

Responsibilities of the Masonic Investigating Committee

The Lodge Brothers who are appointed by the Worshipful Master to serve as a member of the Investigating Committee should consider such appointment to be a high honor because it is a visible expression of the implicit trust and confidence in not only his ability, but his concern for the welfare of the lodge, its Brethren and Freemasonry. Much like the Tyler, the Lodge Investigating Committee must make sure that no man not qualified for the teachings and blessings of Freemasonry be allowed to pass through the West Gate to initiation.

Duties of the Investigating Committee

As members of the Investigating Committee, you are answerable to no one except your conscience. Your Lodge and Freemasonry are dependent upon your best efforts and keen judgment. You are screening a person who has the ability to make the structure of your lodge either stronger or weaker by his very presence. It is, therefore, your solemn duty to perform the following checklist upon yourself before you begin to investigate a applicant.

Unbiased Opinion: Each member of the Investigating Committee must be unbiased by improper solicitations and uninfluenced by any possible mercenary motives by the Applicant, other Brothers or well meaning friends or relatives of the prospect. Remember: You are simply searching for more light.

Friendly, Curious, Helpful, Professional Manner: After introductions, the Masonic Investigation begins by asking questions of the applicant as well as of his chosen references and any other contacts who have knowledge of his character and reputation. Be prepared to ask lots of questions in a friendly, curious, helpful and professional manner. Because the applicant knows very little about Masonry, at this very moment, you and your Investigating Committee team represent the whole of Freemasonry to the prospective candidate.

Stay on Topic: Because you represent the whole of the craft of Freemasonry to the Petitioner, do not digress (go off topic) and begin to tell a long story about yourself, your uncle, your initiation, your Past Master experiences, etc. This is very unprofessional and while the Petitioner may listen politely and

smile or laugh, appropriately, this is not of benefit to the Petitioner.

Your Attire: Dress plays a part in the impression the lodge and the Fraternity will make on the petitioner and his family. Dress appropriately, but don't over dress or under dress for the interview. Just as you will judge the impression the petitioner makes on you; know that he, too, being human, will be judging you (and also Freemasonry).

While there is a long list of do's and don't toward making a good first impression, since you are an adult, simply make it obvious that you and your Investigating Committee have taken care to make a good impression. This will tell the petitioner and his family, in a subtle way, that the lodge members are proud of their fraternity and are particular about who gains admission to its society and its customs.

Begin Asking Questions:

Question His Petition Signers: Ask questions of everyone it is possible to contact, beginning with talking to the Brothers who signed his petition. Ask them why they signed his petition. Require answers beyond, "He wants to be a Mason". Find out what they really know about him, how long they have known him, who introduced them to him and why. Ask them for names of people they know who are associated with the petitioner or know him personally.

Question his References: Seek out and go IN PERSON to the men who the petitioner gave as his references.

1. Did they know they were being used as references?
2. Why do they think they were given as references?
3. How do they feel about the petitioner?
 - A. As a friend?
 - B. As a colleague?
 - C. As a relative, neighbor, etc.
4. Are there any ties that would suggest that their assessments of his character would not be completely honest and straight forward? Do they gain anything by his membership in a worldwide Fraternity?
 - A. Note carefully the responses to your questions. Are they given quickly, in a straight forward manner while they look you in the eye, or do they hesitate, shuffle their feet or look away from you?
 - B. Do they give you a long detailed answer that went off-topic and effectively

said nothing or is the answer brief and to the point, clearly answering your inquiry? If you get too many evasive answers, take this as a sure indication the committee needs to dig further and ask more probing questions.

The committee must seek the truth about the depth of the character of all whom they investigate. Just as importantly, they must consider the financial circumstances of the petitioner, the organizations he is already involved in, the kind of company he keeps, the reputation he has in the community, in his work place, and with the general public he comes in contact with every day.

Instructions to Investigating Committee Members

The best interests of Masonry demand that an exhaustive investigation be made of the character and standing of each and every applicant. It is, therefore, imperative that your investigation of the petitioner be thorough.

Visiting the Petitioner: The LAST STEP in the process of investigating a prospective candidate should be a personal interview with the petitioner in his home... WITH HIS FAMILY PRESENT.

