

Plain Language Big Book (PLBB) FAQ

1. How did this come about?

This current project can be traced back to an agenda topic in 2016, at which time the General Service Conference began the assessment of the need for plain language literature. Following lots of in-depth research and reports, in 2021 the Conference as a whole decided:

*“That a draft version of the book, Alcoholics Anonymous, be translated into **plain** and **simple** language and be developed in a way that is **accessible** and **relatable** to as wide of an audience as possible and that a progress report or draft be brought back to the 2022 Conference Literature Committee.”*

2. Will this replace the Big Book?

No, the intent was and remains for the PLBB to be a tool to access original text and to be a companion piece to it. The original Big Book is not going away and will remain in publication.

3. Is this the first time A.A. has developed plain language literature?

No. Most of our pamphlets are in plain language. Also, at the time the Big Book was first published, Dr. Bob was concerned that the language was beyond the capability of blue-collar members to grasp and, as a result, 5 pamphlets (still available and known as *The Akron Pamphlets*) were written by Evan W. at the request of Dr. Bob during the 1940s.

4. What is Plain Language?

Plain language is a style of writing designed for word choice, sentence structure, and layout to improve readability and understanding.

5. Is it a word-for-word translation?

No. It is a rewrite into plain language that also reflects the scope of the task assigned to ensure that the draft *“be developed in a way that is **accessible** and **relatable** to as wide of an audience as possible.”*

6. Will it be available in Spanish and French?

We will address this question if and when the PLBB is published. However, we understand that English Plain Language is an approach, not a language, and so any simplified French or Spanish versions will need to spring from the original translations into French and Spanish.

7. What reading level will the PLBB be at?

5th Grade – A 2020 Gallup survey indicated 54% of adult Americans read below a 6th grade level

8. Why is the draft confidential to Conference Members only and why can't I see a draft?

Two reasons:

- To follow, respect, and honor our Conference process so that the feedback and decision truly reflects the practice of our 2nd Tradition so that any changes come about as the result of the group conscience of our whole society rather than the wishes of any few.
- Copyright. To retain the copyright in the work we need to assert that it is ours and that no prior versions were at large before publication.

9. What is being translated?

Four things:

- i) The Doctor's Opinion
- ii) The first 164 pages of the original
- iii) Dr. Bob's Nightmare
- iv) The Appendices
- v) Forwards from the first 4 editions

The stories (other than *Chapter 1 – Bill's Story* and *Dr. Bob's Nightmare*) are not being translated.

10. Does that mean the Steps, Traditions, and Warranties are being changed?

No. Only a ¾ vote of all the groups in the world who respond to such proposal has the authority to do that. However, alongside those items, an explanation in plain language will be included. One example of this is in the table of contents of Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.

11. What will be the title of the PLBB?

Subject to the draft being approved for publication and the views of the General Service Conference, the working title is: Plain Language Big Book: A Tool for Reading *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

12. How much has this cost?

The hard costs are \$100K for the writer and approximately \$40K in publishing-related expenses. \$140K to date.

13. What printing options will be available if this book gets published?

As with other A.A. Conference approved literature, hardcover, softcover, and large print are options that will be decided if the Conference approves publication.

14. How was the writer chosen and are they an A.A. member?

Alcoholics chose (via a thorough Request For Information (RFI) process that included proposals from A.A. members) the best writer for the task. The writer that was eventually chosen is a not an A.A. member. Alcoholics have been reviewing the work of the writer at all stages and making changes to ensure that the intent (as expressed in the RFI) that it “**must capture the welcoming and inclusive spirit** of Alcoholics Anonymous and **inspire a sense of belonging and hope** in the alcoholic seeking help” is followed.

15. Was AI (ChatGPT or similar) used in the plain language big book development?

No AI or text generator was used in the plain language draft.

16. Were any Non-Alcoholics on the Tools to Access the Big Book (TABB) or Plain Language Big Book (PLBB) subcommittees?

No. All members were alcoholics.

17. How will the PLBB address gender and God?

Obviously, we will not be changing the gender of named individuals, but where the example given is of an archetype, e.g. the Jaywalker, we will switch up things so that there is a broader representation of both men and women. The original Big Book contains about 250 he/him/his to about 50 she/her/hers. The plain language big book will not be as heavily skewed in one direction.

Where God is mentioned, and will continue to be mentioned, this is sometimes paired with ‘Higher Power.’”

18. When the 2023 General Service Conference got to review the work in progress, i.e., the draft of the first 6 chapters, what did the Conference think?

The response was overwhelmingly positive. Even the three people who expressed constructive concerns liked it.

19. If published, who will own the copyright?

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services Inc.

20. What happens next?

The General Service Conference will review the complete draft at the Conference. Possible outcomes include:

- i) Approving the draft for publication
- ii) Sending the draft back for more work, indicating the issues to be addressed
- iii) Suspend the project