

**Instructions for the Proper Application of the  
Alternate Requirements for Candidate Advancement,  
per Section 2.110(a) of the Virginia Methodical Digest**

1. There are two authorized methods of candidate instruction permitted by the Grand Lodge of Virginia to assess the proficiency of candidates in an understanding of the forms and lessons of each of the three ritual degrees in speculative Masonry. One method of instruction is the memorization of the ritual catechisms as referred to in section 2.110 of the Virginia Methodical Digest. The other method of instruction is referred to as the alternate requirements for candidate advancement, and is outlined in section 2.110(a) of the Virginia Methodical Digest.
2. The alternate requirements for advancement is a method of candidate instruction available to the Worshipful Master to provide an option for the proper management of candidate progress in his Lodge. This instructional method was made available to the Worshipful Master to manage variations in each candidate's ability to memorize, accommodate situations when a candidate has very limited time to meet with his coach, and/or when there are a limited number of catechism coaches in the Lodge.
3. It is the Worshipful Master's option, not the candidate's choice or the coach's decision, whether to use the Ritual Catechism or the Alternate Advancement method to instruct a candidate in the knowledge of his degrees. It is the Worshipful Master's prerogative to decide what is best with regard to his Lodge and the candidate's progress and abilities.
4. Once the candidate has been successfully examined in either the catechism or the alternate requirements for advancement of the Entered Apprentice Degree, that method of instruction must be carried through the entire degree process. It is not permitted to change instruction methods following the Fellowcraft or Master Mason degrees, as this will lead to confusion on the part of the candidate.
5. Every new candidate is selected to use either the ritual catechism or the alternate advancement method. It is a decision made by the Worshipful Master on an individual basis for each candidate. One method does not automatically apply to all candidates if the Worshipful Master decides to use it for one particular candidate.
6. Instruction can be provided either to candidates individually, or in a group setting of similar candidates (all Entered Apprentices, all Fellowcrafts, or all Master Masons). This decision is at the Worshipful Master's discretion, in consideration of the number of candidates in his Lodge and for the convenience of the coaches.
7. The Alternate Advancement instructional process, as outlined in Section 2.110(a) of the Methodical Digest, establishes the requirements for the Worshipful Master to permit the advancement of a candidate using the alternate instruction method. The Worshipful Master may not delete or add parts to the required instruction as outlined in Methodical Digest Section 2.110(a).

8. The process to be followed to accomplish the Alternate Requirements for Candidate Advancement method is as follows:
  - a. The Worshipful Master selects a candidate following the Entered Apprentice Degree as being suitable for the Alternate Advancement method of instruction.
  - b. The Worshipful Master appoints the Lodge Educational Officer or other well-qualified Master Mason to serve as instructional coach for the candidate.
  - c. The coach meets in person with the candidate to instruct him in memorizing the question and answer portion of the catechism which deals with the modes of recognition, i.e.:
    - i. Grips
    - ii. Words
    - iii. Due Guards
    - iv. Signs
  - d. The coach also meets in person with the candidate to instruct him with being familiar and understanding the obligation and the responsibilities that are an essential part of it. The best means of accomplishing this is to recite the obligation a number of times, and at frequent intervals, stopping to explain the meaning of the words and the context of the phrases it contains.
  - e. The coach also meets in person with the candidate to instruct him in the material contained in the Grand Lodge Educational Proficiency Manual for the degree he has received. The manuals are not to be given to the candidate to read at home, as this defeats the purpose of having a conversational, discussion-type setting which encourages and stimulates thinking and the asking of questions. The goal is to promote a discussion and understanding of Freemasonry, what the fraternity represents, what is meant by our symbols and allegory, and how to put the lessons of each degree into perspective. This cannot be accomplished by the candidate reading the manual alone.
  - f. Once the coach is satisfied that the candidate is knowledgeable in all of the material outlined in parts c, d, and e above, he will notify the Worshipful Master.
  - g. The Worshipful Master will appoint a committee of three (3) members of the Lodge to examine the candidate.
  - h. The committee shall meet with the candidate, and have a dialogue and discussion with him regarding the material outlined in parts c, d, and e above. The committee shall not examine the candidate in supplementary material pertaining to the degrees.

- i. The committee, if satisfied, will provide either oral or written certification to the Worshipful Master that the candidate fully understands the material outlined in parts c, d, and e above.
- j. The Worshipful Master may then proceed to advance the candidate at his will and pleasure. A ballot in Lodge is not required or permitted for the alternate advancement method. The report of the committee directly to the Worshipful Master is all that is required to determine adequate preparation for advancement.
- k. It is recommended, but remains the prerogative of the Worshipful Master, to report the committee's findings from the East, in order to make them a part of the permanent record of the minutes of the Lodge.
- l. Following the candidate's satisfactory completion of the Master Mason's examination before the committee, and their report being provided to the Worshipful Master, a Proficiency Certificate in the Alternative Method may be obtained from the Grand Lodge Office to recognize the progress of the candidate.