

D.A. Newcomers First Step Meeting Format

This page contains suggested guidelines for the format of a D.A. meeting. Depending upon the group conscience of its members, groups have autonomy to change the format to fit their needs, using D.A.'s Fourth Tradition as a guide.

Notes:

This format can be adapted for a Newcomer Breakout Meeting, in which selected meeting members hold a meeting with newcomers in a separate room. Breakout meetings typically happen before group sharing during a regular D.A. or BDA meeting.

Trusted servant is to read the italicized sentences in quotes.

1. Opening

Usually a Trusted Servant volunteers to lead the meeting, welcoming everyone and providing an introduction by saying:

"Hello. My name is _____" (first name only) "and I am a debtor. Let's open the meeting with the Serenity Prayer."

2. Serenity Prayer

Many groups choose to open their meetings with a prayer, such as the Serenity Prayer or with a few moments of silent meditation.

"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. Welcome

"Welcome to Debtors Anonymous. Debtors Anonymous offers hope for people whose use of unsecured debt causes problems and suffering. We come to learn that compulsive debt is a spiritual problem with a spiritual solution, and we find relief by working the D.A. recovery program based on the Twelve-Step principles.

"The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop incurring unsecured debt. Even if members are not in debt, they are welcome in D.A. Our Fellowship is supported solely through contributions made by members; there are no dues or fees.

"Debtors Anonymous is not affiliated with any financial, legal, political, or religious entities, and we avoid controversy by not discussing outside issues. By sharing our experience, strength, and hope, and by carrying the message to those who still suffer, we find joy, clarity, and serenity as we recover together."

"This is the _____" (name of group) "Newcomers First Step Meeting of Debtors Anonymous. We're glad you're here. Our goal today is to give you a few basic pieces of information about the D.A. program, share a little of our own experience with Step One, and give each of you a chance, if you would like, to tell us what brings you

here today. This meeting will end after one hour; however, members are typically available for fellowship after the meeting to answer any questions you may have.”

4. Readings

“Statement of Purpose

In D.A., our purpose is threefold: to stop incurring unsecured debt, to share our experience with the newcomer, and to reach out to other debtors.”

*“Would someone like to read the **Word to Newcomers**?”*

*“Thank you. Would someone like to read the **12 Signs of Compulsive Debting**?”*

*”Thank you. Would someone like to read the **12 Steps of D.A.**?”*

*“Thank you. Would someone like to read the **Tradition** of the month and share for 1 minute on your experience with this Tradition?” (Each month, a new Tradition is discussed.)*

*“Thank you. Would someone like to read the **Tool** of the month and share for 1 minute on your experience with this Tool?” (Each month, a new Tool is discussed.)*

“Thank you.”

After the readings, announcements of any special rules, such as no smoking or eating, will often be made.

5. Introductions

“We will now go around the room and introduce ourselves by first name only. My name is _____ and I am a debtor.”

6. We Care Sheet (optional)

Some meetings pass a We Care Sheet to help newcomers find support, including contact info for sponsors and members who are available for program calls. At the end of this document is a version of a We Care Sheet that can be photo-copied.

“We are now going to pass around a We Care Sheet.

”The We Care Sheet will circulate twice. The first time around, please check the services you need or can offer. Upon receiving the We Care Sheet a second time, please copy contact information for people that meet your needs.

”The list will be destroyed at the end of the meeting to protect your anonymity.

”Suggested Service Requirements: Service as a Pressure Relief Meeting (PRM) member

or Sponsor recommended 90 days solvency and two Pressure Relief Meetings (PRMs). Solvency is described as not incurring new unsecured debt."

7. Seventh Tradition

"We will now pass the basket in honor of the Seventh Tradition which states that, 'Every D.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.' However, do not let a lack of funds discourage you from attending this meeting, as the Third Tradition states, 'The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop incurring unsecured debt.'

"In addition, D.A. has a service structure which depends on contributions from our group. After our group's needs are met, we contribute the balance, 45% to the General Service Office, 45% to Intergroup and 10% to the GSR Area Group. Please help us meet our responsibility for supporting the Fellowship as a whole. You can donate directly to the General Service Office at debtorsanonymous.org/donate."

8. Solvency Count (optional)

"We will now do a solvency count. Can everyone please stand (or raise your hand) to celebrate your solvency in this program. Solvency refers to the length of time since a person last incurred new unsecured debt. Stay standing if you haven't debted in 24 hours," (applause) "30 days, 60 days, 90 days, 1 year, 2 years, 3 years, 4 years, etc."

Note: This continues until the last person sits down; there is applause after each count.

9. Speaker (suggested requirement for speakers: 90 days solvency and 2 PRMs)

"Step One of D.A. states that 'We admitted we were powerless over debt, that our lives had become unmanageable.'

"Our speaker, _____, will now share on Step One (suggested 10 minutes).

"Reminder that in this meeting, we focus on the solution and are committed to referencing only D.A. or A.A. Conference-approved literature and materials."

10. Sharing

"We will now go around the room and share on Step One or what brought you to the meeting today. You can either speak or pass. At this meeting, we do not engage in cross talk, which means providing feedback or commenting on what someone else has shared. We will have a timekeeper to ensure everyone has time to speak. May I have a volunteer to be timekeeper? Thank you."

11. Literature, Announcements and Fellowship

"Before we close, please note that literature is for sale after the meeting. If this is your first meeting, please raise your hand and I will give you a newcomers packet.

"Does anyone have any D.A. related announcements?"

"Reminder that everyone is welcome to fellowship after the meeting.

"Problems with money and debt can be overwhelming. As you come to understand the D.A. program, you will learn how to handle these problems. For now, we suggest you do three things:

- 1. Be willing to not debt, one day at a time.*
- 2. Attend meetings regularly.*
- 3. Find a sponsor (or temporary sponsor). A sponsor is a recovering debtor you can call outside the meeting who guides you through the Twelve Steps of D.A. with the help of the D.A. and B.D.A. Step Study Guides. Use the We Care Sheet to find a sponsor."*

12. Closing

"In closing, we would like to remind you that in Debtors Anonymous we practice Tradition Twelve, which is the principle of anonymity. This assures us the freedom to express ourselves at meetings and in private conversations without fear that our comments will be repeated. We keep what is shared at meetings confidential. As we work the Steps and practice D.A.'s Traditions and Concepts, we are reminded that recovery is possible and that we are all here for a common purpose—to recover from compulsive debting one day at a time."

"We will now close the meeting with a reading of the Twelfth Tradition and the Promises of D.A.

*"Will someone please volunteer to read the **Twelfth Tradition**?"*

*"Thank you. Will someone please read the **Twelve Promises**?"*

"Thank you. Let's close with a moment of silence for the still suffering debtor followed by the Serenity Prayer."

