

AA Step 1 Worksheet

In any journey, **the first step is the most important**. Without that step the goal will never be reached. In a 12-step program, the first step is the beginning of a journey towards putting aside addictive behavior and controlling our addiction.

This first step is

We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.

This is obvious but how do we come to admit this. **It is not easy to admit that we are unable to deal with something, let alone this drink that we crave** and will find any excuse to avoid this admission. The book 12 and 12 says

In A.A.'s pioneering time, none but the most desperate cases could swallow and digest this unpalatable truth.

Worksheets are an excellent way of allowing us to focus. In this post **we discuss a worksheet** that can help you review whether you are powerless over alcohol and whether you can manage your life.

An Overview

This first step worksheet is a **series of questions to be reflected on** to help you decide whether it is time to start a new life and change to a life of sobriety. It may also be that upon careful and honest consideration of the questions you decide that you do not have alcohol addiction. That is great!

The purpose of this worksheet is not to convince you that you need a 12-step program or to book yourself into a treatment center, but to act as a way of enabling you to decide. The questions are not easy. They are not supposed to be.

I want to start, though with a caution from the Big Book

Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest.

That says it all – **it begins with being honest with yourself.**

The Worksheet

These are the questions that the worksheets contain with notes. The worksheet has space for you to write down your thoughts as you consider each question. **It is these thoughts on your personal experience that ultimately help you to answer the question** about whether you have a disease of addiction. Carefully consider each of the following questions.

Question 1: Why are you doing this worksheet?

Whether this is the first time you are doing this exercise or not, **what has brought you to this point?** It may be that you are uncertain about your drinking or that someone else has encouraged you to do so.

Question 2: How often have you been unable to avoid binge drinking? (For a male this is 5 drinks in a two hour period and for women 4 drinks in that time)

Here we start to review our drinking patterns and the effects. This is the definition of binge drinking given by the **National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism**

Question 3: How often have you been drinking heavily? (For men this is 14 drinks week and for females 7 drinks in the same period)

This continues the review, again with a definition from the NIAAA. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) considers heavy alcohol use as engaging in binge drinking on 5 or more days within one month.

Question 4: Have you ever lied as a result of your drinking?

At this point the worksheet starts to dig deeper. We can lie about whether we drank, the amount of alcohol we drank, where we drank, what we drank, who we drank with, the effect of the drinking and what we did while drinking. The thing to reflect on here is how frequently you lie, if you lie at all, and **whether there is a pattern.**

Question 5: How do you feel when someone suggests you need to cut back on your drinking:

Appreciative	Acknowledging	Neutral	Defensive	Angry
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This is a simple scale. **The person with a drinking problem will often feel threatened when someone suggests that they cutback or stop.** Select the choice that most closely reflects your response to such a suggestion. If the selection is defensive or angry how intense is that that reaction? Is it slight or is it completely over the top?

Question 6: Does drinking change your personality?

No	Yes
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Often people do not fully grasp this question and think of it as referring only to unpleasant changes. That is not the case. **Do you become someone else?** If you are normally quiet and withdrawn, do you become flirtatious and gregarious? If you are sociable and confident, do you change to being morose and reserved?

We are talking about any personality change and not just becoming aggressive.

Question 7: How do you feel when you want a drink and can't get one?

Do you feel irritated, stressed, desperate even when alcohol is not available on demand? If you have negative thoughts when this happens how quickly do they appear and how intense are they? One of the most important things to consider is whether you feel you can cope without having a drink? One test that some people use is to decide not to have a drink for a week and see how desperate they become the closer to the date you can start again.

Question 8: Have you hurt yourself or someone else because of drinking, either physically or emotionally?

This includes hurting health and emotions and not just physical injuries. Do you often have stomach problems? Have you got into physical fights? Did you engage in emotional or physical abuse of others such as your partner, your parents, or your staff? **What bad results have happened because of drinking and is there a pattern?** Ask yourself if you were in control of yourself. How has your drinking affected the lives of others?

Can you make a list of all persons you harmed? How big is that list?

Question 9: Do you lose self-respect or the respect of others because of drinking?

How do you and others view you when you drink? Consider **whether you have any character defects because of drinking** or that may cause drinking. Is the absence of respect pretty much a permanent thing and is there an absence of trust in you?

Question 10: Would your life be better without drinking? How? Would your future be better? How?

We have examined our current situation regarding our lives and alcohol and now we need to decide whether our lives would be better without booze. Are we able to manage our drinking? **Or are we so addicted that nothing is more important?** Is it controlling your life more and more?

Now can you look beyond the present and imagine a better life than the one you presently have?

Conclusion: Do you feel that you are powerless over alcohol and that your life is unmanageable?

The worksheet is at an end. **Now is the time to answer the question that probably brought you here.** Look back over the ten questions and consider the answers you have given and more importantly think about your reflections on the questions.

What does this tell you? That is the most important question? We can't say that if you answered the questions in a certain way then pronounce whether you are an alcoholic. But **look at what you have said in this worksheet and make the call.**

What Now?

If after an honest review using this worksheet and considering the results of your drinking, you believe that you may not have an alcohol use disorder, I am delighted for you. **Move on and revisit the worksheet if you ever feel the need again,** but it is great that you do not see yourself as affected by alcohol.

It goes against human nature to make an admission of powerlessness. It is sort of a rock bottom admission to admit having no control over something. Yet, it is true that the **first step to regaining that power is to admit to having lost it.**

If, however you see yourself as having a problem then there are certain things you need to do. You certainly can do worse than start to follow the steps of AA, after all you have just done the first step and we think, if you are reading this paragraph, are ready to admit to being powerless over alcohol and that your life has become unmanageable.

Start to attend Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and you will hear such people as had already taken the same step as you are considering right now tell personal stories of their own experience. **You are in the same place a lot of people have been.** Do not let fear put you off working to remove the habit of alcohol use.

You and those you love deserve a life worth living and **this can be the start of something great.**

Note: Except where specified all quotes are from the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous