

**GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS  
WRITING THE STEPS**



**[www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk](http://www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk)**

# GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS

## WRITING THE STEPS

### INTRODUCTION

**Objective: To live a life consistent with our deepest values.**

The steps provide a blueprint for integrating our inner values with our outer life (work, play, family, relationships and spiritual practice). With diligence and commitment, you will be able to identify past patterns of behaviour (many of which caused you to act contrary to your deepest values), and develop new, healthy ways of thinking and living.

**Steps work is self-help AND mutual help.**

Each journey through the Steps is a solitary one. What you write will be intensely personal. However, if you tried to do it alone, you might falter or stop or decide that it is too painful or too difficult - much as you did when you tried to stop gambling without the help of GA. **These writing exercises are designed to be used in Steps Meeting (if available) or reviewed with a sponsor, thus allowing the strength and experience of others to support us through the process.** A Steps Meeting is a safe place for members to share their strengths and weaknesses, feelings and emotions, and fears and spirituality so each may move ahead in recovery.

**Writing is the foundation for working the Steps; writing makes it real.**

When we become willing to commit to paper our actions, behaviours, feelings and emotions, we allow ourselves to be forthright and honest *with* ourselves and *about* ourselves, perhaps for the first time in our lives. Please don't be concerned about structure, spelling, punctuation or form; the writing is for your eyes only unless you choose to share it with a step group, sponsor or someone else. **Write in whatever way works best for you** (some members are comfortable with a handwritten journal or notebook; others may use a laptop or computer). The aim is to capture your thoughts, feelings and emotions, and make them accessible for your review and revisitation.

**Writing is a touchstone for our progress in recovery as we move through the Steps.**

It helps us to recognise when we are struggling, signalling that it is time for us to ask the Group or our sponsor for loving guidance and support. Writing enables us to use the results of this process of self-examination to make healthy decisions and sustainable choices. Writing provides a direct path to our core values and helps to keep us connected to them.

**Have you forgiven yourself?**

You did not choose this addiction - it chose you. Although we are responsible for our addiction-related actions, they were the result of choices dictated by our emotional illness. With abstinence we can move away from illness, and towards recovery, one day at a time. With forgiveness we can begin the process of examining our innermost selves, separate from addiction, and begin to make spiritual, value-based choices instead of addiction-based ones.

*Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over gambling,  
that our lives had become unmanageable.*

### **Step 1, Exercise 1: The Twenty Questions**

1. Did you ever lose time from work or school due to gambling?
2. Has gambling ever made your home life unhappy?
3. Did gambling affect your reputation?
4. Have you ever felt remorse after gambling?
5. Did you ever gamble to get money with which to pay debts or solve financial difficulties?
6. Did gambling cause a decrease in your ambition or efficiency?
7. After losing, did you feel you must return as soon as possible to win back your losses?
8. After a win, did you have a strong urge to return and win more?
9. Did you often gamble until your last Pound was gone?
10. Did you ever borrow to finance your gambling?
11. Have you ever sold anything to finance gambling?
12. Were you reluctant to use *gambling money* for normal expenditures?
13. Did gambling make you careless of the welfare of yourself or your family?
14. Did you ever gamble for longer than you had planned?
15. Have you ever gambled to escape worry, trouble, boredom or loneliness?
16. Have you ever committed, or considered committing, an illegal act to finance gambling?
17. Did gambling cause you have to difficulty in sleeping?
18. Do arguments, disappointments or frustrations create within you an urge to gamble?
19. Did you ever have an urge to celebrate any good fortune with a few hours of gambling?
20. Have you ever considered self-destruction or suicide as a result of your gambling?

As you write your answer to each question, pay particular attention to any defensiveness, guilt or hesitation on your part. Search your heart. Does your *yes* answer come from your own experience or the accusations, anger or frustration of others? Is your *no* answer clear, straightforward and completely without strings, or is it hesitant or defensive? Could it be that you're looking for a way to justify, explain or excuse the behaviour rather than simply admit it?

If a question pushes a button, there's probably something there that needs to be looked at honestly and squarely. Now is the time to get it out into the open! Write about it in detail; talk about it with your sponsor and with others in a Steps Meeting. This is the beginning of a process that helps us to identify what's ours and what isn't - this is the "wisdom to know the difference" that we ask for in the Serenity Prayer.

*Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over gambling,  
that our lives had become unmanageable.*

### **Step 1, Exercise 2: Moving Toward Acceptance**

**THE CYCLE OF UNMANAGEABILITY.** We think, “It will be different next casino visit, next poker game, next bet.” Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. Below are some cyclic behaviours that may be familiar to you:

#### In Our Gambling

Chase wins/emotional highs  
Try to recoup losses  
Squander wins  
Frustration  
Emptiness  
Chase wins/emotional highs

#### In Our Lives

Need to escape/need *time out*  
Defensiveness/manipulation/lying  
Justification/self-pity  
Isolation/denial/emotionlessness  
Low self-esteem  
Need to escape/need *time out*

**ILLUSTRATE THE PROGRESSIVE NATURE OF YOUR ADDICTION.** Documenting the progression of the illness can help us prove to ourselves just how powerless we are over it. Write about specific examples from your life that illustrate how your addiction escalated, and how each attempt at controlling it failed.

