

A Guide for Telephone A.A. Meetings from Home

We believe that going to a regular face-to-face A.A. meeting is the best, but sometimes that may not be possible. What do we do then? Some people don't have access to the internet, and some people aren't familiar with online meetings, but most A.A. members have a phone of some kind. We would like to share our local experience with A.A. meetings on the telephone.

This guide is only our own experience, strength and hope. It is not endorsed by or affiliated with Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., The A.A. Grapevine, Inc. or any other A.A. entity.

One Kind of Telephone A.A. Meeting

In our town, experience with A.A. meetings on the telephone goes back at least to February, 1992. It was between three people. Vicki was recovering from surgery and was under doctor's orders to stay home. Chuck and Bob were in the same home group. All three of them had been sober for years, and they were very active in A.A. They arranged a day and time for the telephone meeting.

They were each in their own homes. Bob was the linking person for the meeting. First he called Chuck. When Chuck answered the phone, Bob pressed the "add call" function. Then Bob called Vicki. When Vicki answered, Bob pressed the "merge call" function. With that, they were on a conference call. It was just that simple!

They used a format similar to the one found later in this guide. The meeting lasted about half an hour. When it was over, each of them said how much like a regular meeting it was. They all agreed that it was much different than two people talking on the phone.

Two or three years later, Bob sent the story of their first telephone meeting into A.A.'s monthly magazine the *Grapevine*. Here is a key paragraph from that article:

"When I told them I would be writing to the *Grapevine*, Vicki and Chuck asked me to include some of their thoughts. Chuck said, 'Maybe the original motive was to help Vicki, but that day I really needed a meeting. I had a terrific resentment about my house being robbed. For that half hour, I was able to be someplace else.' And Vicki said, 'Just talking about it brings a tear to my eye. It was a godsend. I couldn't drive, and I hadn't been to a meeting for. . .well, too long. Isolation is dangerous for an alcoholic.'" [From the article "Reach Out and Touch Someone" *Grapevine*, August 1995.* You can find the full story on the official Grapevine website www.aagrapevine.org]

How does it work?

Here's some good news! Even if you don't know how to use conference calling, only **one** of the three people in the meeting needs to use this feature. That one "linking" person can call the other two people, and they just answer the phone **like it was any other call**.

That one linking person calls the first person. When the first person answers the phone, the linking person presses the "add call" button and calls the second person. When the second person answers the phone, the linking person presses the "merge calls" button. At that moment, all three are on the same conference call.

Most phones, whether they are wired landlines or mobile cell phones, have the ability to make conference calls (sometimes referred to as three-way calling). Each kind of phone is different, so we won't try to give any directions on this. You can contact your service provider and/or phone manufacturer for details.

Some Words of Caution

Telephone meetings are not a good fit for everybody. Newly sober people should not participate in telephone meetings without talking to their sponsor about it first. If you don't have a sponsor, it is strongly advised that you get one. There is an A.A. pamphlet called "Questions and Answers on Sponsorship" which you can read on the official A.A. website www.aa.org. You have their permission to print one copy at no charge.

Phone plans can be very different. If you are the linking person and you pay according to the number of minutes you use, then you might be charged for the minutes for both people you call. If you have unlimited minutes, that might not affect you at all. Check with your service provider on this. The other two people don't need to worry about all that. It is just like any other call for them.

Personal Safety

Never give your home address, your physical location or any other information that could put your safety at risk. In general, if you wouldn't say it from the microphone at a large, open speaker meeting, don't say it in a telephone meeting. If you are not at home, make sure your location is a safe one for talking on the phone. Be sure to read the A.A. service piece "Safety and A.A.: Our Common Welfare." It can be downloaded from the official A.A. website www.aa.org

Getting Started

How do you find people who would like to hold telephone meetings? You might call A.A. friends and members of your home group. Your local district or intergroup may have suggestions. Many of the 93 A.A. delegate areas in the U.S. and Canada have committees for accessibilities, special needs, or remote communities. To find A.A. near you, try https://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/find-aa-resources

More Options

We wanted to keep this guide as clear and simple as possible, but there are other possibilities to consider.

Conference calls are not limited to only three people. With more experience, you may want to add more people to the meeting.

For information about online meetings/online groups: <http://aa-intergroup.org>

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The following is based on a format that some of us have used. Of course, you may want to come up with a format of your own.

Suggested Telephone Meeting Format

Welcome to this telephone meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. My name is _____, and I'm an alcoholic. Let's open the meeting with a moment of silence followed by 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.

"Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

"The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.

"A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes.

"Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety."

This is a Big Book study meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. In keeping with our primary purpose we ask all who share to confine their discussion to their problems as they relate to alcoholism. Are there any newcomers in their first few days or weeks of sobriety who would care to introduce themselves?

I have asked _____ to read a portion of the fifth chapter of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, titled "How It Works," starting on page 58.

I have asked _____ to read the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, on page 562.

Would anyone like to be recognized as having achieved a milestone in their days, months, or years of sobriety?

Are there any A.A. related announcements?

