

A Primer for the Senior and Junior Deacons



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Introduction

“Brother Deacons, to you is especially entrusted the reception and accommodation of visiting Brethren. It is also your province to attend on the Master and Wardens and to act as their proxies in all the active duties of the Lodge, particularly such as relate to the reception and conducting of candidates into the different degrees of Masonry and in the immediate and responsible practice of our rites.”

In the installation of Officers, that is what you are charged with doing. Let us put it in more modern terms: as Deacons, you are to make sure all visitors are signed in properly, greeted respectfully and their wishes are attended to. Also, whatever the Master or Wardens need or want, you are the ones who will accomplish this in their name. However, it is in the preparing and conducting of candidates in each degree that you will make your biggest impression. To you is assigned the task of preparing a non-Mason for entry into what will be a life-changing experience, then to conduct him along a path filled with symbolism, allegory, old fashioned but majestic speech, devotional moments, and Light. Be careful in your work, as first impressions are lasting, and we all want those impressions to be favorable. The Junior Deacon should at all times give the Senior Deacon his hearty cooperation, remembering that upon you both devolve the first duties to the candidate.

How do you get the knowledge to do your jobs thoroughly and completely? Mostly, this will come from your predecessors. It is crucial that all of the officers have a positive and responsible attitude towards their duties and the history of their Lodge and Masonry in general to transmit to the Lodge, and to those who follow in line. Masonic knowledge, funding, membership and memory work are all important, but the ability to greet each Brother with a great attitude, a warm handshake and a smile welds the officers into a cohesive unit, confident in their knowledge and ability to lead, and makes other Brethren want to join them in line.

JUNIOR DEACON

As one of the junior line officers in your Lodge, you should be aware of the commitments of your time and talents. You have dedicated your talents and skills for a year long commitment to the Lodge and your Brethren. Along with all the ritual work, you will be learning more organizational duties. You are the officer charged with overseeing setting up the Lodge room for special and stated meetings, so be there at least thirty minutes early, to make sure that:

- The three Lesser Lights (the tapers) work properly or are of sufficient size,
- The Holy Bible (or other Volumes of Sacred law if applicable), Square and Compasses are on the altar, with the Bible closed and marked to Ecclesiastes, chapter 12 (for Master Mason Degrees and stated meetings), Amos, chapter 7 (for Fellowcraft Degrees) or Psalm 133 (for Entered Apprentice Degrees),
- The gavels are placed at the stations of the Worshipful Master, Senior and Junior Wardens,

- Warden's Columns are on the gavel stands of the Wardens
- There are chairs in the East for the Worshipful Master and two visitors,
- All of the officers' chairs, staffs and holders are in their proper positions,
- The kneeling pad is west of the altar,
- Officer's aprons and jewels are on the seat of their chair,
- The ballot box is under the Senior Deacon's chair,
- Visitors' aprons are available in the ante room,
- Registration sheets or sign in register book and pens are placed near the doors (the sheets should have the date of the meeting and be clearly labeled "Visitors" and "Members," with room for titles). Be prepared to deliver these to the Secretary, Senior Deacon or Worshipful Master, so visitors may be properly introduced.
- The Tiler's sword is in the East, and, if necessary,
- Appropriate degree paraphernalia is in the lodge room for use
- See that there is a spare apron available for any Brother who forgets his.

This seems like a lot, but can be done easily in thirty minutes, mostly from the area around the altar. Congratulations, you now have the Lodge room ready for the meeting! At the end of the meeting, you are also expected to take down the Lodge-that is to put all of the equipment and paraphernalia back where it is stored.

The Learning Curve

Upon your appointment to the Office of Junior Deacon, you are just four years from becoming Worshipful Master of your Lodge, so it behooves you to attend and participate in as many as you can of the following training opportunities:

- District and Area Meetings
- All District Schools of Instruction
- Lodge Officer Meetings

One of the finest opportunities you can avail yourself of is attending training or educational opportunities involving your peers and counterparts. Your peers are fellow Junior Deacons in other Lodges and your counterparts are Grand Line Officers in the Grand Lodge of Wisconsin.

You should place the dates of Grand Lodge on your calendar and attend the Grand Annual Communication. By all means support your other area Deacons by traveling to their Lodges as often as feasible. This is how lifetime Masonic friendships are developed.

What is Expected

By the time you are Installed as Junior Deacon, you should be prepared to perform a number of duties and be familiar with some ritual work. Among these are:

- Being able to open and close any Lodge as Junior Deacon.
- Attend the Tiler's alarm and make the proper pronouncements.
- Know the proper handling of the staff as you walk, turn, stand, speak and sit.
- Recite your duties in the three Degrees.
- Handling the "wrong" word.
- Perform the ceremony of receiving the District Deputy Grand Master and the Grand Master.
- Make sure any needed paraphernalia is set out.
- Know and have available the paraphernalia for a Masonic funeral, in good condition.

Should you be unable to attend a Lodge meeting or other place where you are expected, please have the courtesy to inform the Master in plenty of time for him to find a replacement. This may require you to carry a paper or electronic organizer or planner and to rely on it.

SENIOR DEACON

Having served a year as Junior Deacon, the Senior Deacon has a somewhat smoother road to travel, as he now knows how much time to allow for his various officer duties, and he will be well into his learning curve on memory work. As a Senior Deacon, you may still be called on to perform the duties of a Junior Deacon on occasion, if the Junior Deacon is unable to attend a meeting. Generally, however, as Senior Deacon, you should:

- Meet and welcome all visitors to meetings.
- Familiarize yourself with visitor's names, titles, and their affiliations, as you'll probably be introducing them.
- Be able to conduct a candidate through the Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, or Master Mason Degree (both parts), with poise and assurance.
- Assist the Junior Deacon in taking down the Lodge.
- Open and close any Lodge as Senior Deacon.
- Go over and familiarize yourself with the procedures for a Masonic trial, because as Junior Warden, it will be your responsibility to participate in a Masonic trial in your Lodge. You will find this starting in Section 101 of the Masonic Code.
- Complete your Correspondence Courses, which will help you to be well-versed in the Masonic Code and "Green Book" unless previously completed.
- Visit other Lodges in your area, to meet your peers and attend as many Grand Master visits as possible.
- Ideally, learn the Senior Deacon's Lectures.

- Participate in the District Schools of Instruction.
- Attend Grand Annual Communication
- Attend District and Area Meetings

Should you be unable to attend a Lodge meeting or other place where you are expected, please have the courtesy to inform the Master in plenty of time for him to find a replacement. This may require you to carry a paper or electronic organizer or planner and to rely on it.

Summary

The official duties of the Junior and Senior Deacons are relatively straightforward — they are to carry all messages from one Senior Officer to another, or wherever directed, and to see that the Lodge is protected from intrusion. What is not in the official duties is to prepare yourself for the next step, and those steps are what we've been discussing. Remember, as Junior or Senior Deacon, you are part of a team that changes from year to year. Meet regularly, and support monthly officer meetings with your fellow line officers, so everyone is on the same page, and so there are no surprises. Discuss upcoming issues, so they emerge gradually and are presented to the Lodge as a fully thought-out concept, ready with answers to expected questions, and that all the officers of the Lodge are acting as one unit, leading the Lodge forward. If all goes according to plan, at some point you may be Master of your Lodge. What you do now, in preparation and planning, will determine, in large part, what you inherit. Have a focused, challenging, achievable goal, which can be measured. After all, if you do not have a target, how will you know if you have hit it?

Notes: