Suggested Online 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 should modify this format to better suit its needs.

1. **OPENING:** “Welcome to the [day and time] _________ meeting of Overeaters Anonymous. My name is ________. I am a compulsive eater and your leader for this meeting. Please silence your phones at this time.

   “Our host will keep everyone but the leader and the volunteer timer muted at all times, except during introductions and individually when it is your turn to share. We suggest you change your name so only your first name appears. If you need help, contact the host or cohost through chat.” [Give meeting attendees a few minutes.]

   “We will ask for volunteers for the readings and sharing. To volunteer, please raise your virtual hand.

   “Is someone willing to give service as the timer? Our shares will be limited to _________ minutes. Please raise your virtual hand if you are willing to be the timer.” [Wait for volunteer.]

   “Thank you __________ for being our timer. Timer, how will you let us know when time is up?”

2. **SERENITY PRAYER:** “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. **UNITY WITH DIVERSITY:** “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.”

4. **WELCOME:** “Are there any compulsive eaters here besides me?

   “Is there anyone here for the first, second, or third time? Would you please tell us your first name so we can welcome you? [Welcome each person by name.]”

   “If you are returning to OA or are visiting from another area, please tell us your first name so we can also welcome you.” [Welcome each person by name.]

   “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.”

5. **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.”

6. **READINGS:** [Ask someone to read “Our Invitation to You,” which includes the Twelve Steps of Overeaters Anonymous. Then ask someone to read the Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous. Some meetings may also decide to read the Twelve Concepts of OA Service or to read the Concept corresponding to the month of the year.]

Optional: “We will now read an abridged version of “Welcome Home” from the book A Taste of Lifeline.”

7. **ABSTINENCE AND RECOVERY:** “The definitions of abstinence and recovery in Overeaters Anonymous are:

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.”

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. **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. Sponsors share their program up to the level of their experience, and they strengthen their recovery through this service to others. To find a sponsor, look for someone who has what you want and ask how they are achieving it. Will all abstinent sponsors please identify themselves by raising their virtual hand and putting their contact information in the chat?”
10. LITERATURE: “Only OA-approved literature is used at this meeting. Many OA members find that reading our literature on a daily basis further reinforces how to live the Twelve Steps. If you’d like to purchase OA literature, visit the OA bookstore at bookstore.oa.org.”

11. REPORTS: “Are there any OA-related announcements?” [Announce next scheduled business meeting, which may include intergroup representative’s report and treasurer’s report.]

12. 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. The process for how to give a contribution will be entered in the chat.”

13. STATE THIS MEETING’S CHOICE: [Some meetings vary or combine options, as decided by group conscience. Sample options are listed below.]

   Step and Tradition Meetings: “This is a Step meeting. We are reading Step ______________ and/or Tradition ______________.”
   [Leader 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 three to five minutes on the topic.]

   Speaker Meetings: “This is a speaker meeting.” [Leader describes their story for about twenty minutes and shares experience, strength, and hope. Members are invited to share for three to five 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.]

14. SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR SHARING: “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. Using the chat function to speak to members during others’ shares is also considered cross talk. Please limit chats to providing your contact information and sponsorship availability.

   “We ask everyone to respect our group conscience. This meeting has decided that the chair for each meeting has the discretion to suggest to anyone sharing that they are off-topic or is speaking too long. This meeting asks you to accept this suggestion in order to keep the meeting on track.” [Add here any other guidelines your group conscience has decided to follow.]
15. CLOSING: “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, you will find a link in the chat to the OA pamphlet Where Do I Start? Everything a Newcomer Needs to Know. 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. Find information on other OA meetings at Find a Meeting on 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.

“Thank you for asking me to be your leader. 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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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 action 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.
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.

Permission to use the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous for adaptation granted by AA World Services, Inc.
The Twelve Concepts of OA Service

1. The ultimate responsibility and authority for OA world services reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.

2. The OA groups have delegated to World Service Business Conference the active maintenance of our world services; thus, World Service Business Conference is the voice, authority and effective conscience of OA as a whole.

3. The right of decision, based on trust, makes effective leadership possible.

4. The right of participation ensures equality of opportunity for all in the decision-making process.

5. Individuals have the right of appeal and petition in order to ensure that their opinions and personal grievances will be carefully considered.

6. The World Service Business Conference has entrusted the Board of Trustees with the primary responsibility for the administration of Overeaters Anonymous.

7. The Board of Trustees has legal rights and responsibilities accorded to them by OA Bylaws, Subpart A; the rights and responsibilities of the World Service Business Conference are accorded to it by Tradition and by OA Bylaws, Subpart B.

8. The Board of Trustees has delegated to its Executive Committee the responsibility to administer the OA World Service Office.

9. Able, trusted servants, together with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them, are indispensable for effective functioning at all service levels.

10. Service responsibility is balanced by carefully defined service authority; therefore, duplication of efforts is avoided.

11. Trustee administration of the World Service Office should always be assisted by the best standing committees, executives, staffs and consultants.

12. The spiritual foundation for OA service ensures that:
   a. no OA committee or service body shall ever become the seat of perilous wealth or power;
   b. sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, shall be OA’s prudent financial principle;
   c. no OA member shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority;
d. all important decisions shall be reached by discussion, vote and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity;

e. no service action shall ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy; and

f. no OA service committee or service board shall ever perform any acts of government, and each shall always remain democratic in thought and action.
Welcome Home (abridged)

Have you ever wished you could lose ten pounds (5 kg)? Twenty (9 kg)? Forty (18kg)? A hundred (45kg) or more? Have you ever wished that once you got it off you could keep it off? Welcome to OA; welcome home!

Have you sometimes felt out of step with the world, like a homeless orphan without a place where you really belonged? Welcome to OA; welcome home!

Have you ever wished your family would get to work or school so you could get busy eating? Welcome to OA; welcome home!

Have you ever awakened first thing in the morning and felt happy because you remembered that your favorite goodie was waiting for you in the fridge or in the cupboard? Welcome to OA; welcome home!

Have you ever looked up at the stars and wondered what an insignificant person like you is doing in the world anyway? Welcome to OA; welcome home!

Have you ever cooked, bought, or baked for your family and then eaten everything yourself so you wouldn’t have to share? We know you in OA because we are you. Welcome to OA; welcome home!

Have you ever wanted to hide in the house, without going to work, without getting cleaned up or even getting dressed, without seeing anyone or letting anyone see you? Welcome to OA; welcome home!

Have you ever hidden food under the bed, under the pillow, in the drawer, in the bathroom, in the wastebasket, the cupboard, the clothes hamper, the closet, or the car so that you could eat without anyone seeing you? Welcome to OA; welcome home!

Have you ever been angry, resentful, defiant—toward God, your mate, your doctor, your mother, your father, your friends, your children, the salespeople in stores whose looks spoke a thousand words as you tried on clothes—because they were thin, because they wanted you to be thin, and because you were forced to diet to please them or shut them up or make them eat their words and their looks? We welcome you to OA; welcome home!

Have you ever sobbed out your misery in the dark night because no one loved or understood you? Welcome to OA; welcome home!

—A Taste of Lifeline, pp. xiii–xvi
As we work the Overeaters Anonymous Twelve Step program of recovery from compulsive eating, we have a number of Tools to assist us. We use these Tools—a plan of eating, sponsorship, meetings, telephone, writing, literature, action plan, anonymity, and service—on a regular basis, to help us achieve and maintain abstinence and recovery from our disease.

A Plan of Eating
As a Tool, a plan of eating helps us abstain from compulsive eating, guides us in our dietary decisions, and defines what, when, how, where, and why we eat. (See the pamphlet *A New Plan of Eating* for more information.) 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 all three levels of our program of recovery: physical, emotional, and spiritual. Find a sponsor who has what you want and ask that person how they are achieving it.

Meetings
Meetings give us an opportunity to identify our common problem, confirm our common solution, and share the gifts we receive through this Twelve Step program. In addition to face-to-face meetings, OA offers telephone and other types of virtual meetings that are useful in breaking through the deadly isolation caused by distance, illness, or physical challenges.

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, or describing a troubling or joyous incident, helps us better understand our actions and reactions in a way that is often not revealed by simply thinking or talking about them.

Literature
We read OA-approved literature, which includes numerous books, study guides, pamphlets, wallet cards, and selected Alcoholics Anonymous texts. All this material provides insight into our disease and the experience, strength, and hope that there is a solution for us.

Action Plan
Creating an action plan is the process of identifying and implementing attainable actions to support our individual abstinence and emotional, spiritual, and physical recovery. This Tool, just like our plan of eating, may vary widely among members and may need to be adjusted as we progress in our recovery.
Anonymity

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities (Tradition Twelve). Anonymity assures us that only we, as individual OA members, have the right to make our membership known to others. 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 (Tradition Eleven).

Within the Fellowship, anonymity means that whatever we share with another OA member will be respected and kept confidential. What we hear at meetings should remain there.

Service

Any form of service—no matter how small—that helps reach a fellow sufferer adds to the quality of our own recovery. Members who are new to OA can give service by attending meetings, sharing, and putting away chairs. All members can also give service by putting out literature, welcoming newcomers, hosting a virtual meeting, or doing whatever is needed to help the group. Members who meet specified requirements can give service beyond the group level by serving at the intergroup, service board, region, or world service level.

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.

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