Make an Appointment: When you request your appointment to visit with the petitioner, make sure you make it clear that you need some uninterrupted time without the possibility of a conflict. Just as you can't hold a conversation while the TV is on, neither should you schedule interviews on Monday night during football season, on a holiday, etc. This is the beginning of a new relationship, both for the petitioner and your lodge. Neither the petitioner's heart nor his mind are likely to be on the interview, and yours probably won't be there either!

Take mental note of the following:

1. Does the petitioner welcome you unhesitatingly into his home?
2. Does his wife greet the Investigating Committee warmly and make a genuine attempt to make you feel at home or is she merely tolerating your presence? Any one who is expected to spend many hours and a sum of money with a fraternal organization must have the support, with little or no reservation of his wife and family.

Any man who is torn between two commitments, especially when one is wife and family, is going to solve his problem by negatively affecting one of his commitments and it is likely to be the Fraternity. Spending many hours initiating a man, teaching him the ritual, and developing a reliance on his contributions to the lodge is a useless expenditure of time and money if there is doubt from the beginning that he will be a committed member.

The Interview: While there may well be settings other than a home interview, the home interview is deemed the best because you will get a feeling of the man, himself, his family, his surroundings, any other organizations he is a part of, etc.

Good manners dictate that you will interview the petitioner in the room of the house into which he invites you. This will probably be the room which he and his wife feel most comfortable in or are the proudest of. If possible, however, conduct your interview in the living room or the family room. Try to stay away from the dining room or kitchen. The living room is less likely to have distractions. If there is a TV, if at all possible, in a friendly manner, request that it be turned off, so you can talk without interruptions. If the petitioner will not turn the TV off, he is not truly ready to be interviewed and another appointment should be set, rather than trying to out-shout a political debate, a football game, Dr. Phil, Oprah, etc. If you do not set up another time, everyone loses.

Roles of Each Member of the Investigating Committee

Always have three members of the Investigating Committee present for the interview with the petitioner.

Chairman's Duties: The chairman of the Investigating Committee should assume the leadership role in the interview and should ask the major portion of the questions.

The Investigating Committee Chairman should control the time spent on the interview and should not overstay the committee's welcome. He should be aware of any signs of restlessness on the part of any of the participants and, should the interview become lengthy, he should take steps to bring it to a smooth and natural conclusion. The chairman should poll his committee prior to closing by

asking, in an offhand manner, if he has neglected to mention anything important and/or ask if anyone has a final comment he would like to make or a final question he would like to ask. **Very Important:** (see Brother # 3, below) This will give the third member of the committee a natural opportunity to address any problems he has observed, if he has not had an opportunity to do so up to that point.

The petitioner and his wife should be asked if they have any final questions or observations they would like to make before the committee departs in order to consider their recommendations on the petition.

Brother #2: The second man on the committee should join in answering any questions the petitioner or his wife might have, watch the petitioner for his reactions to questions, and basically act as a resource person.

Brother #3: The third man on the committee should spend the majority of his efforts observing the reactions of the petitioner's wife and any other members of the family that may be present. This man should pay particular attention to the wife and take special care that she does not feel left out of the conversation in any way. She is the key to her husband's retention in the Masonic Fraternity.

Observe the Petitioner's wife, closely for her reactions to questions and to the general conversation and make careful mental notes of her reactions. At appropriate pauses in the flow of the interview, attempt to address any concerns the wife might have that have become evident by her responses or reactions and by her body language.

While it is unlikely that she will verbally object to her husband's interest in the fraternity in front of the committee, she may very likely show her feelings strongly by her nonverbal reactions. This is the time to address her concerns and/or reservations.

Do not wait until her husband has spent both money and time with the Fraternity before finding out that her opinions and feelings were negatively and irreversibly set during the initial investigation. Remember, just as you are there to judge her, she is judging you.

Concordant Bodies: No interview should be complete without mentioning the many concordant bodies such as the Order of the Eastern Star and Order of Amaranth (for both men and women), Rainbow Girls and Job's Daughters for girls, and DeMolay for boys.

Each of these concordant bodies provides fellowship for all members of the family.

