

Questions and Answers for the Postulant



Grand Lodge of Virginia

A.F. & A.M.

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At the Lodge, before the degree and during the time when the Lodge is being opened and the candidate is being prepared, there is an opportunity for the Stewards to be with the candidate.

Remember that it is here in the Preparation Room that the candidate receives his first impression of the Craft. He comes as a total stranger to all the practices and requirements of the Lodge and often is nervous, apprehensive, ill at ease, not knowing what to expect, and fearful lest he make a bad impression of himself in whatever may follow. By a proper attitude toward the candidate in the Preparation Room, his respect for the institution may be tremendously increased. But, on the other hand, an improper attitude or a lack of respect for his feelings can seriously damage his good impression of the Fraternity.

So, during this time, we want to reduce any apprehensions the candidate may have, and put him into the proper frame of mind for enjoying the experience and gaining from it all that is intended. Here is a script that you can use to accomplish this.

Opening Remarks to the candidate before the EA Degree: To set your mind at ease and to put you in the right framework for what you will experience [today/tonight], I thought we might take a few minutes to talk about the degree and what is about to happen. You may have additional questions, but I want to start with some questions other candidates have asked about the degree.

Q1: What exactly are the degrees in Masonry?

A1: The degrees are carefully scripted ritual plays that begin to teach you about Freemasonry, what it stands for and what it values.

Q2: Why are they called degrees? Are they like academic degrees?

A2: The degrees are rooted more in the craft guilds of England than in the university degrees. The man hoping to learn his craft became an Apprentice to a Master. When he gained sufficient knowledge and experience, he became a Fellow of the Craft, a Fellowcraft, and was able to work on his own. When he acquired greater skill and produced a “masterpiece,” he became a Master craftsman and could open his own shop and instruct apprentices. But like the university degrees, the bachelor’s degree, the master’s degree, and the doctorate, there is the concept of studying under those more learned in the field, and proving oneself by demonstrating proficiency — the exams, the thesis, and the dissertation.

Q3: What about the hazing that takes place in college fraternities?

A3: There is no hazing in Freemasonry. Although the Greek letter fraternities, like the Masonic Fraternity, have signs of recognition, fraternal jewelry, initiation ceremonies, and even a philosophy, they are, after all, college fraternities. There is an expression in the Bible: “When I was a child, I used to talk as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I put aside childish things” [1 Cor 13:11]. Freemasonry is for adults, and while we have fun, we have more serious purposes, one of which is to treat each other with respect and dignity.

Q4. Why do all candidates go through the degrees?

A4. All of the members of your Lodge have gone through these same ceremonies, the same as all the members of all the Lodges under the Grand Lodge of Virginia. These ceremonies are very similar to those experienced by Masons all over the country and all over the world. So, the degrees link you to your Lodge Brethren, to millions of Masons throughout the world, and, indeed, to millions of Masons throughout the centuries who have participated in the ceremony you are about to partake.

Q5. What am I expected to do during the degree?

A5. You will be given all necessary instructions, but the main thing is to listen carefully and pay attention to what is being done and what is being said to you.

Q6. Why am I dressed this way?

A6. The reasons will be explained to you following you the conferral of this degree. I would also want to add that during the degree, you will be required to take upon yourself an obligation to adhere to the moral precepts of Freemasonry. This obligation is of ancient origin and contains penalties for violations which are founded in antiquity and are wholly symbolic in nature. We have chosen to leave these symbolic penalties in the obligations because of their antiquity and to impress upon you the seriousness of your undertaking, but the only penalties which Freemasonry imposes for violations of its tenets and regulations are reprimand, suspension and expulsion.

Q7. How will I remember all that happens tonight?

A7. There are at least three ways. First, after the ritual, there is a lecture that will summarize what has occurred. Second, your coach will spend time with you going over what has occurred and answering any questions you may have. Third, you can get another perspective on the degree by visiting an Entered Apprentice Lodge in this or in another Lodge with a Master Mason who can vouch for you, and watching the degree being conferred on another candidate.