



PROVINCE OF EAST KENT

Support and Development Group

Top 10 Tips for Stress Free Ritual

How often have you sat in a Lodge, marvelling at a piece of almost word perfect ritual and thought to yourself *"How does he do that?"* For most of us learning our ceremonies can seem like very hard work indeed. Well now you can make life much easier for yourself by following these 10 simple tips to aid successful learning.

One step at a time

Very few people are able to learn a whole ceremony at one go. Far better to break it down into small bite sized chunks each of which can be learned in a short period. Once each part has been mastered it only remains to recall the order in which they come. Remember the old adage *"...by the inch it's a cinch, by the yard it's hard!"*

Little and Often

Flogging away ,for hours on end, once a month will be less effective (and a lot harder!) than 5 or 10 minutes spent each day working on small segments of the ritual. Our forbears admonition to make "...a daily advance in Masonic knowledge" was sage advice hundreds of years ago. It still holds good today!

Pacing yourself

If you are going to successfully learn the ritual, it has to fit into your everyday life. Making a regular appointment with yourself is one way of ensuring that progress is continuous. The amount of time you devote to it will depend on work, family or other commitments. Go at a speed that suits you and do not be pressurised into running before you can walk. If you need to, you can always spread the work you do as Worshipful Master over 2 years.

Have a clearly defined goal

Setting yourself a goal such as "I want to be able to do the First degree by this time next year" gives you something tangible to go for. Make sure your goal is achievable and do not be afraid to review it if your personal circumstances change. Discuss your goal with your Personal Mentor and together plan how you are going to achieve it

What type of memory do you have?

Recognizing the type of memory you have will help you to develop the learning regime that suits you best. If you have a "photographic" memory that can recall visual images better than other types of information, then a flowchart is a good way of remembering the order of the various parts of the ceremony. If on the other hand you have an "aural" memory which can recall sounds and rythms best, then recording the part you are trying to learn and listening to it may be better.

Using Mnemonics

Many sections of the ritual take the form of lists which can be very difficult to remember in the correct order. Over come this by developing your own easy to recall mnemonics. For example..... “duly **C**onstituted, regularly **A**ssembled and properly **D**edicated” can easily be got right by using the mnemonic **CAD**.

Use your Mentor

If a Personal Mentor has not already been appointed for you, seek out your own. Look for someone who is experienced, knowledgeable, and a good listener. Tell them what you hope to achieve and ask them to support you. Having someone else committed to achieving your goals is invaluable and will help you stay motivated.

Brain Training

Think of your mind as a muscle that needs regular exercise to keep it in good shape. The more you practice, the easier it becomes. Very few people are naturally gifted with an exceptional memory. For the majority success comes from hard work and dedication.

Have fun!

Remember that Freemasonry should be fun. If you are not enjoying your Masonic experience then something is wrong. Talk to your Personal Mentor and explain the difficulties you are encountering. Look again at the goals you have set, and the means by which you are setting about achieving them.

Practice makes Perfect

Your Lodge of Instruction is the perfect place to practice performing the ritual in real time. It is all very well being word perfect on your own in the car, but coping with nerves, and working as part of a team pose quite different problems. Do not be shy about having a go, and never worry about making a mistake.

Perfect ritual is something that very few people achieve, and then often only after years of hard work and rigorous training. Until you reach that point, just ensure that your work is the best you can make it.