Adverse Reactions: If the petitioner or his wife display adverse reactions at any time during the interview, gently find out the reason for their negativity. Their negativity probably has absolutely nothing to do with you or the Investigating Committee.

There are many misconceptions about Freemasonry that abound in whispers, on the internet and in other places. She or he may have heard about Evil Masonic Mysteries, Pentagrams instead of Solomon's Seal, that Masons sacrifice animals in their secret rituals or believe that Masons are attempting to create some sort of New World Order. (pretty hard to do when there isn't even a national Grand Lodge headquarters in the United States!) Even so, she doesn't know any of that. She may have even heard that her husband would have to ride a goat through the streets.

It is your job to truthfully tell her what Masonry is about and allay her fears. The committee needs to explore these adverse topic(s) and fears in greater depth. The best way to shed light upon the subject may well be to explain the role that the Bible (or other holy book such as the Koran, Torah, etc.) have, as well as the reason that each member must believe in a Supreme Being, within Masonry.

It is the job of the Investigating Committee to be well versed in Masonic knowledge and the history of Freemasonry to correctly impart a true knowledge of Freemasonry and reassure the petitioner (and his wife) of the support, friendship and brotherhood the lodge extends to its members.

Handshake: Each member of the Investigating Committee should extend the right hand of friendship to the petitioner and his family prior to departing their home. A warm and friendly grip is the one form of body language, when used in conjunction with a sincere smile, which overcomes reservations and encourages positive relationships.

Investigating Committee Checklist:

Important points on which you will wish to check off include:

1. **Defect/Deformity:**

Ascertain definitely if the petitioner has any defect or deformity which will prevent him from being instructed in the arts and mysteries of

Freemasonry, or cause an inability to acquire the means of subsistence.

2. **Jurisdiction:**

Ascertain definitely if the Lodge has jurisdiction over the petitioner.

3. **Mentally Qualified:**

Ascertain whether the petitioner is mentally qualified to receive Masonic Degrees.

4. **Morally Fit:**

Ascertain whether the petitioner is morally fit to be received into the Fraternity. One way to perform this task is to check the Sex Offender sites which are on the internet. There are many good sex offender search sites, (many are owned by governmental bodies). Some of these websites even place photos of the offenders onto their pages.

5. **Impaired Usefulness:**

Ascertain if any organization to which he belongs or his work or family obligations will impair his usefulness to the Fraternity.

6. **Character:**

Ascertain if his neighbors, acquaintances and employers give him a good character reference.

7. **Questionnaire Completion:**

Check his answers to the questionnaire attached to his petition to see that they have been fully answered. If any questions have not been answered, interview the petitioner and request their completion, or ascertain the reason for his not answering such questions.

8. **Financial Standing:**

Consider the financial standing of the petitioner with particular reference as to his reputation in meeting his obligations, and whether or not the maintenance of Lodge membership would be a financial detriment to those dependent upon him.

9. **Recommendation:**

No member of the Investigating Committee should make a favorable recommendation unless they are truly convinced that the petitioner will conform to the laws, rules and regulations of the Masonic institution.



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Duties and Responsibilities

The Masonic Investigating Committee has one duty to perform and that is to find whether the applicant is worthy and well-qualified to become a member of the oldest and largest fraternity in the world...that of Freemasonry.

Duty of the Master

Several committees are appointed by the Worshipful Master of a Lodge, but no committee is more important and vital to the welfare of the Lodge and to the craft as the Investigating Committee, whose members are appointed to perform a Masonic investigation interview of each Petitioner for the Degrees of Affiliation to a Lodge.

The best interests of Masonry demand that an exhaustive investigation be made of the character and good standing of every applicant. It is imperative, therefore, that this committee provides a thorough investigation of the petitioner.

The Investigating Committee is appointed by the Master privately, and its members are not revealed to the Lodge. It should never include sponsors, relatives, or anyone connected to the petitioner whose connection might prejudice his report. A new committee is formed for each petitioner. The committee is never revealed or questioned in Lodge or elsewhere.

The Worshipful Master should carefully review the lodge's members to select those who have Investigating experience or skill, as not all the Brethren are adept at investigating a prospective member, wherein personal questions must be asked in a fair and non-discriminatory manner.