

Masonic Principles Proficiency for the Fellow Craft Degree

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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 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 Fellowcraft 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.

BASIC TEACHINGS OF THE SECOND DEGREE

In one sense the Fellow Craft Degree symbolizes the stage of adulthood and responsibility during a man's life on earth. In this stage, his task is to acquire knowledge and apply it to the building of his character and improving the society in which he lives.

As the father of our Masonic lectures, William Preston saw Freemasonry as a means to educate men in the liberal arts and sciences. A Fellow Craft Mason is urged to advance his education in these fields during the ritual of this Degree.

Some view the three-part initiation of Freemasonry as representing a progressive teaching directed toward perfecting human nature. It is a simple and straightforward view of human nature divided into three parts: body, mind and soul. Each Degree addresses and instructs one part. The Entered Apprentice Degree encompasses the body and our faculties of action in the world. The four cardinal virtues are extolled as the proper guides to our action in the world that we may perfect our relation to it. The Fellow Craft Degree addresses the mind and its faculties. We are instructed in the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences, which were formulated hundreds of years ago, in order to develop and perfect the mental nature. The intention [of the second degree] was to prepare the mind for spiritual truths.

---FC Basic Education Course, pg 3

1. Who is considered “the father of our Masonic lectures”?
2. Some view the three-part Masonic Initiation as representing a “progressive teaching” towards perfecting these three parts of human nature:
3. The Entered Apprentice degree encompasses the human body and our faculties of action in the world. What does the Fellow Craft degree address?
4. What system of instruction is included in the Fellow Craft degree as a way to develop and perfect the human mind?

The Working Tools of a Fellow Craft

“The Plumb is used by operative masons to try perpendiculars; the Square, to Square their work, and the Level to prove Horizontals; but in our hands, as Free and Accepted Masons, they teach us to walk uprightly in our several stations before God and Man, Squaring our Actions by the Square of Virtue, ever remembering that we are traveling on the Level of Time to that undiscovered Country, from whose bourne no traveler returns.”

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

1. What are the Working Tools of a Fellow Craft? (3 answers)

2. The Plumb teaches us to _____ in our several stations of life.

3. A Speculative Masons “squares his actions” by the Square of _____

4. To an Operative Mason, the Level proves _____, while the Speculative Mason sees this Working tool as a symbol of _____.

Speculative Masonry

“By Speculative Masonry, we learn to subdue the passions, act upon the square, keep a tongue of good report, maintain secrecy, and practice charity.

It is so far interwoven with religion as to lay us under obligations to pay that rational homage to the Deity which constitutes at once our Duty and our Happiness.

It leads the contemplative to view with reverence and admiration the marvelous works of creation, and inspires the most exalted ideas in the Perfection of his Divine Creator”

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

1. List five things a Speculative Mason should learn to do:

THE WINDING STAIRCASE

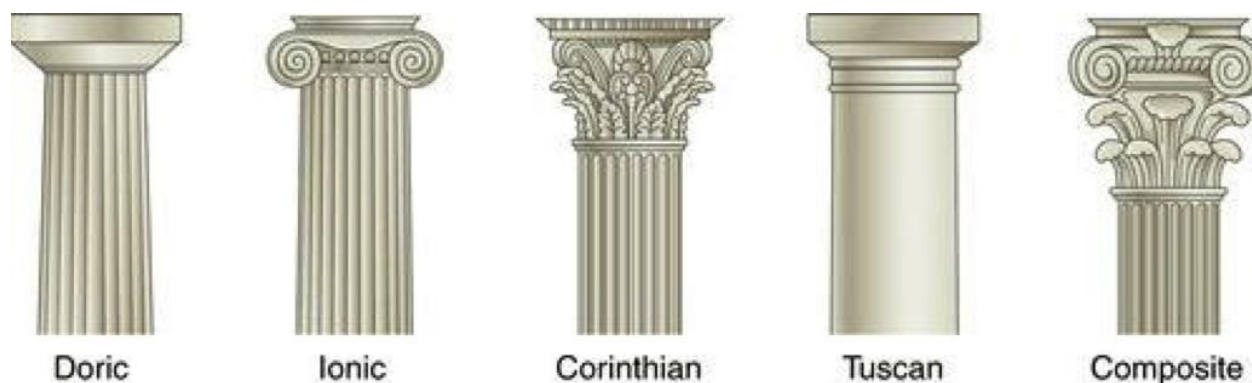
Much of the symbolism of the Winding Staircase is explained in the ritual itself. There are some points to bring out that may lead one to further research and insight. The significance of the number three has already been mentioned. We have the three Degrees, the Three Great Lights, the three Officers, and the three Principle Tenets of Freemasonry. What we want to emphasize here is the Three Theological Virtues: Faith, Hope, and Charity. These virtues were considered a ladder to heaven, another symbol of ascent.

The Five Steps are also explained in some detail. They symbolize the five orders of architecture as well as the five human senses which man constantly employs and is dependent upon in his daily life.