**THE ILLUSION OF CONTROL OVER OUR GAMBLING.** What behaviours, choices or actions perpetuated your illusions that you had some control over the outcome of your playing or betting? What were the results of these *proofs* that you were in control?

**THE ILLUSION OF CONTROL OVER OUR ADDICTION.** What gambling-related behaviours (e.g. limiting casino visits, never using credit cards, limiting ATM use, leaving with winnings, *big shot* behaviour) perpetuated your illusions of control over your growing obsession? What were the results of these *proofs* that you were in control?

**THE ILLUSION OF CONTROL OVER OUR LIVES.** What behaviours or actions (e.g. attempting to control other people or events, if/then thinking) perpetuate your illusion of control over outcomes in your everyday life? What are the results of these *proofs* that you are in control?

**LETTING GO.** We cling to the illusion (or expectation) that we can (or should be able to) control our gambling. **WE MUST LET IT GO.** The truth is, we are powerless over the addiction. It controls us. It will continue to control us until we surrender.

*Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over gambling,  
that our lives had become unmanageable.*

### **Step 1, Exercise 3: Reality Check**

You may have admitted that you are powerless over gambling, but have you fully accepted it? **Write about any lingering doubts, fears, qualifications, justifications, guilt, blame or rationalisation you may have.**

**Write about any withdrawal symptoms you may be experiencing.** These may include some or all of the following, and may be frequent or intermittent:

- Thinking problems
- Memory problems
- Emotional extremes
- Sleep disturbances
- Physical sensation
- Stress sensitivity

Think about the idea of meeting power vs. willpower. Is the Meeting a power greater than yourself? **Write about specific examples from your experience that illustrate how meeting power succeeds where your own willpower fails.**

*Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over gambling,  
that our lives had become unmanageable.*

### **Step 1, Exercise 4: Empowerment**

#### **Accept Powerlessness, and You Empower Yourself.**

There are certain things in our lives over which we have no power or control, like the passage of time, the actions of others, and the weather.

**Be honest with yourself: are you ready to add gambling to that list?**

**List at least 20 things in your life that are within your control/power. Which of these things will you draw upon most to aid in your recovery?**

**Also write about:**

- The most meaningful thing you learned about yourself through working Step 1.
- One thing for which you've become grateful while working Step 1.
- The kindest thing you've done for yourself recently.

Step 2: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to a normal way of thinking and living.

**Step 2, Exercise 1: Our Thoughts & Behaviours**

<b>GAMBLING</b>	<b>RECOVERY</b>
<b>Abnormal Thoughts</b>	<b>Normal Thoughts</b>
<b>Self-Destructive Behaviours</b>	<b>Healthy Behaviours</b>

*Step 2: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves  
could restore us to a normal way of thinking and living.*

**Step 2, Exercise 2: Our Beliefs & Values**

**Write about:**

1. What happened each time you attempted abstinence on your own before you came to GA?
2. How is your abstinence within the GA programme different?
3. Three core beliefs and/or values which gambling caused you to ignore, abandon or compromise when you were active in your addiction.
4. With your abstinence within the GA programme, have these core beliefs and/or values been restored to you? How do you feel about that? What difference do they make in your life today?

*Step 2: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to a normal way of thinking and living.*

### **Step 2, Exercise 3: Willingness**

Step 2 asks us to open our minds to the possibility that there is a Power greater than ourselves. YOU create YOUR OWN concept of a Higher Power. There can be many sources and inspirations for it: religious upbringing, family tradition, life experiences, group membership, reading, training, travelling. Ultimately, it is a personal, spiritual choice, one of YOUR OWN understanding at this time. Keep in mind that, as the fog from gambling clears and you let go of your need to control people, places and things, that understanding may change, grow or deepen. At this point, we need only **become willing** to make it part of our recovery process.

#### **Write about:**

1. Is your mind open to the possibility of a Power greater than yourself? If not, what things are keeping your mind closed? Pride? Ego? Self-centredness? Stubbornness? Fear? Would you be willing to set them aside, just for today?
2. Have you ever seen a Higher Power at work in the lives of others? Have you ever experienced such a Power at work in your own life?
3. Three things that you believe in and trust today.
4. Belief + Trust = Faith. Does writing about what you believe in and trust give you a sense that there is or could be a force at work in your life beyond your own will? Are you willing to welcome this safe, loving and supportive presence into your recovery?



