

First Twelve Days Instructions

The readings for this program are from the pamphlet *Where Do I Start? Everything a Newcomer Needs to Know*. Both the sponsor and the sponsee should have a copy of this pamphlet.

Day	Subject and Reading for Sponsee	Discussion Question(s)
1	<p><b>Fifteen Questions:</b> Read “Dear Newcomer” through “You Are Not Alone,” on pages 1–3.</p>	<p><b>Ask and Discuss:</b> Review the Fifteen Questions on pages 1–2. Ask your sponsee to circle the questions they relate to. Discuss their responses. Stress to your sponsee the importance of working the Steps as a vital part of a lasting recovery.</p>
2	<p><b>Requirements:</b> Read “What are the requirements for OA membership?” on page 22. Next, read pages 23–24, starting with “Who runs OA?” through “What are the Twelve Traditions?”</p>	<p><b>Ask and Discuss:</b> What led your sponsee to OA? What does/do “eating compulsively” and/or “compulsive food behaviors” mean to the sponsee? Does your sponsee have a desire to stop? Discuss. Listen to your sponsee’s concerns about OA. Discuss.</p>
3	<p><b>Symptoms:</b> Read “Many Symptoms, One Solution” on pages 4–5, then “Welcome Home” on pages 27–29.</p>	<p><b>Ask and Discuss:</b> Ask your sponsee to write about symptoms they have experienced. How early did these symptoms start? Discuss.</p>
4	<p><b>Abstinence:</b> Read “Abstinence—Our Primary Purpose,”<sup>1, 2</sup> “The Tools of Recovery,” and “A Plan of Eating” on page 5.</p>	<p><b>Ask and Discuss:</b> Ask your sponsee to write about which compulsive eating or compulsive food behaviors concern them the most. Discuss.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Overeaters Anonymous accepts the following definitions of “abstinence” and “recovery”:

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.

<sup>2</sup> In the context of OA members’ individual abstinences, “Our Primary Purpose” references the primary purpose of each OA member, which is found in the OA Preamble: “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.”

In contrast, Tradition Five is about an OA group’s primary purpose and states: “Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers.”

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5	<p><b>Meetings:</b> Read “Meetings” on page 5, then “How much does OA membership cost?” and “How does OA support itself?” on page 22.</p>	<p><b>Ask and Discuss:</b> Suggest that your sponsee make a plan to attend six meetings. This can include face-to-face, phone, online, or videoconferencing meetings.</p>
6	<p><b>OA Fellowship:</b> Read “Can I stop eating compulsively on my own just through reading OA literature?” on pages 21–22.</p>	<p><b>Ask and Discuss:</b> Ask your sponsee to write about their feelings concerning receiving help from other members in OA. Discuss. Suggest that they start contacting members listed on the <i>Where Do I Start?</i> pamphlet provided or their meeting’s contact list.</p>
7	<p><b>Action Plan and Other Tools:</b> Read “Telephone,” “Writing,” “Literature,” and “Action Plan” on page 6.</p>	<p><b>Ask and Discuss:</b> Help your sponsee draft an action plan for the next several days that will help support their recovery. Discuss.</p>
8	<p><b>Draft a Food Plan:</b> Read “Disclaimer” on pages 29–30, then pages 7–17, starting with “Further Information: A Plan of Eating” through “Structure and Tolerance.”</p>	<p><b>Ask and Discuss:</b> Suggest to your sponsee that, together, you draft an initial food plan that will support them. Discuss, and be sure to tell your sponsee that no sponsor is acting in the capacity of a health care professional.</p>
9	<p><b>Anonymity:</b> Read “Anonymity” on page 6, then “Why does OA place such emphasis upon ‘anonymity?’” on page 25.</p>	<p><b>Ask and Discuss:</b> Discuss the concept of “anonymity.” Discuss the meaning of “humility.”</p>
10	<p><b>Are You Convinced?</b> Read “What is compulsive eating?” through “Can’t a compulsive overeater just use willpower to stop excessive eating?” on pages 18–20.</p>	<p><b>Ask and Discuss:</b> Now that your sponsee has been introduced to the OA program and has taken some actions, does your sponsee now consider themselves to be a compulsive eater? Ask them to write their thoughts and feelings on this subject. Discuss.</p>
11	<p><b>Higher Power:</b> Read “What is meant by ‘a Power greater than ourselves?’” through “Is OA a religious society?” on pages 20–21. Then, read “Structure and Tolerance” on pages 16–17.</p>	<p><b>Ask and Discuss:</b> Ask your sponsee to write about their understanding of a Higher Power. If they struggle with the concept of a Higher Power, are they open to the idea that a Higher Power can simply be the OA meeting group? Has their food history been characterized by their own willpower going out of control? Might the concept of connecting with a Power greater than oneself help their recovery? Discuss.</p>

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12	<b>What's Next?</b> Read "Service" on pages 6–7, then "Sponsorship" on page 5. Lastly, read "Conclusion" on page 17.	<b>Ask and Discuss:</b> Ask your sponsee to write about their experience of their first twelve days in OA and discuss. Review their action plan for how they will move forward. <sup>3</sup>

Remember: In Overeaters Anonymous, there is hope and help. Together we can recover! If you have questions, comments, or suggestions, please email [info@oa.org](mailto:info@oa.org). Find and download Temporary Sponsors: Newcomers' First Twelve Days at [oa.org/sitemap/](http://oa.org/sitemap/) under "Group Resources."