



PAPER

Masonic Dress

Summary: Advice and hints about Masonic dress within the English Constitution.

Masonic dress varies from Lodge to Lodge, from Province to Province and within The United Grand Lodge of England. The unification of the Antients and the Moderns into the United Grand Lodge in 1813, gave us our dress code and our ritual. During the Victorian era gentlemen wore dark morning (tails) or evening dress on all formal occasions and white gloves became an essential element. They were rather keen on rank and status too, hence all our bling and those 90 odd levels of preferment.

The Book of Constitutions Rule 239.

The regalia, clothing, insignia and jewels to be worn are as hereinafter prescribed, and no Brother shall be admitted into any meeting of the Grand Lodge, or of any subordinate Lodge, without the clothing appropriate to his rank under the Grand Lodge.



Courtesy of the Shop at Freemasons' Hall, London

Information for the Guidance of Members of the Craft (the blue book).

The Board strongly reaffirms that, unless it is the custom of the Lodge to meet in evening dress, traditional morning wear or dark lounge suit, with black shoes, continues to be the appropriate dress. Shirts must have a plain white collar and, if not completely white, should be of a restrained pattern or hue.

[Extract from the Board of General Purposes, adopted 14 December 2016]

As the Deputy Grand Secretary, Graham Redman, advises in his book *Masonic Etiquette Today*:

It goes – or should go – without saying that a member of a Lodge should be careful to conform to the dress code it has adopted. A visitor also should, as a part of the courtesy that is one of the reciprocal obligations of hospitality, conform if he is able – and if he is not, should at least show sensitivity – to the customs of his hosts.

Today, in Lodges of the English Constitution, the norm is a dark-coloured lounge suit. Black, charcoal or grey suit or a 'Harrow Jacket' and striped trousers for Provincial and Grand Officers; though nowadays many Masons wear them. Usually complimented with a white shirt and black or 'Masonic' tie, though again we see coloured or striped shirts with white collars and cuffs.

Whilst this is acceptable for most Lodges, some expect their officers to wear a tailcoat at all meetings, others wear an evening suit at all meetings or at Installations only. Women Freemasons have a similar dress code.

Similarly, there are different conventions concerning when to wear Full Dress Apron and tailcoat or 'Undress' for those of higher rank (high Rulers, Provincial Grand Masters etc.) and roles, (Wardens, Directors of Ceremonies etc.) in particular situations (Grand Lodge, representing a Ruler, etc.).



Suffolk Light Blues at Grand Lodge.
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From left to right:
RW Bro Sir David Wootton, Deputy Grand Master,
MW Bro His Royal Highness The Duke of Kent, KG, Grand Master,
MW Bro P.G. Lowndes, Past Pro Grand Master,
MW Bro J. Spence, Pro Grand Master
Photography: Steve Blake ©2021 UGLE

There are university Lodges where it is the custom to wear gowns over regalia, and some Lodges in which court dress is worn i.e., knee breeches, black silk stockings and buckled shoes, white tie and waistcoat, with evening tailcoat or similar. In certain military Lodges, members wear mess kit or full uniform, instead of morning dress. Some 'Working Lodges' even allow Masons to attend directly from work in their work clothes, dependent on the wording in their by-laws.

Highland dress however, can be more of a problem and it normally requires the permission of the Provincial Grand Master to allow the wearing of this type of attire by expatriate Scots, or those of Scottish descent. It should not be assumed however, that it is acceptable when visiting another Lodge.



Photography: Steve Blake
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Ties are also a controversial area and often Brethren are confused as to what they may or may not wear in a Craft Lodge.

Information for the Guidance of Members of the Craft (*the blue book*).

The Board accordingly recommends that

(a) in Grand Lodge Brethren must wear either one of the two versions of the Craft tie, or a plain black tie (without any emblem, whether in the weave or as a coloured design);

(b) on all other occasions, as an alternative to one of the Craft ties or a plain black tie, the relevant authorised Metropolitan, Provincial or District tie may be worn, as may the Royal Arch tie except that Brethren attending a Lodge in an official capacity on behalf of the MW The Grand Master or their respective Metropolitan, Provincial or District Grand Master should wear the appropriate Craft tie or a plain black tie.

[Extract from Report of Board of General Purposes, adopted 14 December 2016]



At the recent Annual Investiture the MW The Grand Master announced that the new Royal Arch tie, approved by the Committee of General Purposes of Supreme Grand Chapter, could be worn in future in Craft Lodges, and that further guidance would be given on the appropriate wearing of the tie. The Board is anxious to emphasise the indissoluble link that exists in English Freemasonry between the Craft and the Royal Arch, and accordingly recommends that qualified Royal Arch Companions should be permitted, and indeed encouraged, to wear the new tie in Private Lodges, unless they are attending in an official capacity on behalf of the MW The Grand Master or their respective Metropolitan, Provincial or District Grand Master, when the appropriate Craft or plain black tie should continue to be worn.

[Extract from Report of Board of General Purposes, adopted 9 June 2010]



Pride in your Lodge or Province to and the desire to show that you are a member of it is understandable; however incorrect dress can cause offence and may prevent your entry into a Quarterly Communication at Grand Lodge.

That said, members of a particular Province are encouraged to wear their Provincial tie within their area, but when visiting a Lodge in another area, it should only be worn with the permission the Provincial Grand Master of that area; don't presume that such permission has been given. Regimental, college, school, livery, or Kindred /Athol Lodges ties are only permitted within those Associations.

- Plain black tie - always acceptable.
- Craft or Chapter tie - likewise, always acceptable.
- Black ties bearing an emblem, whether in the weave or printed, are not acceptable.
- An absolute 'no-no' is a tie associated with another Order (such as the Knife and Fork Degree).

If in doubt, always wear either a plain black tie or the Craft tie and you won't go wrong. However, wearing a tie half undone, as is frequently seen these days, is also unacceptable. What we do outside Freemasonry as a fashion statement is not necessarily acceptable inside.

NB: *Ties and Lapel pins associated with other Orders should not be worn in a Craft Lodge under any circumstances.*

So, if you visit other Lodges, it always prudent to check on their dress code before you attend and keep your own counsel!



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Recommended use of Papers

Papers offer a simple, direct means of advancement in a particular aspect of Masonic knowledge. They can be used in a variety of ways:

- Read at home for private study
- Shared for pre-reading by members of a discussion group
- Read aloud in Lodge or Chapter, or in an LOI/COI/new members forum
 - Followed by 'any questions'
 - As a precursor to a discussion (in which case much more time is needed, possibly more than double that allocated to the paper itself)
 - Supported by audio-visual aids, if necessary

They can be delivered by a single person or split into bite-sized pieces and read by multiple presenters (in which case, the speaker(s) should have read and practiced the delivery of the paper beforehand).

If the paper is to be used to introduce a discussion, the presenter will need to have thought about the material, done a little research, and prepared some open questions to engage with the audience. Kipling's dictum can be of help in preparing open questions, which should begin with one of his 'serving men', as follows: *'I keep six honest serving men (they taught me all I knew). Their names are, What and Why and When and How and Where and Who'*. Rudyard Kipling

*Note: All biblical passages are taken from the Authorized King James version and any reference to ritual will be from Emulation or Aldersgate unless otherwise specified.

For further papers and other learning materials visit *Solomon* at solomon.ugle.org.uk

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