*Step 2: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to a normal way of thinking and living.*

### **Step 2, Exercise 4: Restoration**

#### **Restoration to a Normal way of Thinking and Living.**

At the start of Step 2, we examined what a normal way of thinking and living might look like, and wrote down some things which were meaningful to us: things like taking better care of ourselves and others, acting with integrity, being accountable, driving safely, eating better, developing healthy diversions, respecting the value of money, becoming more spiritual, achieving balance.

1. **Take another look at your list. Note how many of those things have been restored or begun to be restored to your life. Has willpower alone made it possible or is some other power at work in your life?**

Step 2 allows us to become reacquainted with what we believe in and trust to be true, and moves us in the direction of faith.

2. **Do you have a better sense of what's right for you today? Are you willing to continue to move forwards in faith?**

#### **Write about:**

- The most meaningful thing you learned about yourself through working Step 2.
- Somethings for which you've become grateful while working Step 2.
- Something good/positive you've done for yourself recently.

*Step 3: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to care of this Power of our own understanding.*

### **Step 3, Exercise 1: Surrender**

Step 3 asks us to surrender, to turn our will and our lives over **to the care of** our Higher Power. Notice that the Step says **care of**, not control of. There's ease, gentleness, comfort and support in this kind of surrender. Step 3 asks us to make a commitment to let go our stubborn, habitual or irrational need or desire to control things that are clearly beyond our control. These are "the things we cannot change" - like the actions of others, the weather, the passage of time and our compulsive gambling. By allowing our benevolent guiding spirit or Higher Power to handle these things, we free ourselves up to address the things that are within our control. These are all the things we listed in Step 1, Exercise 4, like remaining abstinent, attending meetings, being honest, finding spirituality, achieving balance. If we allow ourselves to be **cared for** in matters over which we have no control, we can direct our energies to effecting change within ourselves.

- 1. Write about three things you could lose - or you're afraid you could lose - if you were to make a decision to turn your will and your life over to the care of a Higher Power. Write about three things you could gain.**

How do we become willing to open our minds and hearts to the benevolent guidance of a Higher Power? We can start within the programme itself. Many of us in GA have come to experience the meetings and the Fellowship as a Power greater than ourselves. Through sponsorship we can align ourselves with members who practice the principles of the programme and embody its spirit,

- 2. Do you have a sponsor? If yes, write about how the relationship connects you to GA and supports you in your life. If no, list the qualities you would look for in a sponsor, and write about how a nurturing relationship with someone in GA could enhance your recovery. Are you willing to make a commitment to choosing a sponsor within the next 60 days?**

*Step 3: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to care of this Power of our own understanding.*

### **Step 3, Exercise 2: Wisdom**

Surrendering our will to our Higher Power enables us to know our Higher Power's will for us. Letting go of our need to control (or be controlled) opens the door for us to develop the wisdom to know the difference between the things we *can* change and the things we *can't*. Because we're not attempting to exert our will, acquiesce to the will of others or force an outcome, we are empowered to see situations as they really are, determine whether our participation is appropriate, assess our options and make productive choices.

#### **Write about:**

- 1. Does surrendering your will mean sacrificing your independence? Even if it does, might it not be worth it?**
- 2. On what do you usually base your decisions? Anger? Intuition? Fear? Logic? How has that worked for you in the past? Is it working for you now? Are you willing to consider another path?**
- 3. What does the phrase "do the right thing" mean to you? How does it work? Cite a recent example from your life.**

*Step 3: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to care of this Power of our own understanding.*

### **Step 3, Exercise 3: Self-Awareness**

We've looked at how surrendering our will relates to our independence. Now let's look at how it relates to our feelings. Often, our need to control situations or exercise our will encourages us to manage, manipulate, distort, deny, excuse or bury our feelings, rather than experience them. Within the next week, choose a situation in your life and make a conscious decision to let go of your need to control it (as long as doing so will not harm yourself or others) and then follow through on it. Allow yourself to feel whatever comes up as you formulate and act on the decision. Observe your feelings as best you can.

Write about:

- 1. How did it feel when you let go of your need to control the situation? Be specific.**
- 2. Your willingness is the key to letting go. Would you be willing to let go again in the same or a different situation, regardless of the outcome?**

When we let go of our habitual need to control (or be controlled), we're also freed to look within ourselves and examine our true nature. The process allows us to connect or reconnect with our spirituality and with personal interests and passions that can enrich and balance our lives in recovery.

- 3. Are you feeling more connected to your spiritual nature? How has this connection changed the way you feel about yourself? How do you feel about yourself?**
- 4. What interests, hobbies or passions have you discovered or rediscovered in recovery? How have they added to your life? Are there any you might like to explore in the future?**

*Step 3: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to care of this Power of our own understanding.*

### **Step 3, Exercise 4: Decisions**

In Step 3, we've written about and discussed important aspects of our independence, including self-will, self-reliance, defiance, false pride, arrogance and our need to control.

