PLBB FAQ’s - 2024 English

1. How did the Big Book in Plain and Simple Language come about? The creation of a Big Book in Plain and Simple Language dates back to a 2016 agenda item, when the General Service Conference began evaluating the need for literature in plain and simple language. After many detailed studies and reports, in 2021 the full Conference requested:

“A draft of the book Alcoholics Anonymous (Fourth Edition) be prepared, translated into plain and simple language, to make it accessible and relatable to the widest possible audience, and that a progress report or draft be submitted to the 2022 Conference Committee on Literature.”

2. Will the Big Book in Plain and Simple Language replace the Big Book? No. The intention was and remains for the Big Book in Plain and Simple Language to be a tool for accessing the original text and a complementary work. The original Big Book will not disappear and will continue to be published. 3. Is this the first time AA has produced literature in plain, simple language? No. Most of our pamphlets are in plain, simple language. Also, at the time the Big Book was first published, Dr. Bob was concerned that the vocabulary would be beyond the comprehension capabilities of less-educated members, and so Evan W. wrote five pamphlets (still available and known as The Akron Pamphlets) at Dr. Bob's request during the 1940s.

4. What is Plain and Simple Language? Plain and Simple Language is a writing style designed so that word choice, sentence structure, and formatting improve readability and enhance comprehension.

5. Is it a word-for-word translation? No. It is a rewrite in plain and simple language that also reflects the scope of the assigned task to ensure the draft “is accessible and relatable to the widest possible audience.”

6. Will it be available in Spanish and French? We will address this question if and when the Plain and Simple Language Big Book is published. However, we understand that Plain and Simple Language in English is an approach, not a language, so any French or Spanish version will have to be derived from the original French and Spanish translations.

7. What reading level will the Plain and Simple Language Big Book be? Fifth grade.

8. Why is the draft confidential and reserved for Conference members only, and why can't I see it? Historically, whenever the Conference reviews new or substantially revised books or pamphlets, only the Conference Literature Committee (or whichever committee is reviewing the item) receives copies of the new or revised literature before the Conference begins. For pamphlets, the rest of the Conference membership has had to request permission to retrieve copies of the new or revised pamphlet(s) at some point during the Conference and is given a limited amount of time to review the literature. For books, Conference members, except for those on the committees reviewing the material, have no opportunity to see the manuscripts and, therefore, have had to base their votes solely on the committee's recommendation. The reasons for this are as follows:

1) To maintain the copyright on AA literature articles, we must be able to ensure that they are not circulating freely, that they have not been widely shared, either in whole or in part, within the Fellowship or shared on social media before publication.

2) It typically takes several years to finalize an AA literature article. During that time, many versions of the article are shared with the Conference committee reviewing it. If it were to be widely shared, the Fellowship and the public could become confused about what is being reviewed, which is the current revised version, and which is “Conference approved.”

When circumstances like these require us to explicitly rely on the Conference process, it might be helpful to remember that Tradition Two says that God’s will is expressed through the group conscience and that Concept Two says that the Conference has become “the true voice and the effective conscience of our entire Society in its world affairs.”

9. What is being translated? Five things: The doctor's opinion. The first 164 pages of the original Dr. Bob's Nightmare. The appendices. The prologues to the first four editions (which, together, make up the new Appendix VIII in the translation). There will also be a new preface, prologue, and glossary. The stories (beyond Chapter One – Bill's Story and Dr. Bob's Nightmare) are not being translated.

10. Does this mean the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts are being changed? No. As the Conference Charter states, only a three-quarters vote of all groups worldwide responding to a proposal has the authority to do so. The Steps and Traditions will be printed in their current form. However, along with them, an explanation in plain language will be included.

11. What will be the title of the Big Book in plain language? The working title, subject to approval of the draft for publication and feedback from the General Service Conference, is: Big Book in Plain English: A Tool for Reading Alcoholics Anonymous.

12. How much did it cost? The costs are $100,000 for the writer and about $40,000 for publication-related expenses. $140,000 to date.

13. What printing options will there be if the book is published? As with other Conference-approved AA literature, if approved for publication, the options will be hardcover, softcover, and large print.

14. How was the writer chosen, and is he or she a member of AA? The alcoholic committee members selected the best writer for the assignment through a request for proposals process. Proposals were received from both AA members and non-members. The writer ultimately selected is not a member of AA. The alcoholics have been reviewing the writer's work at every stage and making modifications to ensure that the intention (as expressed in the request for proposals) that it "should capture the open and inclusive spirit of Alcoholics Anonymous and inspire a sense of belonging and hope in the alcoholic who is seeking help" is fulfilled.

15. Was AI (ChatGPT or similar) used in the creation of the Plain English Big Book? No AI or text generators were used in the Plain English draft.

16. Were there non-alcoholic members of the Tools for Accessing the Big Book and the Plain English Big Book subcommittees? No. All members were alcoholics.

17. How will the Plain English Big Book address gender and God? The gender of the people named will not change, but when an example of an archetype is given, for example, the jaywalker, we will change things to provide a broader representation of men and women. The original Big Book contains about 250 male pronouns and about 50 female pronouns. The Plain English Big Book will be more balanced. When God is mentioned, and will continue to be mentioned, it will sometimes be accompanied by "Higher Power."

18. When the 2023 General Service Conference was able to review the work in progress, the draft of the first six chapters, what did they think? The response was extremely positive. Even those who initially had doubts liked the Big Book in plain and simple language after reviewing it.

19. If published, who will own the copyright? Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

20. What are the next steps? The 74th General Service Conference will review the entire draft at the Conference. Possible outcomes are:

* Approve the draft for publication as submitted;
* Approve the draft with minor changes as suggested by the Conference Literature Committee or the full Conference;
* Return the draft for further work, with indications of topics to be addressed;
* Discontinue the project.