The Seven Steps symbolize the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences. These were formulated as early as 330 CE. Christian scholars adopted them soon afterwards and we find their full flowering at the Neo-platonic Cathedral School of Chartres in 12th Century France. The interesting work that came together here was the union of the philosophies of Neo-platonism and Christianity. The study of the Seven Liberal Arts was considered a means to the knowledge of God. This principle was actually expressed in the construction of the Gothic Cathedral of Chartres. We even find for the first time sculpted representations of the Seven Liberal Arts on the West Door of Chartres Cathedral.

--Fellowcraft Basic Education Course, pg 6

1. List some ways the number 3 appears in Masonic Ritual
2. The Five steps of the Winding Staircase represent two concepts; what are they?
3. Neo-Platonism and Christianity came to regard the Seven Liberal Arts & Sciences as serving what purpose?



The Orders of Architecture

"...by Order in Architecture is meant a system of all the members, proportions, and ornaments of columns and pilasters, or the arrangement of the projecting and visible parts of a building, so joined and united as to form an ideal and complete whole.

The Ancient and Original Orders of Architecture...are no more than three: the Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian, which were invented by the Greeks. To these the Romans have added two: The Tuscan, which they made plainer than the Doric, and the Composite, which was more ornamental if not more beautiful than the Corinthian.

The first three Orders...alone show invention and particular character, and essentially differ from each other. The other two have nothing but what is borrowed, and differ only accidentally. The Tuscan is the Doric in its earliest state, and the Composite is the Corinthian, enriched with the Ionic...."

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

1. List the Five Orders of Architecture

2. Which three Orders were of Greek Origin, and considered the Original Orders of Architecture?

3. The Tuscan is closely related to which other Order?

4. The Composite is a combination of these two Original Orders of Architecture:

The Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences:

“Grammar defines and fixes the rules by which we can express our ideas in correct language and properly convey our meaning to others...”

Rhetoric is the art of using language and methods of speech, which attract the ear and eye and conspicuously carry the thoughts intended, to the heart and understanding of another.

Logic teaches us not only to Think, but also to arrange our Thoughts and Expressions in a Consecutive manner...

Arithmetic furnishes the means of making an ordinary computation of numbers....

Geometry treats of the Powers and Properties of Magnitudes in general, and supplies the more certain methods of investigation and analysis by making use of well-established propositions and truths in the solution of difficult problems....

Music is the use of pleasing notes and harmonies, and is that simple and effectual method often made use of to give expression to the deepest and noblest sentiments of the heart and soul.

Astronomy directs us in studying the system of the heavenly bodies. It develops an order and perfection existing among the countless Brilliants in the skies and extending beyond the conception of the human mind. “

---Ritual of Second Degree, Grand Lodge of Ohio

1. List three of the Arts & Sciences which have to do with WORDS:

2. List two of the Arts and Sciences which are devoted to the use of NUMBERS:

3. This Liberal Art uses sound as a tool to express the “noblest sentiments” of the human soul:

4. This Science develops an understanding of the Universe through the observation of stars, planets and other “heavenly bodies”:

THE WAGES OF A FELLOW CRAFT

“Corn, Wine, and Oil are symbolic wages earned by the Fellow Craft Mason who arrives at the Middle Chamber. These symbolize wealth in mental and spiritual worlds.

Corn represents nourishment and the sustenance of life. It is also a symbol of plenty, and refers to the opportunity for doing good, to work for the community, and to the performance of service to mankind.

Wine is symbolic of refreshment, health, spirituality, and peace.

Oil represents joy, gladness and happiness.

Taken together, Corn, Wine, and Oil represent the temporal rewards of living a good life.

The actual "wages" are the intangible but no less real compensation for a faithful and intelligent use of the Working Tools, fidelity to your obligations, and unflagging interest in and study of the structure, purpose and possibilities of the Fraternity. Such wages may be defined in terms of a deeper understanding of Brotherhood, a clearer conception of ethical living, a broader toleration, and a more resolute will to think justly, independently, and honestly.”

--Fellowcraft Basic Education Course, pg 7

1. Define the symbolic meanings of Corn, Wine, and Oil:

2. The reading proposes that our symbolic wages are compensation for what 3 activities?

3. The reading gives some examples of how a Mason might find his symbolic labors realized. These include:
 - a. A deeper understanding of _____
 - b. A clearer conception of _____
 - c. Broader _____
 - d. A more _____ to think justly, independently, and honestly

The Letter G:

“Geometry: the first, the noblest of sciences, is the basis on which the superstructure of Freemasonry is erected. By geometry we may curiously trace nature through her various windings to her most concealed recesses. By it we discover the power, wisdom, and the Goodness of the Great Creator, as the vast proportions of the universe are revealed to us....

A survey of nature, and observations of her beautiful proportions first determined man to imitate the divine plan, and study symmetry and order. This gave rise to societies and birth to every useful art. The architect began to design, and the plans which he laid down, improved by experience, have produced works which are the admiration of every age.

The lapse of time, the ruthless hand of ignorance, and the devastations of war have laid waste and destroyed many valuable monuments of antiquity, upon which the utmost exertions of human genius had been employed...Freemasonry, not withstanding, has still survived. The attentive ear receives the sound of the instructive tongue, and the mysteries of Freemasonry are safely lodged in the repository of the faithful Breast. Tools and implements of Architecture, and symbolic emblems most expressive, are selected by the Fraternity to imprint on the mind wise and serious Truths. Thus through a succession of ages are transmitted, unimpaired, the most excellent tenets of our institution.”

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

1. This Science is considered “the superstructure of Freemasonry”:
2. Freemasonry credits Geometry with giving rise to _____, and birth to every _____.
3. List three reasons that the collective knowledge of Geometry and Architecture were almost completely destroyed:
4. What three things, belonging to each Mason, that have helped our members preserve “the mysteries of Freemasonry”?
5. What are two things the Fraternity uses to teach “wise and serious truths”?

The Fellow Craft Charge

“Being advanced to the second degree of Freemasonry, we congratulate you on your preferment. It is the internal, not the external qualifications of a man, that Freemasonry regards.

...Our rules and regulations you are strenuously to support, and always be ready to assist in seeing them duly executed. You are not to palliate or aggravate the offenses of your Brethren, but in the decision of every trespass against our rules you are to judge with candor, admonish with friendship, and reprehend with justice.

The study of the liberal arts...is earnestly recommended to your consideration; especially the science of Geometry, which is established as the basis of our Art. Geometry or Freemasonry, originally synonymous terms, being of a Divine and Moral nature, is enriched with the most useful knowledge. While it proves the wonderful properties of nature, it also demonstrates the most important truths of morality.

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

1. What qualifications of a man are most valued by Freemasonry?

2. When you encounter a Brother who is disregarding the rules and regulations of the Fraternity, you should do these three things:

3. According to the passage above, Freemasonry was at one time synonymous with _____

4. According to the passage above, Geometry does these two things:
 - a. Proves _____
 - b. Demonstrates _____

Congratulations! You are now finished with Part One and, with the consultation of your Master Craftsman, are ready to complete the final two portions of the exam, which will be demonstrated to your Brothers in Open Lodge.

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:

22. WM. (Aphs t Alt) Sa I, p y n i f
 23. a r a m, _____ o m o f w a a, i t p
 24. o A G a t w L, e t G a d t t H S s J, d h
 25. a h m s a s p a s, t I w n e t s o t

1. d o a n y p t t a p i t w, e x i b t a t
 2. a l f b o t d, o i a l g l L o F C s a n u n t
 3. h o t u n t a s t, d e o l f i, I s h f h
 4. o t a j e t t s a i a m
 5. I f u r m r e p a s, t I w i l c o n t a a b b
 6. t r l s a r e g o t F C d s f a t m e t m k
 7. T a o f w I d s a s p a s, b m u n l a
 8. p t t o h m l b r t n o p, m h t t e a g
 9. a p t t v u l o t a, s I e b g o w v t m s
 10. o o o o a F C, s h m G a k m s

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 practicing to read the obligation; you will be asked to read back the obligation as part of your proficiency before the Lodge

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. The Entered Apprentice degree encompasses the human body and our faculties of action in the world. The Fellowcraft degree encompasses the human mind. Why would we, as candidates in Freemasonry, be encouraged to improve our actions with the outside world, before improving the mind? (*Exam Page 3*)
2. We are taught in this degree to “Square our Actions by the Square of virtue”, but it is never specifically defined how we are to do this. Some would say we are to measure our thoughts, words, and actions, against someone or something we hold in high esteem. How will you define your own “Square of virtue”? (*Exam Page 4*)
3. How can a man “walk uprightly in his several stations before God and man”? (*Exam Page 4*)

4. It is said that “By Speculative Masonry, we learn to subdue the passions, act upon the square, keep a tongue of good report, maintain secrecy, and practice charity.” Choose one of these traits and explain why you think that this characteristic would be valued by members of the Fraternity. (*Exam Page 5*)
5. Why do you think the 5 orders of architecture are paired with the 5 human senses in the Winding Staircase? (*Exam Page 6*)
6. Why do you think it is important for Speculative Masons to be taught about the 5 Orders of Architecture? (*Exam page 7*)
7. How would having a better understanding of the subjects contained in the Seven Liberal Arts & Sciences improve your life as a Man or as a Mason? (*Exam page 8*)
8. We are taught that our symbolic wages of corn, wine, and oil, are actually symbols for the rewards of living a good life. If a new Mason asked you how he should live his life to “earn his wages”, what would you advise him? (*Exam page 9*)
9. In the explanation of the Letter G, it is explained that the attentive ear, instructive tongue, and faithful breast have helped preserve “the mysteries of Freemasonry”. In this context, “Mysteries” refers to a body of knowledge controlled by an exclusive group of people. What are some of the “mysteries” of Freemasonry you have learned thus far, that have made an impression on you? (*Exam page 10*)
10. Why do you think Freemasonry has survived in spite of war, ignorance, and the lapse of time? (*Exam page 10*)
11. 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 12*)

Final test:

Read back the obligation

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

With the assistance of your Master Craftsman, demonstrate the Grip (and Pass-grip) of a Fellow Craft.