**1. Have you continued to surrender your will and let go of your need to control people, places and situations? How do you feel when you do so?**

Paradoxically, as we gain recovery and make progress in GA, overconfidence may set in. We may begin to feel like “our old selves” and conclude that our problems are solved. In Step 3, several additional aspects of independence may appear, like **impatience** (nothing seems to be moving fast enough), **intolerance** (focussing on the perceived faults or shortcomings of other) and **immaturity** (“the rules don't apply to me”). No coincidence: they're all tell-tale signs of overconfidence. It's also no coincidence that these thinking patterns start with the letter *i*. As much as we'd like to put the onus on others, the people, places or situations we're struggling with, focussing on and judging have everything to do with *i* and very little to do with *them*. The trick is to notice the thinking before we act on it.

**2. Are you experiencing any of this *i* thinking? How are you dealing with it?**

Step 3 asks us to make a decision to surrender our will to the care of our Higher Power. If the request seems too intimidating, we can start by simply deciding **to be willing** to make a decision. We can choose to remain open **to the idea** of surrender. We can continue to use the GA programme and Fellowship as our Higher Power, if that's more comfortable. Remember, it is a Power **of our own understanding** with which we desire to connect, and our understanding may change and evolve if we seek help, trust others and remain open and willing.

When we decide, the decision probably will not be universal. Most of us will make it many times and in countless different situations. We may decide to test it, only to take it back when the outcome is not our liking. We may convince ourselves that we're too time-pressed to turn it over, resolving to “do it later”. We may pick & choose, letting go in minor, inconsequential situations, but holding on in important ones. But if, gradually we can **become willing to make the decision** one day, one hour, one situation, one person at a time, eventually it will become second nature, a more open, humble and accepting nature that can support us in living life on life's terms.

**3. Are you willing to continue the journey through Step 4's searching and fearless self-inventory in partnership with a Higher Power of your own understanding?**

*Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral and financial inventory of ourselves.*

**Step 4 Preparation Exercise:  
Write your “Gambling Autobiography”**

Go back in your memory as far as necessary - to childhood, if appropriate - to identify the history of your relationship with gambling. What’s your earliest memory or experience of betting, wagering or gambling? You may not have been a participant, merely an observer. What do you remember most about the experience? Can you recall how you felt about it at the time? Did it capture your interest or stir your emotions? Did the activity itself appear acceptable and innocent or dangerous and taboo? What part did the incident play in your forming and early opinion about gambling?

**Start with your first recollection and write about it and all subsequent incidents and experiences with gambling throughout your life. Notice whether, along the way, you had a sense of your attitude and participation as *normal* with regard to gambling. When did you first notice changes in your attitude towards gambling and/or your involvement in it? Did other people bring those changes to your attention? How did you feel and respond when they did? What behaviours did you develop? Also notice whether your changing attitude(s) toward gambling or the gambling itself began to affect choices/behaviours in other areas of your life. Use specific examples!**

Creating a “gambling autobiography” enables us to paint a clear picture of ourselves as compulsive gamblers. We may learn that we were *normal* gamblers who became compulsive. Or we may notice that compulsiveness or some indications of it were present almost from the start. By chronicling our gambling history, we can trace the formation of the guilt and shame we carry today. We may begin to see how our early attitudes towards, and experiences of, gambling are connected to our present-day choices/behaviours. Most importantly, we can start to identify the specific character defects - self-delusion, big shot-ism, lying, stealing, manipulation, pride, irresponsibility, wastefulness, self-pity, isolation, greed, jealousy, resentment, laziness, impatience, arrogance - that made it possible for that guilt to accumulate.

*Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral and financial inventory of ourselves.*

### **Step 4, Exercise 1: Character**

CHARACTER = BEHAVIOUR + PERSONALITY + MORALITY

Our character determines how we deal (or fail to deal) with our feelings and emotions. In examining our character, we need to be willing to identify how/when we have hurt others. Only then can we acknowledge our actions, make amends and move on. And what about hurting ourselves? Many aspects of character begin as defences, born in response to circumstances in which wrongs have been done to us, only to evolve over time into a pattern of self-destructive habits/behaviours which we believe we need for our security. As we look to identify the guilt we carry, we also have an opportunity to recognise how we have hurt ourselves.

**Go back over your “gambling autobiography” and your life. Identify specific situations from which you are carrying guilt or remorse for your behaviours/actions. Also identify specific situations from which you are harbouring anger, resentment, pain or sadness. Just note them for now; you’ll refer to them in more detail in later Steps.**

Read from page 1 to the top of 6 in *A Guide to Fourth Step Inventory*. Before you tackle Question 1 on page 6, make a candid assessment of yourself. Is your natural tendency towards high self-esteem, self-righteousness or pride? If yes, start with your character defects or weaknesses. Are you more prone to low self-esteem, depression or worry? If yes, start with your character assets or strengths.

