

Masonic Principles Proficiency for the Entered Apprentice Degree

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Approved for Use of Lodges by the Grand Lodge Education Committee

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A Candidate's Guide to the "Principles Proficiency":

Congratulations, you are a Freemason.

But what exactly does that *mean*?

You came to our organization of your own free will and accord. You asked a friend who was also a Freemason to sponsor your petition. You took your oath, and were declared, "*Brother*".

Now what?

The following pages contain what has become known as the Masonic "Principles Proficiency". It is one of several alternatives available to our degree candidates who aspire to continue in their Masonic progress, advancing to the next degree by proving their knowledge in the "Gentle Craft" of Freemasonry.

If we are to call ourselves Freemasons, we should understand exactly what that means. That was the genesis for the document that now lies before you.

The follow pages offer an alternative for the aspiring Candidate to prove his proficiency and allows a Brother to demonstrate Masonic knowledge without explicitly memorizing his answers, which is more common method employed by other proficiency standards available to advance to the next degree.

The exam is divided into three parts:

Part 1: Contained in this document, provides short reading excerpts from your initiation ceremony as well as Educational materials provided by the Grand Lodge of Ohio. Following each selection are a series of short questions to assure your comprehension of the reading material. You should complete this material with the help of your Masonic mentor (termed "Master Craftsman"), but it is entirely possible to complete this section working independently on your own time.

Part 2: You will learn to read a Masonic Cipher and review the Obligation you took as part of the degree. As part of your advancement to the next degree, you will need to learn to read and repeat this obligation, using the cipher as a reading guide.

Part 3: This constitutes the "Philosophical" portion of the exam. These are the questions you must answer in front of your Lodge brothers to progress to the next degree. These questions require some personal reflection of what you have learned throughout your study. It is highly recommended that you review and practice your responses with your Master Craftsman. You will also need to demonstrate the pass, grip, step, due-guard, and sign of this degree, so extra consultation with your Master Craftsman will be necessary.

The following pages compose Part One for the Entered Apprentice Exam. Following the satisfactory completion of these questions, you will, with the assistance of your Master Craftsman, complete the remaining two sections.

Welcome to the Fraternity—we wish you well as you embark on your studies.

ORIGIN OF FREEMASONRY TRANSITION FROM OPERATIVE TO SPECULATIVE

What is the difference between "Operative" and "Speculative" Masonry?

Operative refers to the time in our history when Masons actually performed the physical labor of building. They were the best at their craft, and they kept secret their methods of building.

Speculative refers to the period of time when men were accepted into the Craft as "non-operative" members. They were not "physical builders", but "builders of character" instead.

We are unable to accurately pinpoint the time when we transitioned from operative to speculative masonry. The change was gradual and probably stretched over a period of more than 50 years. It began early in the 1600's and may have begun with the acceptance of patrons into the operative Lodges. Other members, who were not interested in becoming stonemasons, followed the patrons. Those who were admitted by consent of the operative masons became "Accepted Masons". Membership was desired because of the spiritual, social and cultural advantages. During this time, our Craft grew rapidly in numbers.

The decline of Gothic architecture and the reduced demands for great building projects greatly lowered the number of skilled operative craftsmen needed to carry on construction during this period. If we had not become Speculative Masons, our Craft would have been faced with extinction. Many of the institutions of that day did pass into oblivion; but by becoming Speculative, the Craft has grown to a point never envisioned by its founders. Much of this growth can be attributed to the formation of the premier Grand Lodge of England, when four old Lodges in London held a meeting at the Goose and Gridiron Tavern in June of 1717. At this meeting, a Brother by the name of Anthony Page Sayer was elected Grand Master. From there, Freemasonry quickly spread over much of the world, and other Grand Lodges were established.

EA Basic Education Course, pgs 4-5

1. What is an Operative Mason?
2. A Speculative Mason is a builder of what?
3. The point where our organization transitioned to Speculative is not clear. In the passage above, what is the estimated year(s) when Speculative Masonry began to enter the Craft?
4. What was one reason why our predecessors may have transitioned to admitting Speculative Masons into the Craft?

