

MASONIC ETIQUETTE

by Bro. Harvey L. Sokoloff, P.M.
St. John's Lodge, No. 115, F.&A.M. of Pennsylvania

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This presentation is derived from <http://www.masonic-Lodge-of-education/masonic-etiquette.html> and http://www.pagrandLodge.org/district20/files/masonic_library/Masonic%20Etiquette.PDF)

➤ WHY THIS PRESENTATION?:

- We have been blessed with an influx of many new members who have not been taught all the aspects of Masonic Etiquette and many of our members with many more years of Masonic service can benefit from some "tuning up".
- Masonic Etiquette is largely unpublished or taught in an organized way. Etiquette has generally been learned on the fly – circumstance by circumstance, correction by correction, and not generally with consistency.
- Generally we focus on teaching ritual, Masonic symbols, history, etc., but not how to conduct yourself within and even outside the Lodge.
- Some aspects are of minor importance, some of great importance, BUT ALL REFLECT ON US PERSONALLY AND ON THE LODGE IN PARTICULAR.
- This evening's program is intended to teach Masonic Etiquette in a more comprehensive and organized way.
- **Remember, we are all guilty of lapses or ignorance of Masonic Etiquette. This presentation is intended for ALL of us to improve the operation and status of this Lodge as a premiere Masonic Lodge.**

➤ WHAT IS ETIQUETTE?

- The procedures and behaviors acceptable and required in society.
- It enables us to behave with decorum and dignity.
- Need to match etiquette to circumstances.
- Leads to pleasant, respectful, and appropriate interactions.

➤ **WHAT IS MASONIC ETIQUETTE?**

- Specific technicalities and ceremonial observances unique to Freemasonry that are indispensable for the decorum and harmonious working of the business of the Lodge - the WM's prime responsibilities.
- Brethren, at its core Masonic Etiquette is about showing respect for our Fraternity, our Lodge, our Officers, and our Brothers. It is an experience of the heart and mind that naturally renders due regard to the rights and privileges enshrined in our principles and our ritualistic teachings.

➤ **THE WORSHIPFUL MASTER'S AUTHORITY**

- Key to Masonic Etiquette is our understanding of the Worshipful Master's authority.
- He is the single source of authority and control of the Lodge during its meetings (when he has not yielded his office to the DDGM or RWGM).
- Can rule any brother out of order at any time.
- Decides what can be discussed and for how long.
- If a brother feels the WM is arbitrary, unjust, unfair, or operating in a Masonically (or otherwise) illegal manner he can forward a complaint to the DDGM.
 - DDGM rules on a complaint and if valid forwards it to the RWGM.
- If the WM rules a brother Out of Order AND the brother insists on speaking after being ruled out of order that brother may be committing a Masonic offense and brought up on charges.
 - We have a Committee on Grievance to act on such offenses and charges. (Never invoked in my 38 years in the Lodge).
- When the WM requests a member to serve in some capacity it is proper to accept the request with courtesy and carry out the request with due diligence unless there are particular and UNAVOIDABLE reasons which preclude carrying out the WM's request.

RULES OF MASONIC ETIQUETTE

1. DRESS:

Etiquette Rules:

- a. Dress conservatively. Jacket and tie are required. Our preference is a dark suit or sport coat and slacks, white shirt, and tie.
- b. Put on your apron outside the Lodge room.

Why? The Lodge room during meetings is considered “hallowed ground” in Freemasonry. A casual appearance and a casual approach to being properly dressed prior to entering the Lodge room fails to show respect for the institution and your officers.

Likewise, when the meeting is over, try to take off your apron in the vestibule as you leave and place it in the appropriate box (regular or Past Master) for aprons. This helps the Tyler and again shows respect for the Lodge room. It is similar to the courtesy of always wearing a yarmulke while in a synagogue chapel.

2. SALUTING THE WORSHIPFUL MASTER:

Etiquette Rules: When the Lodge is open and at labor the brethren will salute the Master when they enter and when they leave the Lodge room or when they cross the Lodge room. If the WM is busy wait a moment until recognized by the WM.

- The Chaplain should quietly point out to the WM that there are brethren at the altar if the WM is distracted.
- Don’t “sneak” in and take your seat without approaching the altar and saluting the WM.
- Salutes should reflect your heart-felt respect for all that for which he stands. In other words no sloppy signs. As we are taught - “It is a sign of respect...”.
- A lazy, sloppy, or improper salute is Masonically impolite and, thus, exhibits poor Masonic etiquette
- Stand erect and still at the altar, wait until you have the WM’s attention, throw the sign, WAIT FOR THE RESPONSE, and then move.

3. ENTERING LODGE AFTER THE MEETING HAS BEGUN:

Etiquette Rules:

- If a brother should enter the Lodge after the opening ceremony is under way, he should go to the Altar to salute the Master.
- If he must leave before the meeting is over, the correct Masonic etiquette of his departure is that he should salute the Presiding Master at the Altar before he departs.
- The salute should always be given properly and not in a careless or perfunctory manner.
- When there are multiple brethren wishing to enter or retire they should do it three at a time and throw salute the WM simultaneously.

4. WALKING BETWEEN THE ALTAR AND THE WORSHIPFUL MASTER:

Etiquette Rule: Brethren do not pass between the Altar and the East when the Lodge is open.

Why? As a courtesy to the Master, it is necessary that the three Great Lights which shine their eternal light and wisdom upon the Master to help him govern the Lodge should never be in shadow.

5. SITTING IN THE EAST:

Etiquette Rule: Brethren do not take a seat in the East without an invitation... even if all other seats are full.

Why? It is the Master's prerogative to recognize distinguished visitors or a special member whom the Master wishes to honor by having him sit with him in the East.

In other words, if you were in church and the pews were full, would you go up and sit beside the Pastor?

6. TALKING:

Etiquette Rule: "Side talk" while a degree is being conferred or when another Brother is addressing the Worshipful Master or the Lodge is considered bad manners.

Why? Again, the Lodge room is "hallowed ground" in Freemasonry. It is the equivalent of a chapel in a church, synagogue, or mosque. Talking, without asking to do so, shows irreverence for the proceedings.

It also distracts the officers, the workers, and worst of all, the candidate during the conferral of degrees.

Unless you have been recognized by the Worshipful Master to speak, silence is the rule. This also means no whispering. It is permissible to talk in low voice during periods when the Lodge is "at ease" meaning lulls in proceedings.

Etiquette Rule: No practical jokes, horseplay, or off-color stories.

Why? Rather obvious at this point.

7. SPEAKING – GENERAL RULES:

Etiquette Rule: No man sits while addressing the Lodge or another brother in the Lodge room..

Why? It is simply a form of respect ...and no different than attending a shareholder's meeting or a City Council meeting.

It is expected that if you wish to address the audience, you will stand so all may see who is speaking

Etiquette Rule: Speak up.

Why? The obvious courtesy of helping the Brethren hear your remarks especially those who may be hard of hearing.

Etiquette Rule: Officers are addressed by their office; members by "Brother" and their last name; Past Masters as "*Brother (their last name) Past Master*". Use the First Name plus Last Name if there is more than one brother present with the same last name:

Brother Senior Warden, Brother Secretary, etc.
Brother Santoro, P.M.
Brother Brad Sokoloff

"Hey, Bobby" is not acceptable.

Why? It is common courtesy to be accurate in speaking a brother's name, so it is proper Masonic etiquette to address officers, members, and visitors by their correct Masonic titles and addresses. It also reinforces our sense of being in a Masonic Lodge and not out in the general "profane" world outside the Lodge room.

How? – After being recognized by the WM say:

"Worshipful Master (sign, and wait for response), may I address the Lodge?" or

"Worshipful Master, may I address Bro.Smith (use last name)?"

Then after being given permission:

"Thank you Worshipful Master. Brethren,....."

Or

"Thank you Worshipful Master. Brother Smith...."

(Remember, you cannot address another Brother except through the WM)

NOTE: Be considerate of the WM and your Brethren. The WM has limited time to carry out the evening's agenda. Keep remarks brief. If your thoughts or ideas only need to be discussed with a few brethren then take them off-line. They can be discussed outside the Lodge room and then, if appropriate, present them on the Lodge floor as discussed above. Keep your comments to the point.

8. SPEAKING – OFFERING MOTIONS OR RAISING IMPORTANT TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

Etiquette Rule: If you wish to offer a predetermined motion or an important matter for discussion, advise the Master before the meeting and preferably before the day of the meeting.

Why? As a courtesy to him, his work, and his dedication to the members, it is best to ask him privately, beforehand, if he will be able to recognize you to speak your purpose. This also gives him the chance to consider your concern before the meeting so that he can be properly prepared to address it before or during the meeting.

Be prepared!: Do your homework prior to raising a motion or topic of discussion. Discuss the issue with Past Masters and other experienced brethren prior to presenting the idea off-line to the WM and then presented in the open Lodge. Prepare a written motion and a summary of your points that you can talk to so that you don't ramble on. Provide a copy of your talking points to the WM and the Secretary so that the Secretary can properly summarize the discussion in the Minutes

HOW? Raise your hand to get Master's attention. When the Master recognizes you, you must stand up, and be recognized by the Master to speak.

"Worshipful Master (sign, then wait for Master's response), May I address the Lodge?.....Thank you Worshipful Master"

Then with the WM's permission address the Lodge as a whole:

*"Worshipful Master, [Right Worshipfuls], Wardens and Brethren,
....."*

To address just the Worshipful Master:

"Worshipful Master,... (then proceed with your talking points)"

NOTE: If you have discussed the issue with the WM before the meeting you can arrange a predetermined time at which the WM will call upon you to address the Lodge.

9. OBEY THE GAVEL:

Etiquette Rule: You must immediately obey the gavel.

Why? Failure to immediately obey the gavel is a GRAVE DISCOURTESY and VERY poor Masonic Etiquette.

- The Master is all powerful in the Lodge and his word is final.
- He can put or refuse to put any motion.
- He can rule any brother out of order on any subject at any time.
- He determines what and what will not be permitted to be discussed.
- Brethren who think him unfair, arbitrary, unjust, or acting illegally have redress.
- The Grand Lodge can be appealed to on any such matter (via the DDGM). However, in the Lodge, the Master's gavel, which is his emblem of authority, is 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 a Masonic offense.

Masonic etiquette decries anyone who does not obey the gavel.

10. TURNING YOUR BACK:

Etiquette Rule: Never turn one's back on the Worshipful Master to address the Lodge without first receiving permission from the Master to speak.

Why? Any debates that are in motion must be conducted using proper Masonic etiquette. One always stands to order when addressing the chair.

Customs differ in various jurisdictions as to the method of salute; however some salute should always be given when addressing the Master.

Two brethren, both on their feet, simultaneously arguing a motion, who are facing each other and ignoring the Master, is unacceptable.

11. **BALLOTING AND VOTING**

Etiquette Rules:

1. Do not enter or leave the Lodge room during a ballot. One is not permitted to leave or enter during a test ballot.
2. Balloting and voting is mandatory. When an issue is put to a vote, or a ballot is had, all brethren should vote.

Why? It is discourteous to leave the Lodge room during a speech, during a degree, and particularly balloting. There are several natural periods, such as at the end of one section and before the next begins, OR when the Master puts the Lodge at ease. Then, and only then, may you leave the Lodge without being considered rude. The WM will call order with one rap of the gavel. Then talking must cease.

A brother who does not vote fails to share in his duties and is in direct disobedience to the Master. Furthermore he devalues the proceedings of the Lodge and the sense that we are a Brotherhood. In essence his non-vote implicitly says he doesn't care.

12. **SHOULDERING THE WORK:**

Etiquette Rule: Graciously accept a request made in the name of the Lodge if it is within your abilities. However, do not accept a task beyond your means to accomplish it in the timeframe requested and with due diligence.

Why? Obvious

13. **CORRECTION OF A BROTHER'S ERRORS:**

Etiquette Rule: 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, and even then he does so only when the error is a serious one.

Why? It is discourteous to point out others mistakes in front of the Lodge brethren. If you are in possession of a mind which allows you to be able to perform each and every degree and ceremony, perfectly, please advise the Worshipful Master of such that he may take advantage of your services to mentor others.

14. POSTURE:

Etiquette Rule: *Exhibit good posture while within the Lodge room. Lounging, leaning and slovenly attitudes should be avoided.*

Why: Poor posture implies boredom or a disagreeable attitude about the proceedings and therefore is considered poor Masonic etiquette.

15. PRAYERS:

Etiquette Rule: All prayers at Lodge functions are to be non-sectarian. Prayers are best directed to the Creator, the Master Architect of the Universe and not toward specific religious teachings such as Jesus Christ, Mother Mary, Muhammad, Jehovah, Allah etc.

Why: Freemasonry is worldwide and holds no sectarian views. Non-sectarian means not sectioned into one, specific religion. Freemasonry embraces all monotheistic religions. It is a matter of courtesy that all prayers, speeches and discussions at Masonic affairs avoid sectarian, controversial or political tones.

16. CELL PHONES AND BEEPERS:

Etiquette Rule: All cell phones and beepers should be turned off before entering the Lodge room so as not to disrupt the proceedings. If absolutely necessary keep them on but put them on silent mode. If you must respond to or make a call leave the Lodge room.

Why? Same reasons as the Talking topic above

MASONIC ETIQUETTE SUMMARY:

Etiquette or good manners imply observance of the formal requirements governing man's behavior in polite society and a sense of what is appropriate for a person of high character.

Masonic etiquette is simply the application of rules of good manners to Freemasonry and which make our Lodge meetings more pleasant, respectful, and efficient.

The position of Worshipful Master in the East occupies the most exalted position within the Lodge and much of the rules of Masonic etiquette both respect the office and permit the Worshipful Master to properly exercise his obligation.

The honor conveyed by the brethren in electing him, our historical traditions, and the labors of the Worshipful Masters who have gone before him compel us to give him and the office the utmost respect.

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

St. John's Lodge has a proud heritage and a bright future. We further honor that heritage and help insure our future by our proper conduct. Let us remember those words from our Charge at the Opening of a Lodge: that "we ought to apply ourselves with zeal to the practice and profession of Freemasonry" and also that we are to "preserve a nobleness and justness of understanding, politeness of manners, and evenness of temper" so that we support the name we have always borne of being a respectable, regular, and uniform Fraternity.