**Firstly, list your character traits as Question 1 asks. Secondly, identify your *top five* in each column. Thirdly, pick two traits, one from each column, to examine in detail. Lastly, write about each of these two traits in Questions 2, 3 & 4.**

*Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral and financial inventory of ourselves.*

### **Step 4, Exercise 2: Feelings**

In Step 4, Exercise 1, we identified some major components of our character. Hopefully, we've begun to see how our defects may have created recurring difficulties in our lives while our strengths seem to have eased our journey. As we learn to rely on our strengths and remove our defects, we can begin to create new, healthy relationships, environments and situations.

Now let's take a look at how we deal (or fail to deal) with the feelings and emotions, positive and negative, that are triggered by people, places or things. In this Exercise, we have an opportunity to admit how well or badly we've dealt with our feeling and emotions in the past, and make a decision to deal with them more appropriately today and in the future.

**Read pages 12 to 14 in *A Guide to Fourth Step Inventory*. Write your answers to Questions 1 to 6 and then move on to the *mini-formula*. For Topic 2 in the *mini-formula*, start your writing with specific situations that you identified in Step 4, Exercise 1 (the ones from which you are harbouring anger, resentment, pain or sadness) and move on to other situations/feelings from there.**



*Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral and financial inventory of ourselves.*

### **Step 4, Exercise 3: Dollars and Sense**

The goals of Step 4 are to uncover our burden of guilt and move towards achieving balance in all areas of our lives. Through the previous writing exercises in Step 4, we've begun to see how our character defects (or defences) have created recurring difficulties in our lives, including how we've dealt poorly with (or denied completely) our feelings and emotions. Similarly, we've begun to see how our character strengths have supported us. Now let's look at how the major components of our character (weaknesses and strengths) contribute to our material situation.

For most of us, our financial lives have become unmanageable. A financial inventory is called for, but we will not itemise debits and credits. We will not list the money used, borrowed or embezzled to finance our gambling, nor will we dwell on the amounts of money won or lost. A Pressure-Relief Meeting may be of help for these issues. Instead, we will trace our lifelong experiences and relationships with money. We need to be able to separate our thinking about money and financial responsibility from the effects of gambling, lest we delude ourselves that abstinence alone will solve our financial difficulties. Just as we have an opportunity to bring about a character change from within ourselves, we can change the way we relate to money. As with our feelings and emotions, our goal is to recognise our old behaviours and patterns and leave them in the past. Free of the financial drain caused by gambling, we can decide to deal with our finances realistically and appropriately today and in the future.

- 1. Write a “financial autobiography” that chronicles your experiences and relationships with money or finances, including saving, investing, borrowing, spending, and the acquisition of property and possessions. Identify your attitudes, feelings, expectations, behaviours and habits with regard to money and financial security.**

Some questions to consider as you write: to what lengths have you been willing to go to acquire money or accumulate wealth or possessions? Have you used money to improve your life? Have you used money to fill emotional, psychological or other needs? How have your character defects contributed to your financial instability?

- 2. Write about how working on the elimination of your character defects and drawing on your strengths could have a positive effect on how you relate to money and deal with finances. Can you envision a time when you might be able to trust yourself to manage your financial affairs in a responsible way? What steps must you take to get there?**
- 3. Make a separate list of any guilt that you are harbouring - either from the past, from your gambling days, or currently - in relation to your financial situation.**

*Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral and financial inventory of ourselves.*

#### **Step 4, Exercise 4: Priorities**

Through the writing exercises in Step 4, we're moving closer to achieving balance between who we are and how we operate in the world. We've identified our five major character weaknesses/defects, resolved to change them within ourselves, and selected one defect with which to begin. We've noted our major character assets, from which we will draw strength. We've listed the feelings and emotions that cause problems for us, and identified healthier, more constructive ways to deal with them. We've examined our financial history and discovered that we can change our old attitudes, behaviours and habits towards money, learn to trust ourselves again, and deal with our finances more healthily, realistically and appropriately today and in the future.

Of course, it can be stressful to implement changes, especially within oneself. That's why prioritisation of the major areas of our lives is so important.