The Working Tools of an Entered Apprentice

“The Twenty-Four Inch Gauge is used by operative masons to measure and lay out their work; but we, as Free and Accepted Masons, are taught to use it for the more instructive purpose of dividing our time. Its twenty-four equal parts are emblematical of the twenty-four hours of the day, which we are taught to divide into three equal parts, whereby are found eight hours for the service of God and distressed worth Brethren, eight for our usual vocations, and eight for refreshment and sleep.

The Common Gavel is used by operative masons to prepare rough stones for the builder’s use; but we, as Free and Accepted Masons, are taught to use it for the more noble and glorious purpose of divesting our hearts and consciences of the vices and superfluities of life; thereby fitting our minds as living stone for that spiritual building, that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

--Ritual of the First Degree, Grand Lodge of Ohio

1. What are the Working Tools of an Entered Apprentice?
2. For an Operative Stone Mason (one who works with physical stone), the 24-inch gauge is used for measuring surfaces. As a Speculative Mason, what does the 24-inch gauge teach you to measure?
3. The lesson of the twenty-four-inch gauge recommends you devote your time to these three areas:
4. The lesson of the common gavel is to “divest our hearts of the vices and superfluities of Life”. A Vice is defined as “Immoral or Wicked Behavior”. A Superfluity is defined as “Immoderate or overly-luxurious methods of living”. Name two examples of Vices or Superfluities you have observed in human behavior:

The Jewels of a Lodge

“The Jewels of a Lodge are six: The Square, Level, Plumb, Rough Ashlar, Perfect Ashlar, and Trestle Board. The Square Teaches morality, the Level Equality, and the Plumb—rectitude of life.

...The Rough Ashlar is the stone taken from the quarry in its rude and natural state The Perfect Ashlar is the stone prepared by the workmen, to be adjusted by the working tools of the Fellow Craft, and the Trestle-board is for the Master workman to draw his designs upon.

By the Rough Ashlar we are reminded of our imperfect state by nature; by the Perfect Ashlar of that State of perfection at which we hope to arrive by a virtuous education, our own endeavors, and the blessings of God; and by the Trestle-board we are reminded that, as the operative workman erects his temporal building according to the rules and designs laid down by the Master Workman on his trestle-board, so should we, both Operative and Speculative, endeavor to erect our spiritual building according to the rules and designs laid down by the Supreme Architect of the Universe in the Great Books of Nature and Revelation, which are our Masonic, Moral, and Spiritual Trestle-Board.”

--Ritual of the First Degree, Grand Lodge of Ohio

1. For an Operative (physical) Stonemason, what is a rough ashlar?

2. For a Speculation Mason, The Rough Ashlar is meant to remind us of what?

3. For an Operative (physical) Stonemason, a Perfect Ashlar was a stone that had been previously worked on by the _____ of a Fellow Craft.

4. List three ways the Ritual describes as ways for us to attain “that State of perfection at which we hope to arrive”

5. The Trestle-Board was used by Architects to plan their work. Symbolically, it teaches all of us as Freemasons that we should consult these two “Great Books” which will “guide our Masonic, Moral, and Spiritual development.”: The Great Books of _____ and _____



The Point within a Circle

“Our Ancient Brethren dedicated their Lodges to King Solomon, who was our first Most Excellent Grand Master. But modern Masons generally dedicate theirs to St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist, who were two eminent Christian patrons of Freemasonry. And since their time there is represented in all Lodges dedicated to them a certain point within a circle, embordered by two parallel perpendicular lines, representing those saints and on the top of the circle rests the Holy Scriptures. The point represents an individual Brother, and the circle the boundary line beyond which he is never to suffer his prejudices or passions to betray him. In going round this circle we necessarily touch upon these two lines, as well as the Holy Scriptures; and while a Mason keeps himself circumscribed within these bounds it is impossible for him to materially err;”

--Ritual of the First Degree, Grand Lodge of Ohio

1. According to Masonic tradition, this Biblical figure is considered our First Grand Master:

2. In the development of Christianity, the practice of adopting Patron Saints as a representative of someone’s culture, profession, or other group of people became a popular practice for Christians. At some point in our Masonic tradition, Freemasons named two “Patron Saints” for Freemasonry. Who were they?