The format of this meeting is that I will read a paragraph from the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*. Each person is encouraged to speak once on that selection. Please do not speak twice until everyone has had a chance to share. There will be time for a P.S. at the end. If you have a problem relating to alcoholism or staying sober, feel free to share it at that time or talk to a member after the meeting. All who share give their experience, strength, and hope and do not speak for Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole.

I would like to direct your attention to page _____ in the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*. [See the next section for suggested readings and topics.]

[Read a paragraph and the suggested topic; then call on each person to comment. Of course, they can pass if they want to. After each person has shared, say:]

At this time you may like to add a short P.S.

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The 12th Tradition states that “Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.”

On page 89, the Big Book says:

“PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail. This is our *twelfth suggestion*: Carry this message to other alcoholics! You can help when no one else can. You can secure their confidence when others fail. Remember they are very ill.

“Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends—this is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it. Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives.”

With that in mind, one helpful suggestion would be to call your sponsor. It can help both of you stay sober for another twenty-four hours.

Please remember: “If you feel all alone, you can pick up the phone.” The local number for Alcoholics Anonymous is (___ __) ___ __ - ___ __ __

I’d like to thank each of you for being a part of this meeting. Will those who care to, please join me in closing with the Serenity Prayer.

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The following are readings and topics that may be useful. You may find other ones that better fit your particular situation.

Suggested Readings and Topics for a Weekly Telephone Meeting

- (1). PAGE xiii, line 1 - line 12 (Page xiii, first paragraph: “WE, OF Alcoholics Anonymous...”)
Topic: To show other alcoholics *precisely how we have recovered*
- (2). PAGE xx, line 32 - PAGE xxi, line 9 (Page xx, last paragraph and on to the next page: “At present, our membership...”)
Topic: a new freedom
- (3). PAGE xxviii, line 4 - line 13 (Page xxviii, first full paragraph: “We believe, and so suggested...”)
Topic: can never safely use alcohol
- (4). PAGE xxviii, line 30 - PAGE xxix, line 9 (Page xxviii, last paragraph and on to the next page: “Men and women drink essentially because...”)
Topic: they cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false
- (5). PAGE 8, line 8 - line 12 (Page 8, first full paragraph: “No words can tell...”)
Topic: Alcohol was my master.
- (6). PAGE 12, line 19 - line 24 (Page 12, fourth full paragraph: “*It was only a matter...*”)
Topic: *willing to believe*
- (7). PAGE 14, line 28 - PAGE 15, line 5 (Page 14, last paragraph and on to the next page: “My friend had emphasized...”)
Topic: demonstrating these principles in all my affairs
- (8). PAGE 23, line 3 - line 17 (Page 23, first full paragraph: “These observations would be academic...”)
Topic: the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind
- (9). PAGE 24, line 6 - line 12 (Page 24, first full paragraph: “*The fact is that most alcoholics...*”)
Topic: *We are without defense against the first drink.*
- (10). PAGE 25, line 4 - line 15 (Page 25, first full paragraph: “*There is a solution....*”)
Topic: *There is a solution.*
- (11). PAGE 30, line 1 - line 10 (Page 30, first paragraph: “MOST OF US have been unwilling...”)
Topic: the great obsession of every abnormal drinker.
- (12). PAGE 33, line 4 - line 14 (Page 33, first full paragraph: “This case contains...”)
Topic: no reservation of any kind
- (13). PAGE 34, line 2 - line 15 (Page 34, first full paragraph: “As we look back...”)
Topic: you may be able to stop for a considerable period
- (14). PAGE 39, line 3 - line 13 (Page 39, first full paragraph: “That may be true...”)
Topic: *absolutely unable to stop drinking on the basis of self-knowledge.*

- (15). PAGE 45, line 9 - line 12 (Page 45, first full paragraph: “Lack of power...”)
Topic: Lack of power, that was our dilemma
- (16). PAGE 46, line 13 - line 20 (Page 46, first full paragraph: “Yes, we of agnostic temperament...”)
Topic: lay aside prejudice
- (17). PAGE 46, line 21 - line 33 (Page 46, last paragraph: “Much to our relief...”)
Topic: a new sense of power and direction
- (18). PAGE 47, line 14 - line 21 (Page 47, second paragraph: “We needed to ask ourselves...”)
Topic: wonderfully effective spiritual structure
- (19). PAGE 47, line 32 - PAGE 48, line 13 (Page 47, the last line and on to the next page: “Besides a seeming inability...”)
Topic: alcohol was a great persuader
- (20). PAGE 50, line 8 - line 15 (Page 50, second paragraph: “In our personal stories...”)
Topic: the Power which is greater than himself
- (21). PAGE 55, line 23 - line 29 (Page 55, next to the last paragraph: “We can only clear the ground...”)
Topic: search diligently within yourself
- (22). PAGE 60, line 5 - line 12 (Page 60, first paragraph after Step Twelve: “Many of us exclaimed...”)
Topic: spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection
- (23). PAGE 62, line 6 - line 13 (Page 62, first full paragraph: “Selfishness – self-centeredness...”)
Topic: decisions based on self
- (24). PAGE 66, line 10 - line 19 (Page 66, first full paragraph: “It is plain that a life...”)
Topic: the maintenance and growth of a spiritual experience
- (25). PAGE 66, line 32 - PAGE 67, line 8 (Page 66, last two lines and on to the next page: “This was our course...”)
Topic: the people who wronged us were perhaps spiritually sick.
- (26). PAGE 68, line 3 - line 10 (Page 68, first full paragraph: “We reviewed our fears...”)
Topic: We reviewed our fears thoroughly
- (27). PAGE 73, line 11 - line 15 (Page 73, first full paragraph: “More than most people...”)
Topic: the alcoholic leads a double life
- (28). PAGE 75, line 11 - line 21 (Page 75, second full paragraph: “We pocket our pride...”)
Topic: Our fears fall from us
- (29). PAGE 76, line 15 - line 27 (Page 76, third paragraph: “Now we need more action...”)
Topic: *we would go to any lengths*

- (30). PAGE 82, line 24 - 33 (Page 82, last paragraph: “The alcoholic is like a tornado...”)
Topic: We feel a man is unthinking when he says that sobriety is enough
- (31). PAGE 83, line 19 - line 28 (Page 83, third paragraph: “There may be some wrongs...”)
Topic: There may be some wrongs we can never fully right
- (32). PAGE 84, line 16 - line 29 (Page 84, second full paragraph: “This thought brings us to *Step Ten*...”)
Topic: Love and tolerance of others is our code
- (33). PAGE 84, line 30 - PAGE 85, line 12 (Page 84, last paragraph and on to the next page: “And we have ceased fighting...”)
Topic: we have ceased fighting anything or anyone
- (34). PAGE 85, line 13 - line 23 (Page 85, first full paragraph: “It is easy to let up...”)
Topic: a daily reprieve
- (35). PAGE 86, line 5 - line 18 (Page 86, first full paragraph: “When we retire at night...”)
Topic: When we retire at night, we constructively review our day
- (36). PAGE 86, line 19 - line 27 (Page 86, second full paragraph: “On awakening...”)
Topic: On awakening let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead
- (37). PAGE 86, line 28 - PAGE 87, line 9 (Page 86, last paragraph and on to the next page: “In thinking about our day...”)
Topic: In thinking about our day we may face indecision.
- (38). PAGE 89, line 1 - line 7 (Page 89, first paragraph: “PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE shows...”)
Topic: Carry this message to other alcoholics!
- (39). PAGE 92, line 21 - PAGE 93, line 10 (Page 92, last paragraph and on to the next page: “Continue to speak of alcoholism...”)
Topic: you offer a solution
- (40). PAGE 95, line 1 - line 15 (Page 95, first paragraph: “Unless your friend wants to talk...”)
Topic: lay out the kit of spiritual tools
- (41). PAGE 100, line 5 - line 13 (Page 100, first full paragraph: “Both you and the new man...”)
Topic: the path of spiritual progress
- (42). PAGE 103, line 3 - line 13 (Page 103, first full paragraph: “We are careful...”)
Topic: a spirit of intolerance might repel alcoholics
- (43). PAGE 107, line 28 - PAGE 108, line 2 (Page 107, last paragraph and on to the next page: “And even if they did not...”)
Topic: What had become of their judgment, their common sense, their will power?

(44). PAGE 109, line 13 - line 31 (Page 109, first full paragraph: “*Two*: Your husband is showing lack of control...”)

Topic: the earmarks of a real alcoholic

(45). PAGE 118, line 10 - line 18 (Page 118, second paragraph: “Your husband knows he owes you...”)

Topic: Patience, tolerance, understanding and love are the watchwords.

(46). PAGE 125, line 18 - line 29 (Page 125, second full paragraph: “Another principle we observe carefully...”)

Topic: We alcoholics are sensitive people.

(47). PAGE 130, line 7 - line 18 (Page 130, first full paragraph: “Those of us...”)

Topic: a life of sane and happy usefulness

(48). PAGE 132, line 32 - PAGE 133, line 9 (Page 132, last paragraph and on to the next page: “Everybody knows that...”)

Topic: happy, joyous, and free

(49). PAGE 142, line 3 - line 14 (Page 142, first full paragraph: “Next he can be assured...”)

Topic: take every necessary step

(50). PAGE 143, line 15 - line 23 (Page 143, first full paragraph: “If your man accepts your offer...”)

Topic: a change of heart

(51). PAGE 152, line 11 - line 23 (Page 152, first **two** full paragraphs: “We have shown...” through “so will you.”)

Topic: release from care, boredom and worry

(52). PAGE 152, line 26 - PAGE 153, line 5 (Page 152, last paragraph and on to the next page: “You are going to meet...”)

Topic: you will make lifelong friends

(53). PAGE 164, line 21 - line 27 (Page 164, last **two** paragraphs including the last line of the page: “Abandon yourself...” through “until then.”)

Topic: Give freely of what you find and join us.

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Other Resources

On the official website www.aa.org you can listen to the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous* (including all of the personal stories) and the book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. There is no charge. Also, you can read both of these books and the many pamphlets for free. (There are similar resources in Spanish, French and American Sign Language on the website too.)