**This week, read Part 2: *Priorities - Principles and Responsibilities* from the bottom of page 7 to the middle of page 10 in *A Guide to Fourth Step Inventory*. Write your answers to the questions posed in Priorities 1-3 (Abstinence, Higher Power and Family).**

**Next week, continue reading Part 2: *Priorities - Principles and Responsibilities* from the middle of page 10 to the middle of page 12. Write your answers to the questions posed in Priorities 4-7 (Job/Profession, Goals/Dreams, Friends/Neighbours/Community/Country and Special Interests).**

*Step 5: Admitted to ourselves and to another human being  
the exact nature of our wrongs.*

### **Step 5, Preparation Exercise**

In Step 4, we made a searching and fearless moral and financial inventory of ourselves. We identified and wrote in detail about our personal strengths and defects. We noticed how these defects created problems, dictated our choices, and formed patterns of destructive and self-destructive behaviour throughout our lives, affecting our relationships with our parents, spouses, siblings, children, relatives, teachers, friends, employers, co-workers and, perhaps most importantly, our Higher Power.

**Write about:**

**Have you begun to change your patterns of behaviour as a result of Step 4? In what ways?**

**What has working Step 4 meant to your life?**

Step 5 (“Admitted to ourselves and another human being the exact nature of our wrongs”) isn’t about forgetting our wrongs; it’s about putting our guilt over them into perspective. Carrying a heavy burden of guilt stops us from moving forwards. We need to let go of our guilt and leave it in the past so we can focus on our lives today.

**Write about:**

**Have you forgiven yourself for your illness and the damage it caused? Have you come to terms with the true nature of the illness and your powerlessness over it?**

**Are you still carrying guilt? Are you willing to put it into perspective?**

**Are you willing to admit your defects to another human being, knowing that it’s the first step to letting go of your guilt over the wrongs that resulted from them? Do you feel you deserve to be freed from the guilt? If not, what must you do to allow yourself to feel deserving of being freed from it?**

*Step 5: Admitted to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*

### **Step 5, Exercise 1**

Honesty, open-mindedness and humility are three keys to making Step 5 smooth and productive.

**Are you more honest, open-minded and humble after having worked Step 4? In what ways? What relationships, activities, realisations and choices have contributed to your growth in these areas? Write about how you intend to keep yourself honest, open-minded and humble as you take the action suggested in Step 5.**

The person with whom you do Step 5 should fill two needs. He or she should have the wisdom and experience to receive your admittance in a helpful, supportive and nurturing way, and he or she should be someone you can trust to respect your confidentiality. It could be a sponsor, a member of the clergy, a mentor, a counsellor, a close friend. It could be someone in the GA programme or in another 12-Step programme. It could be someone who's familiar with the Steps, or not. The choice is yours.

**Have you decided to whom you will admit the exact nature of your wrongs? Why are you choosing that person? If you have not yet chosen a specific person, write about the qualities you want that person to have; this may help you to choose.**

*Step 5: Admitted to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*

### **Step 5, Exercise 2**

Review your *top five* character defects - you'll talk about them in your Step 5 admittance.

Review your *top five* character strengths - you'll need to draw on them in your Step 5 admittance.

Identify any guilt you are carrying. It need not be related to gambling, although some of it may be. **Write about the specific wrongs, behaviours or actions (e.g. lying, neglect of self or family, criminal acts, suicidal thoughts) from which your guilty feelings arise. Then write about how your life could be without the guilt. Can you live with not having to punish yourself anymore?**

**Decide with whom you will make your Step 5 admittance. Enlist his/her co-operation, schedule a good time and place to get together, and then just do it.**

*Step 5: Admitted to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*

### **Step 5, Exercise 3**

**Write about:**

**Have you made your Step 5 admittance?** Has your burden of guilt lightened? Have you gained humility? How do you feel today emotionally, spiritually and mentally?

**Are you developing new resolves today while living one day at a time; that is, are you making plans without planning outcomes? What are some of them?**

**Are you more honest, open-minded and willing to change and grow today? How do you know?**

*Step 6: Were entirely ready to have these defects of character removed.*

### **Step 6, Exercise 1**

**Write about the thoughts, tools, resources and actions that help you maintain serenity. You will need to draw on them as you work through Step 6.**

Step 6 is best accomplished one defect at a time. Review your list from Step 4 and choose one defect with which to begin.

**Which defect have you chosen? How has it affected your life in the past? What benefits will its removal bring to your life in recovery?**

*Step 6: Were entirely ready to have these defects of character removed.*

### **Step 6, Exercise 2**

Write about:

**Has your readiness/intention to remove your character defect made you more aware of it when it surfaces? Have you begun to change your behaviours, choices and actions? How?**

**Are you getting any comments from others regarding your character changes or improvements? Have you received any positive feedback? Have you met with any resistance? How do you feel about it?**

**Regarding your other character defects/defences, are there any with which you find yourself unwilling to part? What's holding you back?**



*Step 7: Humbly asked God (of our understanding) to remove our shortcomings.*

**Step 7, Exercise 1**

Write about:

