

SURVIVAL

AA tradition states that working Steps 1 – 3 insures our survival.

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Step 1

Studying the Steps is not the same as taking the Steps. In the "Beginners' Classes" you take the steps. The Big Book says, "Here are the steps we took" not "here are the steps we read and talked about." The AA pioneers proved that action, not knowledge, produced the spiritual awakening that resulted in recovery from alcoholism or addiction.

Big Book Sponsorship Guide
4-Hour 12 Steps

**Triangle Area SAA
Recovery Manual Steps 1 - 9
Track 1**

Introduction to Step 1

In our addiction we held on to the belief that we were in control of our sexual behavior and could successfully manage our lives. This kept many of us from seeing that we even had a problem. We told ourselves that if we tried harder, we could have stopped. But our experience has shown otherwise. No matter how many promises or resolutions we made, no matter how strong our efforts and our determination, the behaviors eventually returned, along with their painful consequences. Only when we admit our powerlessness over these behaviors, and our inability to manage our lives, are we able to begin walking a path of recovery.

In taking the First Step, we admit that our addiction is destroying us, and that we are unable to stop it. We surrender, raise the white flag, and accept the battle is over. The principle behind this admission is honesty. For many of us, the first crack in our denial comes with hitting bottom, and the despair of facing an unbearable situation. The next breakthrough occurs when we are honest enough to take the First Step, acknowledging that we are powerless over the behavior that brought us to this point and that our lives are in shambles. We make this admission without excuses or rationalizations. With the First Step, we stop lying to ourselves.

Introduction - *Sex Addicts Anonymous* handbook, page 22

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What Is Step 1? (*We cannot.*)

Write Step 1 from memory:

If you have not committed it to memory, stop now. Memorize it.

It makes no sense for you to try to work a Step if you do not know what it says.

This is no time for half-measures.

Remember what is at stake.

Find someone at the Retreat to help you memorize it. This should take all of five (5) minutes.

Write Step 1 from memory

Continue when you have it memorized.

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What Is Step 1 Asking?

Read the section on Step 1 in the *SAA Green Book*, the *AA Big Book*, and the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of AA* (usually referred to as the *Twelve and Twelve*) several times beforehand.

Every Step requires we take specific action. Take a moment to consider Step 1.

Write Step 1:

Draw a circle around the words you think are the most important in Step 1. Why did you select them?

Keeping those words in mind, what is the Step asking you to do? Please write this out.

Each Step in the program calls us to adopt new principles to guide our thinking and daily actions. What principles is Step 1 founded on?

Step 1 invites us to adopt and to practice daily the following principles: ***Honesty, humility, self-acceptance, open-mindedness, and willingness***. What can you begin to do **now** to practice these principles in your life?

Discuss these responses with your facilitator.

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To understand what Step 1 asks you to do, it helps to know the origin of the 12 Steps. The first point of interest is that originally there were only 6 Steps.

<http://hindsfoot.org/steps6.html>

1. ***Complete deflation.***
2. Dependence and guidance from a Higher Power.
3. Moral inventory.
4. Confession.
5. Restitution.
6. Continued work with other alcoholics.

What do you think they meant by “Complete deflation?”

The goal was for the alcoholic to break through the shell of pride, ego and selfishness that kept him from seeing what he was doing. Only when the alcoholic accepts responsibility for the great harm he has done to those who love and care for him would he be humble enough to ask for and accept help. He would be “deflated.”

Step 1 should lead you to a similar breakthrough because:

- You are writing Step 1 for an audience of **one**. You are writing it for **yourself**.
- When **you** read your 1st Step presentation, **you** will hear **your** voice reading **your** own words describe how terribly **you** have wounded **yourself** and those around **you**.
- In the process you will convince yourself that you are powerless over your compulsive sexual behavior and that your life is unmanageable.

Step work is difficult because the Program insists that we confront, examine, reveal, and ultimately understand the very things we used sex to numb or forget.

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What Does A Good Step 1 Look Like?

Common Elements

Addiction has a deep root. For all of us it began in our earliest years and progressed steadily, growing in intensity over time. Because addiction develops in this predictable manner, 1st Steps tend to have many common elements regardless of the approach used to write them. These are a few of the most commonly shared experiences:

- An introductory review of these childhood topics:
 - What we learned from our family and closest friends about intimacy, honest communications, sex, love, displaying emotions, and the like;
 - When we first learned about pornography and masturbation;
 - When our secret life of shame began and when we started lying about it.
- Adolescence and early adulthood:
 - How we found it difficult to talk with the people we found attractive;
 - Feeling less than, fearful, anxious became a part of our daily thinking;
 - Our first sexual encounter;
 - How years of acting out made sex in the real world difficult;
 - The escalating nature of our addiction:
 - More intense porn / More time watching porn
 - Prostitutes / Massage parlors
 - Having sex in increasingly risky places;
 - Lying to everyone about this
- Adulthood to maturity:
 - How uncontrolled acting out costs us our
 - Jobs
 - Friendships
 - Marriages
 - Calculate Financial / Health / Security Costs
 - Money spent on prostitutes, pornography, and websites.
 - Hours spent in front of the computer
 - Diseases caught and the cost to treat them;
 - Infecting others;
 - Being arrested;
 - Increased use of drugs, alcohol, etc.
- Hitting bottom
 - Getting caught
 - Admitting you need help
 - Getting a therapist; coming to SAA

A 1st Step should be completely honest and as long as you need it to be. Then you edit your 1st Step into a presentation that describes powerlessness and unmanageability but is not triggering to the audience. A 1st Step that covers these themes is usually 20 to 30 minutes long.

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Different Ways to Work Step 1

We describe four methods to work Step 1.

Each will be described in greater detail in this section.

- Share one you wrote while in treatment.
- Use a published workbook like *Facing the Shadow*.
- Go for it and start writing.
- Use your sexual history and inner circles.

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Share One You Wrote While In Treatment

This approach builds on work done at a treatment center.

Treatment centers vary in length of time and use related but not identical treatment modalities.

All detoxify by keeping the addict in a controlled environment where access to triggering agents (e.g. pornographic material) is impossible.

Centers combine detoxification with professionally mediated group sessions where an addict is confronted with the harsh realities of compulsive destructive sexual behavior.

Homework is mandatory and includes writing about one's addiction, its onset, its steady progression, its cost in dollars and in the suffering the addict inflicts on himself and his family.

The endpoint is the same: To help the addict break through denial and help the addict identify and put in practice survival strategies / coping mechanisms before returning to their home environment.

Sharing one's writing is a common practice, and it is not unusual for someone in treatment to write most if not all of a reliable Step 1.

If you attended a treatment center and have your original work with you, you should be ready to give your Step 1.

Schedule your Step 1 sooner rather than later.

If you did not give your Step 1 at the treatment center and are unsure if what you have written persuasively demonstrates powerless and unmanageability, ask

- A facilitator to work with you;
- Someone in your home meeting who has worked Step 1 to review your work and give you feedback;
- If you can, take 10 minutes to read what you have. Ask for feedback. Build on it.

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Use a Published Workbook

There are several books on the market designed to help an addict get sober and work the Steps.

Some are generic in format, meaning they can be used to treat more than one type of addiction.

Some are sex addiction specific, like *Facing the Shadow* by Carnes.

If you own a workbook that includes a guide to writing a 1st Step and you feel prepared to present it, ask someone to read it first.

Remember: For a 1st Step to be effective, it must contain undeniable evidence of powerlessness and unmanageability.

Ask someone who has worked Step 1 if your work meets this requirement.

By asking someone to review your work, you practice humility, surrendering, and trust.

These are good things.

By agreeing to review someone's Step work, you practice compassion, understanding, and encouragement.

These are good things, too.

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Go For It and Start Writing

Some people come to SAA in such incredible pain and in such direct contact with the destructive nature of their disease that they can immediately start writing.

If you believe you can begin to write your Step 1 right away, re-read the section titled *Common Elements* on page 49 and use it as a general outline.

Re-reading the stories in the *SAA Green Book* will also help you organize your ideas into a compelling and honest reporting.

Ask two or three people who have worked Step 1 to read your story. Ask them if it proves that you are powerless over addictive sexual behavior and your life has become unmanageable. Listen closely to what they say. Take notes.

When you have your first draft prepared, schedule a ten-minute reading with your facilitator. A common, shared fear about disclosing our shameful acting out is that we will be judged, rejected and condemned. By reading even a few pages of our Step 1 out loud, we:

- Confront the fear of rejection,
- Receive the love, understanding and support of our companions,
- Inch our way from shame to grace; and
- Time the length of the speech.

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Use Your Sexual History and Inner Circles

Most newcomers to the Program are overwhelmed by the thought of writing Step 1. Common complaints are, “Where do I start?” “What do I include?” “How do I know when I have written enough?”

This approach provides more structured guidance than the other three. In it you combine your sexual history with your Inner Circles in the form of a table.

A sexual history is a summary of a person’s personal experiences with sex, how they discovered it, learned about it, used it to escape difficulties, and ultimately became addicted to it.

A good approach is to divide your life into segments, perhaps start with birth to 10 years old, 11-20 years old, as so on. Other possible categories are childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and high school, college, relationships, etc. It is a good idea to discuss your approach with a facilitator, sponsor, or so-sponsor before you start.

How This Approach Works:

- The history is in a table format, with each column representing a decade of your life starting with infancy on the far left.
- **The final column on the far right contains your Inner Circle (IC) behaviors.** Use your Middle Circle behaviors if you only have a few IC behaviors.
- Once this is done, ask yourself this question: *How did I go from being an innocent child on the far left to the sex addict on the far right who cannot stop the compulsive Inner Circle behaviors?*
- Think about the question carefully and then fill the columns in with the activities that lead to your compulsive behavior.
- If you do not know where to start refer to the section titled *Common Threads*. It mentions sexual experiences most sex addicts have had.
- Enter the events as **bullets** in each column. Avoid the temptation to write in detail about these events. You will examine these events more deeply in Step 4. For now, log the event using a short phrase. This will minimize the possibility this exercise will cause you to act out.
- ENTER AS MANY EVENTS AS YOU CAN.

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Age 0 – 9	Age 10 – 19	Age 20 – 29	Age 30 – 39	Inner & Middle Circle
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Only child of abusive alcoholic father and submissive mother ▪ Lived in fear and learned to “behave” to avoid being punished. ▪ No positive reinforcement or emotional support ever. ▪ Trusted no one. ▪ Lonely all the time. ▪ Felt ashamed because everyone knew about my Dad. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Played show and fell with a neighbor. I felt shame but also wanted to do it again. ▪ Found my father’s stash of pornography. Took several and hid them under my bed. ▪ Felt shame when I looked at the porn but when I threw it away I always went back to get it. ▪ Began to compulsively masturbate sometimes for hours. It relieved the loneliness and made me feel great. ▪ Shared my porn stash with friends. Felt superior. ▪ Began to date. It was awful. I never got anywhere and my friends always said they did. ▪ Got drunk at a party and slept with a stranger. I do not remember it at all. ▪ Lied and told all my friends it had been amazing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I was a loner in college. ▪ Met my future wife at a bar. We went home that night. The next day she wanted to stay with me. No girl had ever done that before so I agreed. ▪ She pursued me and moved in the next month. ▪ Became engaged because I thought this would help me to stop masturbating and looking at porn. ▪ Fiancé found my porn stash and demanded I quit. Promised I would but I did not. ▪ Started going to massage parlor. Spent \$ → \$\$ ▪ Went to massage parlor the night before my wedding. ▪ Began emotional relationships with co-workers. Spent \$ on dinners / gifts ▪ Spent \$\$ upgrading memberships on porn sites. ▪ Stayed up until 2 -3 pm masturbating. ▪ Lied to my fiancé about porn. Again. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Had an affair with one of my wife’s friends. ▪ Fired for watching porn on site. ▪ Spent \$\$\$ at massage parlors. ▪ Began cruising the streets looking for prostitutes. Spent \$\$\$ Got STD. ▪ Infected my wife. ▪ Separated from wife. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Masturbating to porn ▪ Massage Parlors ▪ Affairs outside my committed relationship

EXERCISE: Circle the events that demonstrate POWERLESSNESS. Do the same for UNMANAGEABILITY. Are there any that show both?

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Once the sexual history is complete, the next step is to look for patterns.

In the sample history above can you see where the Inner Circle behaviors began?

- Circle the events that lead from No Masturbation on the far left to Compulsive Masturbation with Pornography on the far right.
- Do the same for the other Inner Circle behaviors.

A good sexual history will make it easy to see the pattern of events that worked together to reinforce our Inner Circle behaviors.

It will point out how the behavior got worse with time.

It may be possible to estimate the cost of some behaviors like money spent on prostitutes and porn sites as well as hours spent watching porn or being with prostitutes. This is a good way to show increasing unmanageability.

Once you have labeled your events as Powerlessness or Unmanageability it will be easier for you to write a 1st Step.

A simple approach is to include two or three events from each decade and tie them to your Inner Circles that are ruining your life. You can add or remove events if you need to lengthen or shorten your work to make it 20 – 30 minutes long.

The same advice given earlier applies here.

Humbly ask others who have worked the Step 1 to review your work.

Listen carefully to what they have to say.

Re-write and then ask a facilitator for input.

Schedule a 10-minute time slot to read your draft when you are ready.

Then schedule your 1st Step presentation preferably with your home group.

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Step 1 Prayer

There are 12 Steps, 12 Traditions, 12 Promises, and 12 Prayers.

Try to commit the individual prayers to memory.

You can call upon these powerful tools of recovery when you are in danger.

You can also reflect upon their goodness when your soul is at peace.

Dear Lord,

I admit that I am powerless over my addiction.

I admit that my life is unmanageable when I try to control it.

Help me this day to understand the true meaning of powerlessness.

Remove from me all denial of my addiction.

Closing

Reading Step 1 creates profoundly triggering feelings of vulnerability and the need for external validation. Be aware of this and work with your sponsor, co-sponsor or accountability partner to temporarily intensify your sobriety plan. A stronger phone program is a good strategy as is attending more meetings. Talk about your vulnerability and the fears that accompany it. Doing so will help you understand and accept that telling your story ends your isolation and is essential if you are to be known by the fellowship.

When you complete Step 1, you will experience helplessness, shame, and regret.

These are strongly triggering.

Do not wait or hesitate.

Move on to Step 2 quickly!