

A Primer for the Worshipful Master



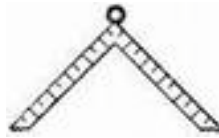
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When you elect a Worshipful Master, you are electing someone to rule and govern the Lodge.

THE WORSHIPFUL MASTER



Introduction

No doubt, from the position you occupy, you have found yourself to be an expert Master Mason and on the passageway to that of Worshipful Master. You have labored in the quarries of your Lodge and district as Deacons, and Wardens, but now you have arrived at that moment when all eyes will look to you for wisdom, guidance, delegation, and leadership. Now that we have established this, it is time to dedicate yourself to learning what is expected of you as Worshipful Master of your Lodge. If this presentation finds you still in your studies of your approach to the East then this final tutorial in this series will allow you time to reflect upon earlier training material, and how you plan to apply the teachings while you are Master of your Lodge. If by timing, this is the first year of the availability of this instruction then you must become a quick study and work to improve the chances of

success of your line officers during their year, all the while ruling and governing your Lodge.

Your Charge

Your duties as Worshipful Master require you to be a good man, a true man who obeys the moral law, a peaceful citizen who is not concerned with or in conspiracies or plots against the government. You must agree to respect civil magistrates, work, live, and act diligently, creditably and honorably. You must hold in veneration (respect) the rulers and patrons of Masonry, avoid piques (feelings of resentment brought on by hurt pride or insult) and quarrels and guard against intemperance (overindulgence) and excess, be courteous to your Brethren and faithful to your Lodge. You are to genuinely respect all Brethren, agree to promote the general good of society, the better virtues, and spread the knowledge of the art of Masonry. You promise to pay respect to the Grand Master and his Officers and conform to every edict of the Grand Lodge, be a regular attendee of Committees, and communications of the Grand Lodge. You are to guard against communications involving irregular Lodges or clandestine members of those Lodges, and that no person can be made a Mason or admitted as a member without notice and inquiry into his character. You are to guard entrance into your Lodge by insuring all are properly vouched for or stand for examination.

Only upon your agreement to these requirements are you allowed to become the Worshipful Master of your Lodge.

You are charged to learn a number of things in order to carry out your duties as Worshipful Master of your Lodge. You should be thoroughly familiar with, or know where to find the Grand Lodge laws, rules, edicts and resolutions and the by-laws of your Lodge. To fulfill your duties, you must study and be familiar with the Methodical Digest.

Worshipful Master's Duties

Section 2.48 The Duties of a Master of a Lodge

The rulebook, yardstick, or plumb line for your decisions will be the Methodical Digest, and I encourage you to read this and keep an updated copy with you during all Lodge proceedings and events. Section 2.48 specifies the duties of the Worshipful Master, and you should study and consult this section regularly. First, "The Master of a Lodge shall direct and control the order of business and work in his Lodge except when the Grand Master or the District Deputy Grand Master is present and presiding."

Some of the infrequently used points of law found in the Methodical Digest but vital to know are found below;

- ⚙ In case of a tie, the Master shall have a second vote.
- ⚙ The Worshipful Master controls the funds of the Lodge and may order them expended for Masonic purposes.
- ⚙ The Worshipful Master may have a disruptive or disrespectful Brother removed from the Lodge room.
- ⚙ The Worshipful Master has the right to refuse to entertain motions as he controls the business of the Lodge.
- ⚙ The Worshipful Master has the authority to order the Trustees of the Lodge to transfer funds to be used as directed by the Worshipful Master or by Lodge vote.

As you may have heard many times, your Lodge Secretary does not set the tempo or order of business. You should prepare the agenda for each meeting, or if you choose to delegate this task, require an advance copy for your authorization or correction. Having an agenda cannot be stressed enough. It is the roadmap of your meeting. Interruptions and lengthy discussions will eventually occur and your agenda will allow you to put your meeting back on course. Good meetings keep the Brethren active and energized. Poor meetings lead to poor attendance and reduced participation in the Lodge.

As Worshipful Master, you should consider yourself the Maestro or leader of the band. You

want to allow more time when interesting programs are occurring, and move things along when they bog down or get uninspiring. Accordingly, as Worshipful Master you should simplify the meeting where feasible. Thus, if announcements are too prolonged, consider having most of them typed up prior to the meeting and passed around to the Brethren. This will have more impact, save time, and leave the Brethren with something they can keep and place on their calendars. Similarly, you should instruct the Secretary to clear his desk rather than wasting time asking if there are new petitions, maturing petitions, bills, etc. The Secretary can cover what is on his desk devoid of this dialogue. As the Master, you will want to make sure that the minutes are summarized - to cover the major events of the meeting. There is nothing more dispiriting than to listen to a long recitation of the minutes where the Secretary rereads the communications.

As the Worshipful Master, you set the overall tone of your Lodge. Are you positive? Do you present a gloom and doom picture for all to observe? How you present yourself is how the Brethren and the public will perceive your Lodge.

Evaluations

First, I would suggest you conduct an evaluation of your Lodge. This is a physical evaluation of the structure, both internally and externally. Secondly, review the audit reports for

the past five years and see what modifications you should or must make for your budget.

Next, complete a leadership evaluation. Is your Lodge bringing in new candidates for degree work? How many new Brethren has the Lodge brought in during the past five years? Are the Brethren involved actively or are the same members doing the same thing year after year?

Finally, as Worshipful Master, you should conduct a self-evaluation of your own abilities, and seek help in areas where you are weak.

The Grand Lodge Committee on Lodge Services has a good program to help you evaluate your Lodge's long-term viability and to provide leadership support. To obtain such help, contact a member of the Committee or the Grand Lodge office.

Building your Team

It is important that you select your officers and evaluate their individual skills. Review with them their strengths and weaknesses (public speaking, planning, running a meeting, negotiation and persuasion, ritual, etc.) Discuss with them your theme or vision for the Lodge and get their ideas. You want to turn your vision for the Lodge into their vision as well. It helps to hold regular officer meetings, meet with your line officers independently to coach them on working on their

plans, checking on their progress and helping them to appreciate the balance between home and Lodge. In sum, you should stress the need for a multi-year program for the Lodge and emphasize the need for continuity. Encourage your officers to honor the traditions of the Lodge, retain programs and projects that seem to be working and have the support of the Brethren, and add new programs and projects to generate additional interest and excitement.

The development of a strong line of well qualified Lodge officers is one of the most important responsibilities of a Worshipful Master.

Masonic Education

As Master of your Lodge, one of your principal responsibilities is to educate and train your officers. Masonic education involves a wide ranging study of our history, philosophy, values, symbology, ceremonies, and ritual. Accordingly, promoting Masonic education is essential for turning your members into knowledgeable and educated Masons.

Presented by a Brother with good delivery skills, programs on Masonic education can increase interest and attendance, promote discussion and further research. The Master should consider calling upon his Lodge and District Educational Officers (LEO and DEO) for assistance in presenting programs and improving the Masonic

knowledge of his Brethren. Grand Lodge sponsored education programs are intended to dispel ignorance and provide the Lodges with researched programs. Much can be learned by regular attendance at educational meetings and Area Conferences.

Finally, you will want to teach your Brethren how much there is about Freemasonry that can be discussed with non-Masons and how little needs to be protected. This will go a long way toward helping us to explain Freemasonry to our friends and neighbors and help to dispel the notion held by some members of the public that we are a secret society.









Many districts also hold District Conferences on Education either in combination with the District Ritual School or as a separate undertaking. DEOs are always available to Lodges for the purpose of presenting interesting programs to the Brethren.

In addition, you should remember that there are four Masonic Research Lodges in Virginia: A. Douglas Smith Lodge of Research in Alexandria, The Virginia Research Lodge in the Richmond area, Peyton Randolph Research Lodge in Williamsburg, and the Civil War Lodge of Research that meets in various historic locations. Each meets on a different quarterly schedule to hear interesting and informative papers which are published in booklet or electronic form, and are usually available from their Secretaries. Not only should you encourage your members to attend or join these Research

Lodges, you also should consider its members as potential speakers at your stated communications.

Correspondence

How can you enhance your communications with officers and other members of the Lodge? What forms of communication is your Lodge using? Here is a list of suggested communications you may want to consider.

-  Officer's e-mail and telephone list.
-  E-mail addresses and telephone numbers of all Brethren
-  Lodge Webpage
-  Master's Blog
-  Lodge Podcast
-  Birthday cards (Secretary or designated Brother has them brought to stated communication with envelope prepared in advance)
-  Get Well cards
-  Facebook page for the Lodge or Master

As you explore other areas of correspondence such as e-mail, blogging, podcasting you will find these new approaches will attract a younger crowd of candidates. The use of blogs and websites also is a way to include younger Masons in the activities of the Lodge. If you get them involved and give them a job, they are more likely to stay active. In addition, by identifying those Brethren who would

prefer receiving updates and Trestleboards electronically, you can reduce your mailing costs.

Visiting

If you want to learn more about Freemasonry and meet more of the Brethren, then you should understand there is no more pleasant pastime and no better way to find the real meaning of Masonry than to visit other Lodges. It has often been said that there are no strangers in Freemasonry, only Brethren whom you have not yet met!

As the Master, it is incumbent upon you to encourage visitation. Talk with your line officers, lay out your expectations and set the example. You can build visitations around the James Noah Hillman Award. As you travel, you can gain valuable credit for this award for your Lodge. Visitation has a positive benefit to Masonry as a whole and may result in saving a Lodge that cannot, for the time being, easily exist on its own.

Introductions

As Worshipful Master, you will be responsible for introducing visiting Brethren and dignitaries. Repeat this mantra "Members and guests are introduced at their seats, and presented at the altar." Again, "Members and guests are introduced at their seats, and presented at the altar," and once more for good measure, "Members and guests are introduced

at their seats, and presented at the altar." This means that if you are introducing a Brother or a guest, they are introduced at their seat. But if you are going to present them to the Lodge for an honor or to receive a presentation award, then you would have a committee present them at the altar. If you need to, put this on the top of your agenda, so you will always have a reminder.

Masonic Protocol, Formal Ceremonies, and Use of Masonic Titles

As the Worshipful Master, you set the tone and are responsible for proper decorum and protocol. Protocol is universally defined as the ceremonial forms and courtesies established as proper and correct in official interactions between heads of state and their ministers. In Freemasonry, it refers to the established forms and ceremonies used in welcoming dignitaries at either a stated or called communication. This may include inviting a Past Master to a seat in the East, or having a committee present him at the altar, where he is welcomed by the Master, escorted to the East, and paid the ceremonial honors due.

Whether an informal introduction of these Brethren at their seats, with a concurrent invitation to seats in the East is to be used, or the more formal presentation at the altar depends upon the circumstances. Most Lodges favor the use of the less formal method of recognizing dignitaries at

their seats at routine stated communications, reserving the more proper and time consuming ceremonies for distinctive occasions, such as the reception of the District Deputy Grand Master or the Grand Master on their official visits to the Lodge. Courtesy requires that visiting Brethren be asked which method of introduction they prefer.

It is not good form or proper for the Senior Deacon to present higher ranking Brethren at the altar. The Senior Deacon's ritualistic enjoinder "to introduce and accommodate visiting Brethren" does not refer to these formal ceremonies. Rather, protocol indicates that, when possible, these Brethren be escorted by a two-man committee of rank equal to or higher than those being presented. Visiting Past Masters should be presented by a Committee of Past Masters or Past District Deputy Grand Masters, or higher ranking individuals.

Obviously, this may not always be possible. For example, when a Past Grand Master is present, and there is no one of equivalent or higher rank available to present him. In such cases, the Master appoints a committee consisting of the two highest ranking available Brethren. It is courteous to notify committee members in advance of the presentation, so they are prepared to insure they have the full name and rank of the individual they are to present.

Finally, there is a marked difference in applying the terms "title," "rank," and or "office." In a polite society, a person does not usually use his

title when referring to himself orally or when writing a letter. It is not appropriate for an individual to refer to himself in a lofty manner. For example, we have never heard a Past Grand Master refer to himself (or sign his letters) as "Most Worshipful." He simply appends his rank (PGM). It also follows that the complimentary close of a letter signed by a PDDGM, who was elected Secretary of his Lodge to appropriately read:

"Sam C. Kropff, PDDGM
Secretary"

The Worshipful Master's signature is a little different. His "Earned Title" is Worshipful Master, but he probably would feel quite uncomfortable signing as Worshipful, therefore his letters could appropriately read:

"Sincerely and fraternally,
Hiram Anderson
Master 2008"

Titles such as Worshipful, Right Worshipful, and Most Worshipful are titles of respect, referring to the office now or formerly held by the Brother. These titles are based on the Old English definition of "worshipful" as meaning respected. Many would argue that the most important title is that of "Brother."

Public Relations

The best public relations vehicle any Lodge has is its membership. Every Mason leaves an impression with the public, based in no small measure on how he lives up to his Masonic oaths and obligations. For years our Craft has enjoyed an enviable reputation for a membership having high moral character, known for its courteous and decent behavior, and its unyielding integrity.

To create a favorable image of Freemasonry in your community, you must ensure that your Lodge Brethren reflect the rectitude of conduct demanded of every Master Mason. You must set an example and create the expectation that all will comply. But if the conduct of a Brother falls below that standard, you need to promptly take corrective measures (from a whisper of good counsel — to a Masonic trial).

There are several good public relation programs offered by our Grand Lodge. First, there is the Community Builders Award, which permits you to present a Certificate of Recognition to a non-Mason in your community, who has made a substantial contribution to its quality of life.

The individual should be carefully selected and the presentation made immediately before or after a Lodge meeting or, perhaps, at a dinner arranged especially for that purpose. Many Lodges combine the presentation with a Ladies' Night Dinner, as one

of the highlights of the evening. Every effort should be made to have a local media photographer photograph the presentation for the local papers. If you cannot secure a media photographer, then have someone familiar with photography take a digital picture to submit to the news media along with a press release. (For an example of a good press release, please see "A Guide for Planning Your Year as Worshipful Master" Grand Lodge Publication 2007.) This publicity strengthens the ties between the Lodge and the community and serves to make Freemasonry known to local citizens as a positive force.

In the same way, participation in charitable programs such as the Child ID Program, sponsoring Little League teams, participating in local charitable activities (ringing bells for the Salvation Army kettles, helping with community sponsored events) serve to bring home to the community the essential nature of our Lodges. It also helps to rebut the attacks launched against us by certain radical bodies and serves to attract the attention of good men, prospective petitioners, who may meet our requirements for membership.

We also suggest that you contact the Grand Lodge Committee on Public Relations for assistance. Remember, we cannot cloak the Craft in secrecy and expect it to survive. The men we hope to attract to our Fraternity will not be interested in something they know nothing about.

Finding a Suitable Job

One of your key jobs as Worshipful Master is to motivate and energize your new members and retain the more experienced Masons as well. Certainly, every new Master Mason needs to have a job or function in the Lodge. I am not talking about making him your new Junior Deacon - there are many jobs you can consider - many of them listed in the Grand Lodge publication: "Jobs to keep our Brethren Active and Our Lodge Healthy."

Remember, if you find a job for each new Brother you will be able to integrate him into the Lodge and help him build relationships with the Brethren. If you do this, he will return. If not, you will find many new Masons quickly find another way to spend their time.

Delegating

As the Worshipful Master, you are the Captain of the ship, but that does not mean you must man the oars, set the sails and cook for the crew. You cannot do it all, and you should not try. You are in a position to grow your line officers, and pass on appropriate authority and responsibility for well-defined tasks to other members of your Lodge team. Require that each of your committees deliberate and make short clear, specific recommendations to the Lodge during the time set aside for new or unfinished business. If you properly use your

committees, you will build an active membership and, as a bonus, you will accomplish more while sharply reducing lengthy meetings.

To reduce redundant debate later in the meeting, encourage your committee chairmen to move the acceptance of the committee's well-crafted recommendations at the conclusion of their reports. As Master of your Lodge, require all committee recommendations to be in writing and submitted to the Worshipful Master prior to the meeting. If a report is going to require the expenditure of Lodge funds, it is best to have this proposal presented to the Finance Committee prior to voting in the Lodge. This will save you a great deal of meeting time.

Hints for the Worshipful Master

1. Plan your stated communications, called communications and special events.
2. Plan fun activities.
3. Work with your committee chairmen prior to meetings. Know what they are going to propose.
4. During discussion keep members from rambling.
5. Greet everyone with a warm smile, firm handshake, and friendly manner.
6. Delegate; then monitor progress but do not butt in.

7. Be patient and understanding. Do not criticize. Express appreciation sincerely, the Lodge will adopt your attitude. If you are gloomy, the Lodge will be gloomy. If you are happy, enthusiastic and optimistic, the Lodge will be happy, enthusiastic and optimistic.
8. Work with your Secretary. The strength of many Lodges can often be traced to the strength of the Worshipful Master-Secretary relationship.
9. Go after the James Noah Hillman Award. Plan your events and outings around this, and it is much easier to obtain."
10. Accept the honor of serving as Master with grace and humility. As it is written in Proverbs 18:12, "before honor is humility."
11. Most importantly, take your Wardens into your confidence. Train and educate them and use their skills, knowledge and abilities.
12. Utilize the Grand Lodge Handbook on Lodge Community Service Projects for ideas to connect to your community.

Reacting to Difficult Personality Types

When dealing with people, be ready to react to the actions of different personalities. Some examples are:

1. Dealing with the aggressor, who is intimidating, hostile and loves to threaten.
 - a. *What to do:* Listen to everything the person has to say. Avoid arguments and be formal, calling the person by name. Be concise and clear with your reactions.

2. Dealing with the undermining person, one who prides himself in criticism and sarcasm, although he is the one being devious.
 - a. *What to do:* Focus on the issues and do not acknowledge sarcasm or overreact.

3. Dealing with the unresponsive person, who is difficult to talk to or never reveals his ideas.
 - a. *What to do:* Ask open-ended questions and learn to be silent - waiting for the person to say something. Patience is a virtue of life, and friendliness is best displayed with a smile.

4. Dealing with the egotist, who knows it all and feels and acts superior.
 - a. *What to do:* Make sure you know the facts. Agree when possible and ask questions and listen. Disagree only when you know you are right.

Preparation for Past Master

Renowned author Stephen R. Covey, in his book *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* says "begin with the end in mind." Let your imagination, conscience, independent will and self-awareness shape your actions. We can apply his teaching from *Being Proactive* to what you are doing now, *Sharpening the Saw*, improving and enhancing the greatest asset you have, yourself.

When you envision how your year as Master will conclude, you have your snapshot of your goals. Now get to work, you have your plans that you have developed, you have established reasonable priorities and work with your line officers and other Masters of adjoining Lodges during implementation and reviews (midcourse corrections).




After serving your year as Master, you will join that body of Brethren entitled to be called Past Master (PM). Quite contrary to what you may have heard and cheerfully believe, they really do not deem that they "know it all," nor do they believe that they ever will. But they will continue to share their insights and experience with the Lodge, and try to help the current officers if they are asked.

One of the important lessons of the Fellowcraft Degree is that life is a journey composed of countless learning experiences and choices. You learned that life is about choices, choose wisely. At

each way-stop the path continues, and various, equally pleasant, pathways come into view. Becoming a Master and then Past Master should not be considered the final destination, remember to choose wisely.

Some Past Masters desire to assist at the district level as an officer or local committee member, some are chosen to serve our Grand Lodge, but the greatest majority and the greatest tribute is choosing to continue to labor in the quarry of their own Lodge. Some, after being devoted to the Lodge for several years, choose to stop working in the quarries and some stop for a period of time only to return in search of grand designs upon the Trestleboard. Remember, choose wisely.

During your year in the East, frequently reflect on your accomplishments.

-  Are your officers prepared to continue the work of the Lodge without you?
-  Is the Lodge better, in some way from your leadership?
-  Are you on target to accomplish your goals?

No one besides you is keeping score, but if all your goals are not met then maybe this will help you choose the path to follow as a Past Master, bear in mind to choose wisely.

Conclusion

You have cultivated your values, carefully shaped your ideas, and attentively crafted your plans. Now, that you have been elected Master, you must be responsible for your Lodge and your Brethren. Be their leader, be the Worshipful Master they need, not necessarily what they want. Remember, choose wisely.

Notes: _____

