

Part #11

Briefing Guide About "Lodge"

After being raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason, the new Brother is often left to fend for himself. Why should he have to learn the hard way the common rules about how a lodge works?

The following list might be used after the Entered Apprentice degree (leaving out appropriate parts) or as a general reminder after the third degree. They can be briefed in a lodge, or provide another opportunity for the Mentor to engage the new Brother about what he thinks about the lodge.

1. Two basic types of lodge meetings, stated and special communications.
 - a. Stated Communications are specified in the Lodge's By-Laws and are _____.
 - b. A Special Communication may be called for degree work or practice, installations, funerals, etc.
2. The Master of the Lodge has "near unlimited" authority for his year in the east.
 - a. The Master can rule a Brother or a topic out of order, and can table any subject including motions. This power is seldom used, but is available to ensure that "peace and harmony prevail."
 - i. Two subjects should never be discussed in Lodge: religion and politics.
 - b. He is the only one lodge who has the privilege of being "covered" (wearing a hat).
 - c. The Master is the last to stand up, and the first to sit down.
 - d. Brothers should never break the Master's view of the Three Great Lights.
 - i. Don't walk between the Master and the altar (unless required by degree work).
 - e. The Master uses the gavel as a symbol of authority and to control movement in the lodge.
 - i. Most Brothers need to know two basic gavel commands; 3 and 1 knocks.
 1. Three knocks command the entire lodge to rise.
 - a. Used for prayers, Pledge of Allegiance, and at appropriate points in the opening, closing, and degree work.
 2. When standing, a single knock seats the lodge.
 - ii. Two knocks of the gavel command all lodge Officers involved in the current activity to stand.
 - iii. A single knock is also to be used as a "command of execution."
 1. The initial knock on opening a lodge commands; the Junior Deacon to close the door, Brethren takes seats, and Officers take their stations and places. Warden display columns, erect in the south, down in the West.
3. A Brother should be prepared for each lodge meeting.
 - a. The dress code for any given lodge may vary greatly, ours is _____.
 - i. Officers may dress more formal than sideliners.
 - ii. Special occasions may call for more formal attire.
 - iii. Brothers always prefer that you show up, dressed however you have to, if the alternate is you don't show up.
 - b. All Brothers need to be properly "clothed" to be in a lodge room.
 - i. The apron must always be tied outside of any jacket or coat worn.

- c. During the opening of a lodge at the FC or MM level, each Brother (except the Master and Wardens) must give the appropriate “Pass” to the Deacon as they purge the lodge.
 - i. Stand as the Deacon approaches you and whisper the pass to him.
 - ii. If you are not sure what the Pass is, ask before the opening ceremony.
 - d. Toward the opening and closing of a lodge, all Brothers must give the “Due Guards” and “Signs” of each degree as appropriate.
 - i. When opening at the MM level, start with the due guard and sign of an EA, then the FC, and the MM. To open a lodge at a lower level, only give due guards and signs up to the level which is being opened.
 - ii. On closing from the MM level start with the due guard and sign of an MM, then the FC, and the EA. To close originally opened at a lower level, only give due guards and signs starting at the highest level which was opened.
 - e. To speak in open lodge, a brother should rise, salute the Master with the “sign” of the current level (EA, FC, or MM) and wait to be recognized before speaking. Sideline conversations are not appropriate.
 - f. You should use proper forms of addressing individuals in the lodge.
 - i. When referring to an Officer of the Lodge, use the proper title; Worshipful Master, Senior Warden, Junior Warden, Senior Deacon, Secretary, etc.
 - ii. When referring to a Brother use “Brother _____” or “Worshipful Brother _____” for a Past Master.
 - iii. “Right Worshipful Brother _____” is reserved for the holders of the 3 officers below the Grand Master in the Progressive Line and the Grand Secretary and Grand Treasurer.
 - iv. “Most Worshipful Brother _____” is reserved for the current and past Grand Masters.
 - g. If a Brother gets to lodge after the opening ritual has started :
 - i. You will have to wait till the opening ceremony is complete.
 - ii. The Tyler and the Junior Deacon will inform the Master that you want to enter and pass his permission to you.
 - iii. Approach the west of the alter and salute with the “sign” of the current level and have a seat.
 - h. The proper attitude of prayer is to stand with your arms crossed over your chest, with the left arm over right arm.
 - i. When the prayer ends with “Amen” the proper response from all of the Brothers is: “So Mote it be,” which translates to; so may it ever be.
4. Lodge processes:
- a. A Lodge is at “Labor” (in session) from the time the Master declares it open during the opening, till he declares it closed during the closing.
 - i. Lesser lights will be on and the Greater Lights displayed as appropriate.
 - b. While most lodges use the motions, second the motion, discussion, vote, and amendments to motions to deal with lodge business, Roberts Rules do not apply in a Lodge.
 - c. In a Lodge, there are two forms of voting:
 - i. For normal motions, Brothers vote by giving the “Usual Sign of a mason” (raising the right hand) when called for by the Master, normally after discussion.
 - ii. When a Secret Ballot is declared, pay close attention to what the Master says.

1. Stand when the Senior Deacon brings the ballot box to you. Remember white balls elect, black balls or cubes reject. Use extreme caution in use of the black ball.
 2. Never discuss a secret ballot, how you or anyone else voted.
 3. Only Master Masons of that lodge can ballot, and all of them must vote.
- d. When moving around the lodge, always walk straight lines either north or south or east and west. Use square corners. Again, don't cross the East in front of the Master.
 - e. A lodge may be called to "Refreshment" as specified in the code book.
 - i. Greater Lights closed and lesser lights are out.
 - ii. Used for longer breaks in lodge activities such as a meal, etc.
 - iii. Also used to change from one level to another (example: MM to EA)
 - f. The Master can declare that; the "Brothers may have Liberty of the Lodge" which relaxes normal behavior rules (open discussion permitted, etc.).
 - i. May be used facilitate position changes for degree work, waiting for candidates to get prepared or to facilitate general discussions (say during a LEO Program).
 - g. Some Lodges are dark during the summer months.
5. Right to Visit – As a Mason you have the right to visit any "Regular Lodge."
- a. If in doubt, check with your Lodge Secretary, or Grand Secretary to ensure that the lodge you intend to visit is not "clandestine" (defined as the lodge which is under a Grand Jurisdiction which is not recognized by your lodge's Grand Lodge).
 - b. You should arrive early enough to be examined if necessary.
 - c. Unless there is someone at the visited lodge who has sat in lodge with you (or knows someone who came with you, who has sat in lodge with you), you will be examined.
 - i. Make sure you have your dues card (legal information).
 - ii. They should check that your lodge is "Regular".
 - iii. Three Brothers of that lodge will join with you as you all give the "Test Oath" from the back of the code book with all of your hands on the Bible.
 - iv. You will all kiss the Bible.
 - v. They will then ask you general questions:
 1. They should at least cover the passes, due guards and signs of the degrees (which will be necessary for you to get through the opening ceremony).
 2. They may choose to ask you other Masonic questions, answer to the best of your ability.
 - d. Your right to visit can be over ridden by the complaint of any Brother of the visited lodge. Peace and Harmony being one of the primary goals.