can be found on [oa.org](http://oa.org).

“The opinions expressed here today are those of individual OA members and do not represent OA as a whole. Please remember our commitment to honor each other’s anonymity. **Whom you see here, What you hear here, When you leave here, Let it stay here.** Let us all reach out by phone or email to newcomers, returning members, and each other. Together we get better. As OA’s responsibility

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

“Thank you for asking me to be your leader. After a moment of silence, will those who wish please join us in \_\_\_\_\_ [*Select one of the following closings: Serenity Prayer, Seventh Step Prayer, Third Step Prayer, or the OA Promise ‘I put my hand in yours...’*] followed by ‘Keep Calling Back! It Works!’ Press \* \_\_\_\_\_ to unmute if you would like to join in the closing.”

**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

Overeaters Anonymous®, Inc.

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## Our Invitation to You

We of Overeaters Anonymous have made a discovery. At the very first meeting we attended, we learned that we were in the clutches of a dangerous illness, and that willpower, emotional health, and self-confidence, which some of us had once possessed, were no defense against it.

We have learned that the reasons for the illness are unimportant. What deserves the attention of the still-suffering compulsive overeater is this: There is a proven, workable method by which we can arrest our illness.

The OA recovery program is patterned after that of Alcoholics Anonymous. As our personal stories attest, the Twelve Step program of recovery works as well for compulsive overeaters as it does for alcoholics.

Can we guarantee you this recovery? The answer is up to you. If you will honestly face the truth about yourself and the illness; if you will keep coming back to meetings to talk and listen to other recovering compulsive overeaters; if you will read our literature and that of Alcoholics Anonymous with an open mind; and, most important, if you are willing to rely on a power greater than yourself for direction in your life and to take the Twelve Steps to the best of your ability, we believe you can indeed join the ranks of those who recover.

To remedy the emotional, physical, and spiritual illness of compulsive eating, we offer several suggestions, but keep in mind that the basis of the program is spiritual, as evidenced by the Twelve Steps.

We are not a "diet club." We do not endorse any particular plan of eating. In OA, abstinence is the act of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight. Once we become abstinent, the preoccupation with food diminishes and in many cases leaves us entirely. We then find that, to deal with our inner turmoil, we have to have a new way of thinking, of acting on life rather than reacting to it—in essence, a new way of living.

From this vantage point, we begin the Twelve Step program of recovery, moving beyond the food and the emotional havoc to a fuller living experience. As a result of practicing the Steps, the symptoms of compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors are removed on a daily basis, achieved through the process of surrendering to something greater than ourselves; the more total our surrender, the more fully realized our freedom from food obsession.

Here are the Steps as adapted for Overeaters Anonymous:

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.

“But I’m too weak. I’ll never make it!” Don’t worry; we have all thought and said the same thing. The amazing secret to the success of this program is just that: weakness. It is weakness, not strength, that binds us to each other and to a higher power and somehow gives us an ability to do what we cannot do alone.

If you decide you are one of us, we welcome you with open arms. Whatever your circumstances, we offer you the gift of acceptance. You are not alone anymore. Welcome to Overeaters Anonymous. Welcome home!

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

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# The Tools of Recovery (abridged)

We use Tools—a plan of eating, sponsorship, meetings, the telephone, writing, literature, action plan, anonymity and service—to help us achieve and maintain abstinence and recover from our disease. Many of us have found we cannot abstain from compulsive eating unless we use some or all of OA’s nine Tools of recovery to help us practice the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.

## **A Plan of Eating**

A plan of eating helps us abstain from compulsive eating. (See the pamphlet *Dignity of Choice*.) This Tool helps us deal with the physical aspects of our disease and achieve physical recovery.

## **Sponsorship**

We ask a sponsor to help us through our program of recovery on all three levels: physical, emotional, and spiritual. Find a sponsor who has what you want and ask that person how he or she is achieving it.

## **Meetings**

Meetings give us an opportunity to identify our common problem, confirm our common solution through the Twelve Steps, and share the gifts we receive through this program. In addition to face-to-face meetings, OA offers telephone and online meetings.

## **Telephone**

Many members call, text, or email their sponsors and other OA members daily. Telephone or electronic contact also provides an immediate outlet for those hard-to-handle highs and lows we may experience.

## **Writing**

Putting our thoughts and feelings down on paper helps us to better understand our actions and reactions in a way that is often not revealed to us by simply thinking or talking about them.

## **Literature**

We read OA-approved books, pamphlets, and *Lifeline* magazine. Reading literature daily reinforces how to live the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.

## **Action Plan**

An action plan is the process of identifying and implementing attainable actions that are necessary to support our individual abstinence. Just like our plan of eating, it may vary widely among members and may need to be adjusted to bring structure, balance, and manageability into our lives.

## **Anonymity**

Anonymity guarantees we will place principles before personalities and assures us that only we have the right to make our membership known within our community. Anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television, and other public media of communication means that we never allow our faces or last names to be used once we identify ourselves as OA members.

Within the Fellowship, anonymity means that whatever we share with another OA member will be held in respect and confidence. What we hear at meetings should remain there.

## **Service**

Any form of service that helps reach a fellow sufferer adds to the quality of our own recovery. Members can give service by getting to meetings, putting away chairs, putting out literature, and talking to newcomers. Beyond the group level, a member can serve as intergroup representative, committee chair, region representative, or Conference delegate.

As OA's responsibility pledge states: "Always to extend the hand and heart of OA to all who share my compulsion; for this, I am responsible."

See the full *Tools of Recovery* pamphlet for more information.



## 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 nonprofessional, 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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