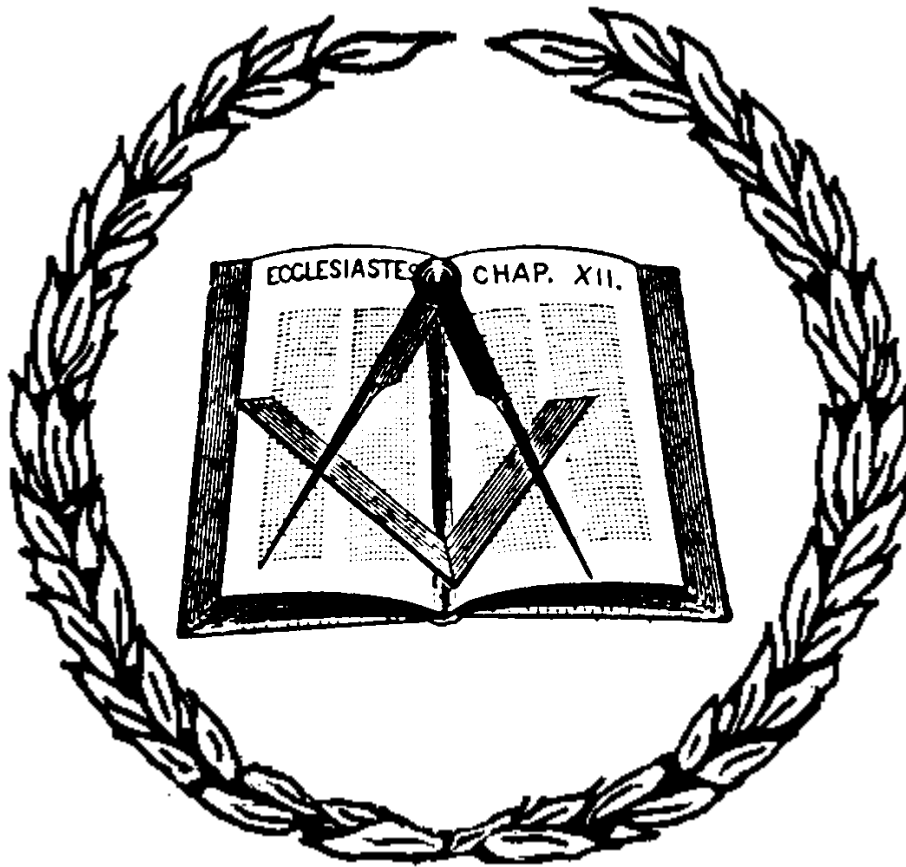


# Master Masons and Prospective Lodge Officers



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**When You Elect a Junior Deacon You Are Electing  
a Potential Worshipful Master**

## **MASTER MASONS AND POTENTIAL NEW LINE OFFICERS**

### **Introduction**

As a Master Mason, you are a potential line officer in your Lodge. You have obtained all of the rights and benefits that are due to a Master Mason and, so long as you remain in good standing with your Lodge, no one can ever deny you any of the rights and benefits of Freemasonry. Most of the rights and benefits have been explained to you in the course of receiving the three degrees. However, if like most candidates, you progressed through the degrees rapidly, then your education in Freemasonry was like “taking a drink from a fire hose.” This booklet was designed to place a control valve on the fire hose of Masonic education. Its intent is to provide you with information and guidance that you can read at your leisure and refer to from time to time as questions arise. It will enlighten you on your Lodge, its officers, Freemasonry in general, and will provide guidance about what will be expected of you should you be asked to become a line officer. It also gives some insight into how a Junior Deacon is chosen and the decision making process you might go through to

decide if now is the right time to become an elected officer of your Lodge.

In addition to the rights and benefits, there are also responsibilities that you are expected to adhere to as a Master Mason. Many times the responsibilities are not taught to the candidates in the course of the three degrees and, consequently, many Master Masons do not know nor understand their responsibilities as a Master Mason. This probably accounts for why so many Master Masons feel left out when they attend Lodge and soon fail to even attend.

These responsibilities include supporting your Lodge, being a good and faithful Brother, and acting as an effective ambassador for Freemasonry by treating all those with whom you are in contact in such a manner as to leave a favorable impression of the Fraternity.

Freemasonry is a charitable organization, but it is not a charity. We do not join Freemasonry for any material reason but rather for the chance to learn and become better men, husbands, sons and fathers.

On the application for employment form for many marketing career opportunities is the question, "Do you belong to a fraternity?" The reason for this question is to determine if you have access to people to whom you can sell products or services. During the course of your daily conduct of

your business, you can admit to membership in the Fraternity, but any form of solicitation is prohibited in a Masonic Lodge. It is also a Masonic offense for a Brother to print his Masonic affiliation on his business card or advertising matter. If the use of such emblem contributes to the advantage of any Mason, such use comes under the heading of “commercialized Masonry” and is prohibited by the Methodical Digest.

## **Lodge Organization**

Since the dawn of mankind, men have been learning how to live and work together for the mutual benefit of all. Various types of organizations from small units to vast empires have been tried. No single factor seems to dictate which organizational form will be best for any given situation, environment, or culture. However, in every successful organization we have learned that some men must provide leadership, while others must learn to follow. Additionally, we have learned that there are certain functional and physical arrangements that make the organization more efficient and create a better environment in which to live, work, or just to come together for fellowship.

Your Lodge is a certain number of Free and Accepted Masons duly assembled with the Holy Bible, Square, Compasses, and a Charter from the Grand Lodge of Virginia empowering them to work. The Lodge’s structure is situated East and

West in a rectangular form. The Worshipful Master, representing the Pillar of Wisdom, is the head of this body and sits in the East. He presides over the meetings and must be saluted by members of the Lodge, who must await his acknowledgment before they can speak. The Senior Warden, the Pillar of Strength, sits in the West and is second in command and supports the Worshipful Master. In the absence of the Worshipful Master, he will assume the East and command of the body. The Junior Warden, the Pillar of Beauty, sits in the South and is third in line of progression to the East. The Senior Deacon sits to the right of the Worshipful Master, and it is his duty to assist the Worshipful Master in performing his duties. That makes him fourth in line of progression. The Junior Deacon sits to the right of the Senior Warden. This is the beginning of the elected line in a Virginia Masonic Lodge and the starting point in a Mason's journey to the East and his year to rule and govern the Lodge.

Your Lodge, along with a number of other Lodges, forms a district and is assigned a number (1A, etc.) by Grand Lodge. Each Masonic district has a District Team of Officers, which is led by the District Deputy Grand Master for that district. The team includes the District Instructor of Work, District Educational Officer, District Masonic Home Ambassador, District Blood Coordinator, District VACHIP Director, District Membership



Coordinator, and representatives of the Grand Lodge Committee on Lodge Services.

## **Getting Involved In Lodge Activities**

At this point, you have probably realized that there is a lot going on in Lodges in your district or at the district level. As a relatively new Master Mason, or even a not so new one who has not taken an active role in Lodge, you may think it is sufficient to sit back and watch the activity from the sidelines. Trust us when we say that you will never get your money's worth by just sitting on the sidelines! If you did not catch it the first time, then go back and reread those four booklets that were given to you when you petitioned the Lodge and received the three degrees of Freemasonry. We cannot make it any clearer but to restate that you will get out of Freemasonry in direct proportion to the effort that you put in to it. Freemasonry is a participatory Fraternity of friends and Brothers, who are banded together for the common good.

Of course, in addition to playing an active role in your Lodge, the benefits of Masonic membership is found in the study of its values and philosophy, its history and traditions. It should then be no surprise when we say that the best education comes from practical application of each lesson that is being learned. Practical application means learning by putting the information or skill that is being learned into use in your daily life.

To paraphrase President John F. Kennedy, “Ask not what your Lodge can do for you, but what you can do for your Lodge.” This paraphrase of Kennedy’s famous statement can be expanded to include, “Ask not what Freemasonry can do for you, but what you can do for Freemasonry.” The Lodge and Grand Lodge need leaders, and as a Master Mason, you are eligible to become Worshipful Master of your Lodge, and if it is your aspiration, to become Grand Master of Masons in Virginia. Only you can set your goals in Masonry and only you can determine whether you are successful or not. Success is relative to the individual and is determined by what is important to that individual. Success is not necessarily financial gain, but rather happiness and contentment. Some of the richest men I know are not happy and some friends who struggle to get by financially are the happiest, most contented people you can meet. It is up to you to define what success is then make this your goal.

### **Deciding To Get “In Line”**

An important question for every Mason is “How much time can I devote to the Fraternity?” First, you must know that Freemasonry should not come between you and your family, your church, your work, and other important social obligations. We recognize that there are certain circumstances when we have more time to give, and conversely,

circumstances when we will have less. Still, although we are all given the exact same amount of time each day, some Masons seem to have a lot of time to devote to the Craft, while others have very little. Could it be that some Masons have discovered arcane knowledge about time, or are they just better at time management and setting priorities in their lives? A little thinking will lead each of us to the latter conclusion. It does take good time management skills to be an “all-around” Mason. However, this is equally true for every successful person, regardless of their chosen profession or avocation, and that’s why every Mason should learn to be a good time manager before he even considers getting into line to become an officer of a Lodge.

Too many Masons, when asked by the Senior Warden, take getting into line too lightly and then find out that they do not have the time to participate fully. Becoming an elected Lodge officer is a serious commitment and requires much thought. Before accepting an offer to become the Lodge’s Junior Deacon you should have a discussion with your wife and family. Without their understanding and support, you most likely will fail and eventually drop out of line. This is not good for you or the Lodge. Therefore, if you are asked to become the Junior Deacon, and eventually become Worshipful Master, please sit down with your wife and family and explain the commitment you are making to the Lodge. This includes:

1. Learning the ritual;
2. Attending each stated and called communication;
3. Visiting other Lodges in your district;
4. Participating in District and Area Schools of Instruction;
5. Obtaining your Warden's Certificate;
6. Planning your year in the East;
7. Being very busy during your year as Worshipful Master;
8. Attending the Grand Annual Communication.

Next, project your work or business schedule for the next five years, and make a calendar of Masonic events you will be expected to attend. Make a list of family activities you regularly participate in and review your schedule for conflicts. Determine if there are workarounds or ways to reschedule or reorder events and commitments that will avoid these conflicts. Masonic events are not normally scheduled on Sunday, but you need to review your Church's demand on your time. My personal prioritization is family, church, work, and then the Masonic Fraternity, but I find that I can make the appropriate contribution to all four. Your priorities may be different, but the point I am trying to make is there are limits to your time, and you need to

determine where Masonry ranks in your priorities and the amount of time you can give.

For most Masons, the time allotted to family events is the most important time of their life. **We have absolutely no argument with this.** But this makes it all the more important to discuss Masonic time obligations with your wife and children before getting into line to become a Lodge officer.

Only you can decide if and when getting into line is right for you. We can only say that it is a journey that we believe every Master Mason should experience. There is a great deal to be learned from that experience and a great sense of accomplishment and satisfaction.

Once you have made the decision, what do you do next? There is nothing wrong with letting a Brother, such as the Senior Warden, know that you are interested in getting into the line. However, it is considered bad form to actively campaign for any office in Masonry. (At Grand Lodge, there is a prohibition from any personal campaigning.) Time has proven that the best way to get into the line of a Lodge is to earn it through your labor. The Brethren will recognize your work and, at the appropriate time, will ask you to either accept an appointment, or nomination for election to the line. The best way to exhibit your interest is to attend your stated and called communications. Showing up at Lodge ritual classes also is a great way to show

the Senior Warden you are interested in becoming a line officer.

## **Etiquette and Decorum**

Regardless of whether you decide to accept an appointed position, or a nomination for elected office in your Lodge, every Master Mason is expected to observe Masonic etiquette and decorum at all times. These terms do not come to us from our ritual but are inherent, if not expressly named, in many of the virtues that we are charged to practice and inculcate. This being the case, it is easy to see how a Brother might inadvertently violate Lodge etiquette or decorum without even realizing it. Masons living up to all of their duties and obligations would recognize your breach of etiquette or decorum as a fault induced by a lack of education and act accordingly to provide a proper education. This is one of those areas where a mentor or coach is invaluable. However, lest we fall into the age old trap of “If we always do what we’ve always done; we’ll always get what we’ve always gotten,” beyond the specifics of Masonic etiquette and decorum such as how we address another Brother and how we comport ourselves in Lodge, there is the larger matter of how we act toward all of those we meet. For as Master Masons, we are instructed to act with courtesy and respect to all Mankind, and to deal honestly and fairly with all.

What constitutes “gentlemanly” or good behavior? Most of us probably think we know what constitutes good behavior and that we are always gentlemen. Many of us can spot bad behavior in others without ever recognizing the same behavior in ourselves. At bottom, we cannot go too far wrong if we adopt the Golden Rule and simply treat others as we would wish to be treated. While self analysis is hard for us all and like most other things that we attempt to do in life, we must first make an assessment of where we are and then map out a plan for improvement.

### **Committee on Masonic Education Courses**

Another source of information for all Master Masons are the Correspondence Courses available from the Committee on Masonic Education. The four courses that are currently available teach by having you find the answers to questions in several of our Grand Lodge publications. By the time you finish all of the courses, you will have largely read these publications and have a fairly good understanding of where you can find information.

Is every Masonic book worth reading? One always hopes that when an author expends the time required to write a book that there will be something worth learning in the book. The problem is in knowing how to sort out the “grain from the chaff” in anything we read. Also, what is important to others may not be of interest to you. Therefore I

would suggest that you seek the advice of learned Brethren in your Lodge and ask them to recommend several good Masonic books. Keeping in mind that all Masons are not readers and tastes differ from individual to individual.

Learn to read and think for yourself. As it is written in the Fellowcraft's Charge, "As you increase in knowledge, you will improve in social intercourse." Learning is addictive. The more we learn, the more we want to learn. Reading is one of the ways that we learn, and we can do it alone, anytime we have a few spare minutes, or better yet, set aside a specific period each day to read. The more you learn about Masonry, its history, and its future, the more we appreciate its teachings and how important it is to socialize with like-minded men.

One of the greatest advances in the distribution of information and knowledge is the Internet. We all have discovered that a wealth of information is available at the click of a mouse. So it is with Freemasonry. There is a tremendous amount of data available on the World Wide Web. However, some of it is fact, and some of it is fiction. Be extremely careful when searching the Internet for information about Freemasonry. If you get confused or concerned about some of the articles you access, then talk to your mentor about it.



## **Masonic Offenses**

This is the last lesson in this booklet and for a very good reason. No one wants to talk about Masonic offenses. Unfortunately, they do occur sometimes and then we need to know what they are and how to handle them. What are Masonic offenses? As described by the Methodical Digest, it is as follows: “Masons owing allegiance to the Grand Lodge, A.F & A.M., of Virginia and sojourning Masons while in the Commonwealth of Virginia, must obey the civil laws, support the establishment of governments, keep inviolable the mysteries of the Order, preserve and obey the laws and resolutions of the Grand Lodge of Virginia, observe the Ancient Landmarks of Masonry and discharge their duties and obligations to their families, to each other and to mankind in general.

Willful failure to comply with any of these requirements shall constitute a Masonic offense and subject the offender to Masonic trial, and, if found guilty, to discipline.

Masonic Charges may be brought in only one Lodge for the same offense and then through the process of accusation, investigation by a committee which the Worshipful Master will usually appoint, and the formulation and presentation of the Charges at a stated communication of the Lodge. The Charges are simply a formal statement of the willful violation of the laws of the Grand Lodge of

Virginia. It is supported by the evidence discovered by the committee.

At the Masonic trial, the Lodge is represented by the Junior Warden or someone designated to take his place. The accused may be represented by counsel or any other Brother. If represented by counsel, that counsel must be a Master Mason. The accused can, if he so desires, defend himself at such trial. Witness for the accused, if there is any, will be summoned by the Trial Commission at his request.

The trial procedure is similar to a civil trial in that the charges are read to the accused, and he should then be asked how he pleads, guilty or not guilty. The Junior Warden then presents witnesses and evidence to support the charges against the Brother. The accused, or his counsel, can examine every witness who testifies or each piece of evidence produced. At the conclusion of the Lodge's case, the accused Brother then can present his witnesses or evidence to dispute the charges against him. The Lodge, by way of the Junior Warden, can cross-examine these witnesses. The Trial Commission may also question any witness presented.

The Trial Commission, the Lodge, and Grand Lodge have but one goal — the establishment of facts in the case, and the determination of guilt or innocence of the Brother. The Commission can make its own rules as to permitting statements and

arguments by the representative of either the accuser or the accused. This is slightly different from the civil trial where a Judge makes an interpretation of the existing law before making a decision on what rule applies.

After a ruling has been made by the Trial Commission, the verdict is sent to the accused by the Secretary of the Lodge. The accuser or accused has the right to appeal the decision within sixty days of the date of the notice. The appeal is started by writing a letter to the Secretary of the Lodge stating that the accuser or the accused, as the case may be, desires to appeal the verdict of the Commission. The appeal is passed to the Grand Master through his representative, the District Deputy Grand Master. The Committee on Appeals submits a report at the Grand Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Virginia. Their findings are either approved or disapproved by the Grand Lodge itself. If you would like further information, you can review the “Manual for Masonic Trials,” published by the Grand Lodge of Virginia in 2007.

I also would encourage you to review Appendix A of the “District Educational Officer’s Manual for Training of Subordinate Lodge Officers.” If you do not have a copy of this manual, you can download it from:

[www.grandlodgeofvirginia.org/education/publications/index.htm](http://www.grandlodgeofvirginia.org/education/publications/index.htm)

the website of the Grand Lodge of Virginia.

## **In Conclusion**

It is important to reiterate that what you will get out of Freemasonry is directly proportional to what you put into it. If all you do is get your three degrees and stay home, you will have learned little. If you get involved in your Lodge, visit other Lodges and take part in the degrees, you will find your rewards will be far greater than you ever imagined. You will find that being raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason is a life changing event. It was for me.