3. In the Symbolism of the Point within the Circle, the Patron Saints are represented by two _____ lines.

4. The point itself represents:

5. The circle represents the limits to which an individual Brother Mason will not allow his _____ or _____ to detract from his character.

The Tenets of a Mason's Profession:

"The Three Great Tenets of a Mason's Profession are Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth.

By the exercise of Brotherly Love, we are taught to regard the whole human species as one family: the high, the low, the rich, the poor—who as created by one Almighty Parent.... are to aid, support and protect each other. On this principle Freemasonry unites men of every Country, Sect and opinion, and conciliates true friendship among those who might otherwise have remained at a perpetual distance.

To relieve the distressed is a duty incumbent on all men but particularly on Freemasons, who are linked together by an in-dissoluble chain of sincere affection. To soothe the unhappy, to sympathize in their misfortunes, to compassionate their miseries, and to restore peace to their troubled minds is the Great Aim we have in view....

Truth is a divine attribute and the foundation of every virtue. To be good men and true is the first lesson we are taught in Masonry. On this theme we contemplate, and by its dictates endeavor to regulate our conduct....

---Ritual of the First Degree, Grand Lodge of Ohio

1. List the three Great Tenets we are to adopt as a Freemason:
2. In the practice of Brotherly Love, we are encouraged to _____, _____, and _____ each other.
3. From the reading above, name four ways that a Freemason can demonstrate the Tenet of Relief in their daily interactions with others:
4. What is the "first lesson" we are taught in Masonry?
5. Which of our Three Tenets is considered, "the foundation of every virtue"?

The Four Cardinal virtues:

Temperance is that due restraint upon the affections and passions which renders the body submissive and frees the mind from the allurements of vice. This virtue should be the constant practice of every Mason, as he is thereby taught to avoid excess, or contract any vicious or licentious habit, the indulgence of which might lead him to disclose some of those valuable secrets which he has promised to conceal and never reveal....

Fortitude is that noble and steady purpose of the mind whereby we are enabled to undergo pain, peril or danger, when deemed expedient. This virtue is equally distant from rashness and cowardice, and should be deeply impressed upon the mind of every Mason, as a safeguard or security against any illegal attack that may be made-- by force or otherwise-- to extort from him any of those valuable secrets which he has been so solemnly entrusted....

Prudence teaches us to regulate our lives and actions according to the dictates of reason, and is that habit by which we wisely judge and prudentially determine upon all things relative to our present as well as our future happiness. This virtue should be the peculiar characteristic of every Mason.....

Justice is that standard or boundary of right which enables us to render to every man his just due without distinction. This virtue is not only consistent with divine and human law, but is the very cement and support of civil society....

--Ritual of the First Degree, Grand Lodge of Ohio

1. List the Four Cardinal Virtues:

2. This virtue is defined as “the very cement and support of civil society”

3. A Mason who carefully considers his words and deeds, avoiding unnecessary conflict, would be practicing this Cardinal Virtue:

4. A Mason who avoids indulging in anything to excess, and avoids developing bad habits that could be used to manipulate him, is practicing this Cardinal Virtue:

5. This Cardinal virtue is defined as “the noble and steady purpose of the mind”

THE ENTERED APPRENTICE CHARGE:

“There are three great duties, which you assume at your entrance into this Order...you are charged to inculcate: To God, your neighbor, and yourself. To God, in never mentioning His name but with that reverence which is due from the creature to his Creator. To implore his aid in all your undertakings, and to esteem him the Source of all Good. To your neighbor, in acting upon the Square and doing unto him as you would have him do unto you...and to yourself, in avoiding every irregularity and intemperance which may impair your faculties or debase the dignity of our Profession.

In the State you are to be a quiet and peaceful citizen, true to your government and just to your country. You are not to countenance disloyalty or rebellion, but patiently submit to legal authority and conform with cheerfulness to the government of the country in which you preside.

Although your frequent attendance at our meetings is earnestly solicited, it is not intended that Masonry should interfere with your necessary vocations....

You are not to suffer your zeal for the institution to lead you into argument with those who, through ignorance, may ridicule it...

Finally, keep Sacred and Inviolable the Mysteries of the Order, as these are to distinguish you from the rest of the community and mark your consequence among Masons.

If in the circle of your acquaintance you find a person desirous of being initiated into Masonry, be particularly careful NOT to recommend him unless you are satisfied that he will conform to our rules; to the end that the reputation, honor, and welfare of this institution may be firmly established, and the world at large convinced of its good effects.

--Ritual of the First Degree, Grand Lodge of Ohio

1. At the close of the degree you are charged to be responsible to three “great duties” in living the life of a good and True Mason. Who are these three “persons” you are now obligated to?

2. Should a Good and True Mason use his membership to foster political rebellion? (Yes or No)

3. Should a Good and True Mason contribute his time and talents to the Fraternity, as long as it does not interfere with his other responsibilities? (Yes or No)

4. If you know someone that wants to be a Mason, before you propose him for membership you should be certain that he will _____ to our _____.

DULY AND TRULY PREPARED

Being duly and truly prepared refers to the wearing of simple garments furnished by the Lodge to emphasize our concern with man's internal qualifications, rather than his worldly wealth and honors. By wearing these garments, the Candidate signifies the sincerity of his intentions. The Candidate is not to bring into the Lodge room his passions or prejudices, lest that harmony, which is one of the chief concerns of Freemasonry, be destroyed. Being duly and truly prepared also refers to the state of a man's heart and soul as he seeks admission into our Order.

THE HOODWINK: The symbolism of the Hoodwink is twofold: first, it emphasizes the veil of secrecy and silence surrounding the mysteries of Freemasonry; secondly, it represents the mystical darkness, or ignorance, of the uninitiated. It is removed at the appropriate time; that is, when the Candidate is in the proper attitude to receive Light.

THE CABLE-TOW: The Cable-Tow is a rope such as would be used to tow or restrain. It is also generally regarded as a symbol of the voluntary and complete acceptance of, and pledged compliance with, whatever Freemasonry may have in store. The length of the Cable-Tow is frequently referred to in the language of Freemasonry, but many of the new Brethren do not understand its meaning. Formerly, a Cable-Tow was deemed to be the distance one could travel in an hour, which was assumed to be about three miles. In Ohio, this is any reasonable distance from which a summons may be answered, health and business permitting. Each Mason is bound to all other Masons by a tie as long and as strong as he himself determines his ability will permit.

--Entered Apprentice Basic Education Course, pg 9

1. Why is a candidate for Freemasonry dressed in simple clothing? What symbolic lesson is being taught?

2. List two symbolic interpretations of the hoodwink (blindfold)

3. The Cable-tow represents our obligations to the Fraternity; in older times, this was defined as three miles, a reasonable distance for one traveling on horseback. What is the modern interpretation that we observe here in Ohio?

THE THREE GREAT LIGHTS OF MASONRY

The Three Great Lights of Masonry are the Holy Bible, Square and Compasses. The Volume of the Sacred Law (no matter what religion) is an indispensable part of a Lodge. The Grand Lodges of the United States use the Holy Bible as the V.S.L. on their Altars.

In our jurisdiction, a Candidate should always have his own sacred book present on the Altar with the Bible during his degree ceremonies. In Lodges in other countries, other sacred texts are placed on the Altar in place of the Holy Bible.

The open Bible or Holy Book signifies that we should regulate our conduct according to its teachings because it is the rule and guide of our faith and is a symbol of man's acknowledgment of his relation to Deity. The Square is a symbol of morality, truthfulness and honesty. To "act on the square" is to act honestly. The Compasses signifies the propitious use of action and is a symbol of restraint, skill and knowledge. We might also properly regard the Compasses as excluding beyond its circle that which is harmful or unworthy. The general public recognizes the square and compasses as the symbol of Freemasonry.

--Entered Apprentice Basic Education Course, pg 11

1. List the three Great Lights of Masonry
2. Which Great Light is chosen to represent "The rule and guide of our Faith"
3. According to the reading above, list three things a Square symbolizes:
4. This Great Light is a symbol of restraint in one's thoughts and actions:

PRESENTATION OF THE LAMBSKIN APRON

The Apron is at once an emblem of innocence and the badge of a Mason. By innocence is meant clean thinking and clean living, a loyal obedience to the laws of the Craft and sincere good will. The Badge of a Mason signifies, among other things, that Masons are workers and builders.

Other aspects of this most visible vesture of our Fraternity should be mentioned. The lamb has always been a symbol of innocence and sacrifice.

There are two senses in which innocence is being used here. Innocence in one sense is free from moral defect. The other sense used is that of being new born.

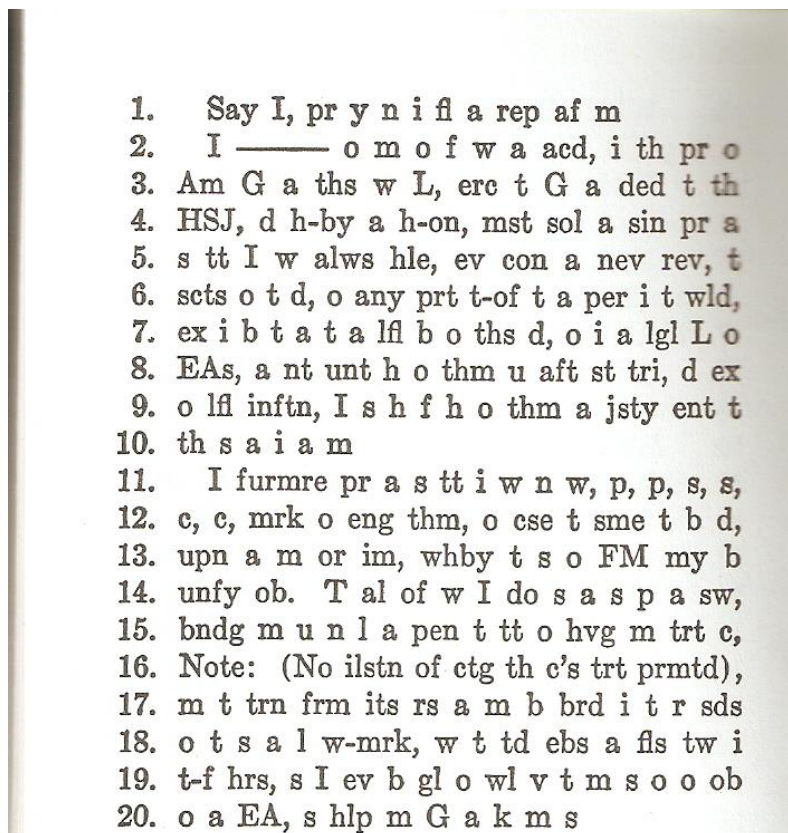
The Masonic Apron is made up of two parts: a square and a triangle, representing four and three respectively. The symbolism of these numbers, as well as their sum, should be studied in connection with the form of the apron in the different degrees. Finally, it should be mentioned that the word Candidate comes from the Latin candidatus, which means, "clothed in white."

--EA Basic Education Course, pg 12

1. What personal quality does a white apron represent?
2. The Masonic Apron is actually composed of two geometric shapes. What are they?
3. What other function does a Masonic Apron have besides being a symbol of innocence?

Part 2: Reading the Masonic Cipher and Understanding your Obligation

With the help of your Master Craftsman, decipher this page of Masonic Cipher to Review your Obligation:



Questions to Discuss with your Masonic Mentor:

1. What are some things that you promise to do in taking your Obligation?
2. What, if anything, do you promise not to do in taking your Obligation?
3. What is the Penalty for this degree? How does that relate to the Due-Guard and Sign of this degree?

Continue to practice reading the obligation; you will be asked to read it back to the Lodge as part of your proficiency

Part 3: Questions before the Lodge

Congratulations on your perseverance and completing Parts One and Two of your examination. You are now provided with the final set of questions, which will ask you some questions about what you learned in the course of your studies. A few points to consider:

1. These are open-ended questions, and in many cases there is more than one right answer. Discuss your answer with your Masonic Mentor, and refer back to the reading as often as you need to while forming your answer.
2. This is NOT a “Grade-School Test”. Do not worry about “passing” or “failing”, as much as demonstrating an understanding what you have read and studied.
3. You will answer these questions in Open Lodge—meaning, with members present. Do rehearse your answers until you feel comfortable speaking on the question at hand. There is no prohibition against writing short notes to refer to during your Lodge examination. Under no circumstances should a Mentor force you to go before the Lodge until you feel ready.
4. At the conclusion of the questions, you will be asked to demonstrate the pass, grip, step, due guard, and sign of the degree. ***Work with your Masonic Mentor on this during several occasions before demonstrating this to the Lodge.***

Principles Proficiency Exam Questions:

Exam pages have been provided to help you refresh your memory on the material, and help you develop your answer.

1. Why is it important to know that you are a “Speculative” Mason? (*Exam Page 3*)
2. In your own words, describe the lessons of the 24 inch gauge and common gavel. Are there any “vices and superfluities” that you have observed in the lives of yourself or others? (*Exam Page 4*)
3. What does the symbolic lesson of the Rough and Perfect Ashlars teach you about your character-building goals as a Freemason? (*Exam Page 5*)

4. In the lesson of the Point Within a Circle, we talk about “a boundary line beyond which (a Mason) is never to suffer his prejudices or passions to betray him”. What are some moral actions you have observed, in yourself or others, that would cross this personal boundary line for you? (*Exam Page 6*)

5. The three great tenets of a Mason’s profession are Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth. Name three Ways you can demonstrate these tenets in your daily life: (*Exam page 7*)

6. The Four Cardinal virtues are Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence, and Justice. Why do you think these four qualities were chosen as virtues for Masonic conduct? (*Exam page 8*)

7. At the end of the Entered Apprentice degree you were charged with upholding duties to God, your neighbor, and yourself. What are some ways that you can honor this idea in your daily life? (*Exam page 9*)

8. What did the “Rite of Destitution”—the act of wearing the candidate outfit and being unable to comply with the Master’s request—teach you about how you should treat those less fortunate than yourself? (*Exam page 10*)

9. The Cable-tow represents our obligations to the Fraternity; in older times, this was defined as three miles, a reasonable distance for one traveling on horseback. How do you define your own personal “Cabletow” to your involvement with Masonry? (*Exam page 10*)

10. The three Great Lights of Masonry are the Holy Bible, Square and Compasses. Considering their symbolic meaning, why do you think the Square and Compasses are appropriate symbols to pair with the Holy Bible? (*Exam page 11*)

11. Why is a White Apron an appropriate “Badge of a Mason”, besides the fact of historic tradition? Consider the symbolism involved. (*Exam page 12*)

12. Why do you think it is important to Freemasons to be bound by Oaths and obligations to each other? (*Exam page 13*)

13. In your own words, explain some of the things you promise to do, or not do, as part of living your Obligation as a Freemason (*Exam Page 14*)

Final test:

Read the Obligation

Demonstrate the Step, Due Guard, and Sign of this Degree.

With the assistance of your Master Craftsman, demonstrate the Grip (and Pass) of an Entered Apprentice.

Editions:

v.2.0 Grammatical errors corrected

v.3.0 Reading of the Obligation added to part 3 to satisfy Code requirements for proficiency

v.4.0 Questions about putting obligation in your own words added at request of GL Education Committee

