

# MASONIC PROTOCOL

Compiled from various authoritative sources including the Grand Lodge of Virginia and the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia

**Masonic Protocol is the formal code of etiquette for the Grand Lodge. Although the rules of the Masonic etiquette for the Grand Lodge of Ohio are not written down anywhere as official requirements, yet they do exist and have been transmitted from the past and accepted as the rules of polite manners and correct behavior, to be exercised while we are engaged in Masonic activities.**

1. One of the peculiarities of the Masonic Fraternity is that a man attends a Lodge meeting or a Masonic gathering not as a private individual, but as a Master Mason. He is therefore to be addressed by his surname, i.e., "Brother Smith" rather than "Brother Bill." "Brother" is a title. In addressing another member, the correct way to do so is "Brother Lastname". Officers may be addressed as "Brother Junior Warden" etc. Dignitaries should be referred to by their titles as in "Right Worshipful Brother Lastname" etc.
2. A Mason's profane status or title should be of no concern in Masonic Lodge. His Masonic status or title are the governing criteria for his recognition in the Lodge.
3. Masonic protocol requires that all inter-Jurisdictional correspondence must take place between the respective offices of the Grand Secretaries unless written permission has been received in advance for direct correspondence to occur. This applies to correspondence to/from Officers of Lodges and/or Grand Lodges. The pervasive and easy use of e-mail does not eliminate the need to follow Masonic protocol. When in doubt, contact the Grand Secretary's Office for guidance.
4. The responsibility of every Mason is to maintain a respectful attitude toward the Grand Master, not necessarily for the sake of the man in the high office, but for the maintenance of the supreme importance of the office, The Grand Master is therefore never to be addressed at any Masonic gathering by his first name, no matter how close an individual may feel toward him. His proper address is "Most Worshipful" and when being formally received in a Lodge, he is accorded his full title, "Most Worshipful Brother (*full name*), Grand Master of Masons in Ohio"
5. The Worshipful Master must be shown the same respect and courtesy we show the Grand Master. He should be addressed at all times as "Worshipful" and when an individual rises to speak or when called upon by the Worshipful Master he should salute the Master with the proper mode of recognition, both when he rises from his seat and when he is reseated. No other procedure is acceptable.
6. Prayers at Lodge functions should be in keeping with Masonic teachings. They should never be an expression of particular sectarian views or dogmatic creeds. It is a matter of courtesy and respect that all prayers, speeches and discussions at Masonic affairs avoid sectarian, controversial or political tones.

7. When the Grand Master visits a Lodge, nothing is supposed to follow his remarks except the closing. However, the Grand Master may, when the occasion is appropriate, waive the otherwise mandatory requirements.
8. When wishing to speak in Lodge, a Brother should rise and wait to be recognized by the Master. Then, salute the East appropriately and begin to speak. All remarks should be directed to the East. If a Brother wishes to speak to another Brother directly ask permission from the East first. Rising to speak should also be practiced when making or seconding motions et all.
9. The Ballot is secret, sacred, and inviolate. When a Ballot is taken the act is momentous for the Candidate and significant for the Lodge. It is an official act by each member in turn and by the Lodge as a legal body. The Ballot has legal sanction and must be conducted according to solemn rules. It is etiquette for the Lodge Room to be in complete silence, without whispering, or discussion of the Candidate while waiting to cast your Ballot or any information about how a member has voted. The officers should remain at their stations and places in silence and dignity. Such of them as participate in spreading, inspecting, and declaring it, should act in strict decorum. The period of etiquette and decorum doesn't end when you've cast your vote. It includes the declaration of the results by the Master, the restoration of the Ballot Box, and the return of the participating officers to their places.
10. A District Deputy on an official visit is received with an etiquette which reflects the fact that he is the personal representative of the Grand Master. When he is present in the Lodge room it is as if the Grand Master was there in person .. Proper deference to the DDGM includes allowing him the protocol of "final comment". No one should rise to speak on any issue after the DDGM has completed his prepared remarks. Worshipful Masters are reminded to encourage their members to make announcements from the sidelines before the DDGM speaks.
11. An office has a station or place of its own in the Lodge, with duties, responsibilities, and dignities inherent in it. The etiquette and protocol accorded to an officer represent the properties of the office, and is not directed to the officer personally.
12. A sloppy manner of saluting, of approaching the East (or any other station), of standing, and of speaking to an officer, is a reflection on the Lodge for a failure to give to the office that respect which belongs to it. If a Master exacts of every member, and of every other officer, a faithful rendering of the form of etiquette that is to be accorded to his own office, it will create a more faithful observance of the form at every other station or place.
13. The manner in which an examination is to be conducted is the focus of etiquette and protocol. The Examining Committee withdraws with the visitor to a private place. They are in an official relationship with him and therefore their manners are formal. They must keep in mind that their only purpose is to satisfy themselves that the visitor is, or is not, a Master Mason in good standing from a Regular Lodge holden under a Grand Jurisdiction with whom we are in amity. They are NOT called upon to test his proficiency in the ritual

or to be personally inquisitive. If the Examining Committee has the duty to satisfy itself that a visitor is a Master Mason in good standing in a Regular Lodge, the visitor also has a right to make sure that the Lodge he comes to visit is itself a Regular Lodge. He may, therefore, ask to see its charter. But what if the Lodge is already in session and the charter is hanging on the wall over the Secretary's desk?? It is etiquette to grant his request to see the charter; on the other hand it is also etiquette that we not disturb the Lodge by going to fetch it. In such a dilemma the etiquette of the Lodge should take precedence. The visitor should be told in a friendly manner, that if he wishes to examine the charter, he must come at another time, and before Lodge is opened. If the visitor satisfies the committee, and if the visitor himself is satisfied, the visitor as yet possesses no right to enter until after the Worshipful Master has consented. The Committee should conduct the visitor to the Anteroom and introduce him to the Tiler who in turn ceremoniously hands him over to the Junior Deacon.

14. In many societies an office holder reverts to the same status at the end of his term which he had before. The rule in Masonry is different. A Lodge member who has held the highest office in the Lodge has for life a Masonic position of his own. It has its own identity and recognition and carries with it the title of "Past Master." Past Masters have a standing in Masonic Law; certain duties may be assigned to them. In etiquette they are entitled to a deference which belongs to their position; in protocol they are entitled to a specific order of lineal precedence. On their own part, Past Masters are bound to the same rules of etiquette that is observed toward the Worshipful Master by all other members of the Lodge.
15. The preparation room is a sanctuary for the Candidate and the officers preparing him. It is necessary that it be closed-in and that its privacy is strictly preserved. It is a breach of good manners for the candidate to be under view or made the subject of unkind remarks. The officers preparing him act with dignity and are not expected to discuss with him anything in the Degree he is being prepared for. It is proper to review any Degrees that he has already taken and coach him to respond to questions in the same form and tense that they are asked. For example; "Is it, .... etc.? Answer "It is." ; "Do you , .... etc.? Answer "I do," Instead of "yes, sir" and "no, sir" which in Lodge sounds unsuitably trite.
16. The etiquette governing the conferral of Degrees is strict. There shall be no talking, whispering, or laughing, or any disturbances during the Degree work. It is not an occasion for mirth. There should be no needless moving about. The officers participating shall never step out of their roles, to hold conversations, to make private remarks, to indulge in pantomime, or to make comments about the candidate. Nothing outside the Standard Work in our Ritual shall be substituted for or added to any portion of it (including a "Chamber of Reflection"). If costumes are worn they must be correct and appropriate. Detailed arrangements are always completed before the Degrees begin and not improvised while the Degree is in progress.
17. The Worshipful Master is the officer whose first duty it is to see that nothing is ever allowed to harm the Lodge which is entrusted to his care. For that reason he cannot tolerate a careless practice of etiquette. If, upon coming to the East, a Master finds that indifference to, or a casual practice of etiquette has crept into the Lodge he should find

an early opportunity to address the subject with his officers and members. What is the place of Masonic etiquette in the Craft? It has no SPECIAL place! It has every special place! It is ALWAYS observed whenever or wherever Masons assemble, or speak, or act in the name of the Craft! For that reason it is described as "Masonic". If it belonged to the Ritual of the Degrees a Master might conceive it to lie outside the span of his responsibility, and hold that it is only in the care of the Grand Lodge or Grand Officers; but it is in the ritual as elsewhere and in no sense peculiar to the Ritual alone. The District Deputy Grand Master may consult and advise concerning a Lodge's practice of etiquette, but they cannot interfere. The Worshipful Master has full responsibility for etiquette, as he has total charge of all things in the Lodge. And, like all leaders, the W:.M:. may delegate authority, but the responsibility resides with him alone. Our Brother, Harry S. Truman, said it best, "The buck stops here!!" The Worshipful Master is Master of the Lodge's etiquette in the same sense that he is Master of the Lodge. It is as much his duty to govern the Lodge in etiquette as in its business, its balloting, its debate, its conferring of Degrees.