**How do you interpret your Higher Power's will for you?**

**Do you feel that your life has meaning and purpose?**

**What does the word *humility* mean to you? Has your view of it changed since joining GA?**

**How does humility manifest itself in your behaviour and actions today? Give specific examples. How will you keep it in your life as your recovery progresses?**

*Step 7: Humbly asked God (of our understanding) to remove our shortcomings.*

### **Step 7, Exercise 2**

Write about:

**Do you have a *one day at a time* plan for asking for help in removing the character defect that you targeted in Step 6? What is it?**

**Are you willing to continue to apply Steps 6 and 7 to your other defects? How do you intend to continue the process?**

**Are you more honest, tolerant and loving towards yourself and others today? Describe how you will use these qualities to work Step 8.**

*Step 8: Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.*

### **Step 8, Exercise 1**

Write about:

**In what ways (spiritually, emotionally, mentally, physically, financially) did you harm yourself through gambling? List and write about them. Be specific.**

**Make a detailed list of all others you harmed through your gambling. Describe how you harmed them. Be specific.**

(Note: If you are working the Steps for a second, third, or more time, you may have already addressed some, or all, of your gambling-related harms. If that is the case, identify and list any ways in which your more recent behaviours and actions may have harmed you or others.)

*Step 8: Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.*

### **Step 8, Exercise 2**

Write about:

**Review your lists from Step 8, Exercise 1. Are you carrying any guilt or shame over the harm you did to others? Are you still angry or blaming others for the harm done to you? Write about your feelings of guilt, shame, anger or blame.**

**Choose a way (visually, symbolically, spiritually or physically) to release your feelings of guilt, shame, anger or blame. Describe this process of letting go and how you felt afterward.**

**Are there any legal or financial situations you created while gambling with which you will need additional assistance or support to make direct amends/repayments? Are you willing to ask for help with them (e.g. from a sponsor, Pressure-Relief Meeting, employer, court system, bank/creditor)?**

*Step 9: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible,  
except when to do so would injure them or others.*

### **Step 9, Exercise 1**

The thought of making amends raises the fear of consequences and the shame of apologising. The act of making amends creates the hope of forgiveness and the joy of freedom.

**If you haven't already forgiven yourself, face yourself in the mirror and do so now. Describe your feelings afterwards.**

**Are you willing to make amends to yourself and others now? If not, what do you need to do to become willing?**

*Step 9: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*

### **Step 9, Exercise 2**

**Review your lists from Step 5, Exercise 1 (of harm done to yourself and others) and write out how you intend to make your amends to each person on the list.** For example, if you embezzled money, indicate how you will make restitution. If you neglected yourself or your family, lied to a loved one, abandoned a friendship, or duped your employer, indicate how you intend to acknowledge it (in person, wherever possible, or by telephone or in an audiotape, videotape or letter).

**Prioritise your list of amends to be made, starting with those to yourself, and then, one by one, begin to make them. Write about how you feel as you move through the process.**

**Are there any people to whom you owe amends, who could be injured in some way by your making amends? If yes, how can you reconcile it and move on?** (For example, you might write a letter of apology to them but not send it, or you could make an anonymous charitable donation in their name.)

*Step 10: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.*

**Step 10, Exercise 1: Daily Inventory**

<b>Date</b>	<b>3 Things I Did Well</b>	<b>3 Things I Could Have Done Better</b>

*Step 10: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.*

### **Step 10, Exercise 2**

Write about:

**What insights have you gained from doing the *Daily Inventory* for a week?**

Acknowledge areas of growth, achievement and progress.

**Are you promptly admitting when you are wrong? If not, what are the barriers to your doing so?** (For example: denial, ego, pride, and justification.)

**Are you living in a more spiritual way - that is with kindness, generosity, honesty and humility?** Be watchful for any patterns of selfishness, dishonesty, resentment or fear.

**How do you intend to continue to practice Step 10?** (For example, do a daily, nightly or weekly inventory; schedule a review or reality check with your sponsor.)

**Have you developed constructive ways of releasing/expressing feelings? If yes, what are they? If no, what could work for you that you would be willing to make a part of your Step 10 practice?**

**Are you taking better care of yourself and minimising stress in your life?** Give specific examples.



*Step 11: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.*

### **Step 11, Exercise 1**

Review your writings from Step 2, Exercises 3 and 4, and Step 3, Exercises 1 and 2.

Write about:

**Has your willingness to turn your will and your life over to your Higher Power created miracles in your life?** Give specific examples of the miraculous differences you have experienced in your journey through the Steps.

**Has your open-mindedness improved? Are you asking for and accepting help from others in the programme and in your life?** Give specific examples of how you are asking for, and acceptance of, help have contributed to your recovery.

*Step 11: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.*

### **Step 11, Exercise 2**

Through prayer you can communicate with your Higher Power and ask to know your Higher Power's will for you. In meditation, you can release and surrender your own will and receive your Higher Power's answers.

How you improve and maintain conscious contact with your Higher Power is YOUR CHOICE. Only YOU can decide how much time to devote to it, how often to do it, and what form the practice/ritual will take. Step 11 asks you to make those decisions and then commit to making those practices a part of your daily life.

Write about:

**Are your prayers based on spiritual objectives or are you praying for material gain or intervention? Do you have a prayer practice? Describe it.**

**Have you embraced the practice of meditation? Describe how you quieten your mind.**

**How will you keep the practice of prayer and meditation alive in your daily life? What is your greatest source of personal satisfaction today? Peace of mind? Freedom? Integrity? Choice? Attitude towards others? Spirituality?**

*Step 12: Having made an effort to practice these principles in all our affairs, we tried to carry this message to other compulsive gamblers.*

### **Step 12, Exercise 1**

Write about:

**Are you practicing the 12 Steps in your life, one day at a time?** Give specific examples.

Step 12 involves showing that we care for other compulsive gamblers. We demonstrate caring through our words and our actions. **What words and actions of yours demonstrate your caring for your GA brothers and sisters and for compulsive gamblers who still suffer?** Give specific examples.

**How will you balance carrying the message to others with taking care of yourself and your own recovery?** Give specific examples.

*Step 12: Having made an effort to practice these principles in all our affairs, we tried to carry this message to other compulsive gamblers.*

### **Step 12, Exercise 2**

As the Q&A booklet reminds us, the greatest challenge with which we will be faced is that of bringing about a personality change from within ourselves. This challenge **should be worked on immediately and continued throughout our lives**, through the practice of the Twelve Steps of Recovery.

After having worked all 12 Steps, ask yourself these questions:

1. **Am I still powerless over gambling?**
2. **Do I believe that a Power greater than myself can restore me to a normal way of thinking and living?**
3. **Have I made a decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of this Power of my own understanding?**
4. **Have I made a searching and fearless moral and financial inventory of myself?**
5. **Have I admitted to myself and another human being the exact nature of my wrongs?**
6. **Am I entirely ready to have these defects of character removed?**
7. **Have I asked my Higher Power to remove my shortcomings?**
8. **Have I made a list of all persons I have harmed?**
9. **Have I made amends to all the people on my list?**
10. **Have I continued to take personal inventory and, when I was wrong, promptly admitted it?**
11. **Have I improved my conscious contact with my Higher Power?**
12. **Am I carrying the message of recovery to other compulsive gamblers?**

If you answered no to any of the above, or if you have any doubts, please take this opportunity to look inside yourself and see what's holding you back. This exercise may help you to become more willing to commit to doing the work that will enable you to answer yes to all of these questions.

Now, ask yourself and answer one more question:

**Am I willing to work the 12 Steps again, starting with Step 1?**

## **What is the GA Recovery Programme?**

When compulsive gamblers apply the 12 Step GA Recovery Programme in their lives, disintegration stops and unification begins. These steps are basically spiritual in their concept and their practice can be highly rewarding. These are the steps which are suggested as a programme of recovery:

1. We admitted we were powerless over gambling that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to a normal way of thinking and living.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of this Power of our own understanding.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral and financial inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have these defects of character removed.
7. Humbly asked God (of our understanding) 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 understand him), praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having made an effort to practise these principles in all our affairs, we tried to carry this message to other compulsive gamblers.

No one claims these steps are in any way original to GA. They reflect practical experience and application of spiritual insights, as recorded by thoughtful men in many ages. Their greatest importance lies in the fact that they work.

They enable us and thousands of others to lead happy, productive lives. They represent the foundation upon which our society has been built.

They were given to us freely, for which we are grateful.

## **What is the Unity Programme?**

Unity is the most precious quality our society possesses. Our lives and the lives of all to come depend squarely upon it. Yet unity in GA cannot automatically sustain itself. Like personal recovery, it demands honesty, open-mindedness and, above all, vigilance. In the words of Benjamin Franklin, when he expressed his opinion that unity was essential to achieve victory in the American War of Independence; "We must hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately." So there can be no sacrifice too great if it will strengthen our essential unity.

In maintaining unity, we have begun to traditionally practise the following principles:

1. Our common welfare should come first, personal recovery depends upon GA unity.
2. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.
3. The only requirements for GA membership is a desire to stop gambling.
4. Each group shall be self-governing except in matters affecting other groups or GA as a whole.
5. GA has but one primary purpose - to carry the message to the compulsive gambler who still suffers.
6. GA should never endorse, finance, or lend the GA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every GA group ought to be self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. GA should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centres may employ special workers.
9. GA as such ought never to be organised, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. GA has no opinion on outside issues; hence the GA name ought never to be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion, we must always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films and television.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of the GA Recovery Programme, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.



*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.*



[www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk](http://www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk)