

JOHN

MASONIC ETIQUETTE: LODGE DO'S AND DON'T'S

Over time and by watching others, members conform themselves to exhibit proper Masonic etiquette behavior and learn Lodge customs. As a newly Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft or Master Mason, it is expected that you will exhibit the proper decorum and propriety in observance of the formal requirements which govern behavior in polite societies...BEFORE someone takes you aside to explain your errors.

Unfortunately Masonic Etiquette or Blue Lodge Etiquette is largely unpublished as well as unspoken, therefore making it more difficult to learn the rules and nuances. You may study ritual work, degree work, floor work and know all the glorious history, symbols, jewels etc. but there is very little written about how to comport yourself so you do not look foolish and be regarded as disrespectful. Some are small things and some are not, but remember, your Lodge conduct is continually on display.

We will attempt to list but a few with the hope that you will adhere to the precepts and make all of us proud of counting you as a Brother.

WORSHIPFUL MASTER: during his term in office, the Brother who has been elected as Master is the most powerful member of the Lodge. He has the authority to: rule any Brother out of order on any subject at any time; decide what can and cannot be discussed; open and "run" a Lodge, conducting the brethren to work, organizing committees, elect junior officers, etc and many other administrative and operative functions. Courteous brethren accept the requests made by the Master to serve on committees, work groups and other duties as determined by the Lodge's needs.

The following items are not to be considered "Masonic offenses", they are simply etiquette transgressions, in other words, considered to be bad form or bad manners which should be avoided at all costs and at all times:

SALUTATION: upon arriving to Lodge, you will shake hands, smile and look directly into the eyes of the Brother standing before you (remember your "grip"). You will make sure you salute everyone present, known to you or not.

DRESS CODE: monthly "communication" meetings are formal events, the dress for the work of the evening will always be shirt, tie and suit jacket for all members; "degree night" will see the officers dressed in formal ware (tuxedo) and gloves.

Brethren do not enter the Lodge room either without their apron nor while putting on that apron...not even while tying its strings. Why? Officers expect that the Brethren will have the courtesy to enter fully dressed and ready for the labor. They should not have to wait for a member to be fully dressed, even just tying or adjusting their apron. It is expected that you will be properly and entirely dressed when you pass by the Tyler and enter the Lodge room.

SEATING: unless otherwise requested, Brethren will find a suitable seat either in the North or South "benches". Officers might instruct you to sit in a particular spot for the work of the

evening. Never sit in the East of West without being invited to do so by the Master, even if there are no empty seats left in the Lodge.

While all Brethren within a tiled room are equal to one another, it remains the Master's prerogative to recognize a particular Brother for his hard work, study, devotion and loyalty by inviting him who he wishes to honor to join him in the East (also, a visiting dignitary or Past Masters, distinguished visitors, etc).

In other words, if you were in church and the pews are full, would you go up and sit by the officiating priest?

CROSSED LEGS: a good Mason does not cross his legs while in the Lodge room. Why? Each member is expected to be open to the lesson to be learned that evening. Crossed legs are perceived to be physical evidence of a closed mind and are regarded as the member being inattentive to the lesson to be learned. It is also viewed as sloppiness of behavior; crossed legs, slouching and leaning against walls, tables, etc are considered to be a form of sloppy manners wherein others perceive you to be lazy...just as you would not cross your legs during a formal job interview.

WALKING: there will be no Brethren walking around the Lodge room while in session, unless otherwise instructed. Officers and Candidates only exception (and the Candidates only when accompanied by an officer).

TALKING/SPEAKING: stand when you speak, no man sits while speaking in the Lodge room, no matter if he addresses an officer or another Brother. If you have something of interest to say, raise your hand. When the Master recognizes you, you must stand up and be recognized by the Master to speak.

All Lodge activity is based on each man in the Lodge as being a servant of the Brethren. This includes the Worshipful Master and his officers. While the man who has been elected Worshipful Master does not gain any special honor personally, as the Worshipful Master his position deserves respect, and it is the Master of the Lodge whom you are standing to address. It is simply a form of respect, no different than attending a City Council meeting for instance. It is expected that if you wish to address the audience, you will stand so all may see who is speaking.

If you wish to offer a predetermined motion or matter for discussion advise the Master beforehand. Why? Advising the Master before the meeting, that you intend to bring up a specific motion or a matter for discussion is an important courtesy. You may indeed do it without advising him in advance, but the Master may have plans of his own for that gathering, for which your proposed motion or discussion may not easily fit into the allotted time frame. As a courtesy to him, his work, and his dedication to the members, it is best to ask him privately, beforehand, if he be able to recognize you to speak your purpose. This saves "face" for both of you. You will not publicly be refused and he will not have to seem disagreeable or arrogant in his refusal of your motion.

A good Mason does not talk while a degree is being conferred or the Lodge is open. Why? Because the Lodge room is a temple, the temple of the Great Architect of the Universe. The Brethren within are working to make the best ashlar for His spiritual temple. Just as it is

impolite to talk in church, doing so might improperly distract the officers, the workers of the degree or the Candidates.

Talking without asking to do so shows irreverence for the proceedings. God's house is not for social conversation within the lodge room. It is for worship and learning the lesson of the day which is being taught. Unless you have requested of the Master to speak, silence is the rule. This also means no whispering.

OBEY THE GAVEL: you must immediately obey the sound (rap) of the gavel.
(One: sit. Two: officers only must stand. Three: everybody stands)

Failure to immediately obey the gavel is a **GRAVE DISCOURTESY** and displays **VERY** poor Masonic Etiquette. The Master is all powerful in the Lodge and his word is final, he rules on what will be done and how, by whom and when. He can say what he will, and what will not be permitted to be discussed. The sound of the gavel denotes his authority, is emblematic of his office, and he thus reigns supreme. When a Brother is "rapped" down he should obey at once, without any further discussion. It is **VERY** bad manners to do otherwise. In fact, it is perilously close to the line between bad manners and Masonic offense. Masonic etiquette decries anyone who does not obey the gavel.

SIMULTANEOUS SPEAKING: Brethren will take/wait their turn to speak (with the Masters permission of course) and should never argue a motion/subject with other members unless authorized and requested by the Master. To carry on a discussion with another member without proper sanction is ignoring the Master and his authority, thus unacceptable.

SHOULDERING THE WORK: it is good Masonic etiquette not to refuse a request made in the name of the Lodge. Why? To refuse is to, again be viewed as a weak link in a strong chain. It is implying that you simply want to sit on the sidelines and enjoy the show, the brotherhood and the food, without having to shoulder the necessary work that must be done for the enjoyment of all.

CORRECTION OF VERBAL ERRORS AND MISTAKES: Lodge customs state that no one except for the Worshipful Master or his prearranged designee, may correct any mistake that may occur during the course of a Ceremony.

Why? It is discourteous to point out others mistakes in front of the Lodge brethren.

NO PRACTICAL JOKES/OFF-COLOR STORIES: Why? The great lessons of Masonry, which are taught by our ritual, should never be demeaned by levity or pranks. The lodge room is not the proper location for the telling of practical jokes, pranks, horseplay nor off-color stories.

USE PROPER MASONIC NAMES: Why? It is common courtesy to be accurate in speaking a brother's name, it is proper Masonic etiquette to address officers, members and visitors by their correct Masonic titles and addresses. Make a effort to remember.

Masonic etiquette is simply the rules of good manners which make Lodge meetings

pleasant for everyone.

The position of Worshipful Master in the East occupies the most exalted position within the Lodge. A Lodge which does not honor its Master, no matter how they personally feel about the man himself, lacks Masonic courtesy. The honor conveyed by the brethren in electing him, in other words, the historical traditions and the men who have gone before you both must be given the utmost respect, if the traditions of the Fraternity are to be observed and Masonic etiquette is to be maintained.

Masonic etiquette comprises Lodge courtesies and proprieties, like those of the profane (non-Masonic) world, are founded simply and completely on obeying the Golden Rule which states: "Do Unto Others As You Would Have Them Do Unto You".

Good manners imply observance of the formal requirements governing man's behavior in polite society and sense of what is appropriate for a person of good breeding with high morals and good taste.

The spirit of brotherly love and affection, by which we are bound together will be exemplified in our conduct, our carriage and our behavior at all times.

It is my hope that you will use your trowel to cement the stones of brotherly love for the "More Noble and Glorious Purpose" of exhibiting these rules of Masonic Etiquette toward one and all within the Brethren.

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