



Provincial Grand Chapter of Worcestershire

Provincial Office, 94 Birmingham Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, B61 0DF

Creating a Website

Introduction

Masonic websites are becoming increasingly popular and many Lodges are now on-line. In addition, many Lodges use the internet to distribute information, such as summonses and the details of social events. Aspiring web masters often enquire about the content of Masonic websites. In general terms, Masonic websites, in particular those pertaining to a Lodge, tend to follow a standard format and are therefore relatively simple to design. Inspiration can be sought by referring to other Masonic websites, in particular those listed on our Links page.

A typical Lodge website might contain:

- A welcome page containing an introduction to the website. This will usually be the first page displayed when visiting the website and it is therefore very important it creates a positive first impression.
- General information about Freemasonry, including: the history of the fraternity; the three grand principles on which it is founded; the three degrees; the structure and organisation of the United Grand Lodge of England and Provincial Grand Lodge in which the Lodge meets; and the Masonic charities and their work.
- Information about the Lodge, including: its history; its banner; its seal; its meeting dates and times; its membership; its officers; the Worshipful Master's programme of work; details of social events; contact details; and how to find the Masonic hall or centre in which the Lodge meets.
- Membership information, including details of how to become a Freemason.
- News, covering both local and national issues.
- Contact details.
- Links to other Masonic websites.

Unless the web master is familiar with their use and possible security implications, forms that allow a visitor to publish information on a website, such as a guest book or forum, should be avoided.

Remember: your website will be visible to the world and will be seen to represent Freemasonry.

There are many ways in which a website can be created. For simplicity, these have been defined below as: the Traditional Method, which involves following several technical steps; and the Modern Method, which takes advantage of on-line template-based systems. The traditional method will appeal to those with a keen interest in technology, or those who require the maximum level of flexibility; and the modern method to those who simply want to produce a professional website with the minimum of fuss.

Before starting work, all web masters must join the Worcestershire Web Masters and Internet Group.



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Traditional Method

The traditional method involves several technical steps, all of which must be followed in order to produce and publish a website.

The first step involves the registration of a domain. The recommended format is your Lodge name, followed by its number, followed by .org.uk (e.g. mylodge1234.org.uk). You may choose to omit the number (e.g. mylodge.org.uk); however, as every domain must be unique, the inclusion of the number prevents ambiguity and is generally recommended. The letters www are often prepended to the domain and refer to the host name of the web server. This is usually done automatically by the service provider from which you purchased the domain, or can be configured at their website. Please note that the registration records associated with your domain should be in the name of your Lodge. These records are published on the internet and care must therefore be taken to ensure they do not contain any personal information.

The second step is to identify a web hosting facility, which is the space in which the website will live. This is often provided free-of-charge by internet service providers and is often combined with the registration of a domain. Check with your internet service provider, or those of your Lodge members. Many companies also provide this service, for which they will charge. Expect to pay no more than £50 per year for a domain name, ample web space and email forwarding to a large number of email addresses. If you would like to create email addresses that contain your Lodge, such as enquiries@mylodge12345.org.uk, you should ensure email forwarding is provided as part of your domain registration or web hosting package. Email forwarding allows an email address ending in your Lodge's domain to be linked to one or more personal email addresses. For example, email sent to enquiries@mylodge12345.org.uk would be automatically forwarded to myname@myisp.net. This has several advantages: your personal email address does not have to be published on your website; you can associate a single email address with one or more personal email addresses; you do not have to edit your website when you change your personal email address; and it gives your website a consistent and professional appearance.

The third step involves identifying and installing suitable web design software, such as Serif or Microsoft FrontPage. There are many software packages available and they differ with respect to their complexity, features and price. Members of the Worcestershire Web Masters and Internet Group are able to provide advice and support a wide variety of software packages. If in doubt, please ask!

Finally, you should design and publish your website. You can start from a blank page, or download and customise a free template. Free templates are available from a number of sources, including OSWD and Open Web Design. You must ensure that the website template you select does not contain any commercial advertising; you are, of course, encouraged to acknowledge the author.

If followed, these steps will lead to the production of a very professional and flexible website.



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Modern Method

There are a growing number of on-line applications that support the rapid creation of websites. These are template-based and remove the need to register a domain, identify web hosting, and purchase and install web design software. They also greatly simplify the tasks associated with the production and uploading of the website onto the world wide web. There is almost always a charge for such a service, but it is usually very reasonable and often lower than that incurred when following the more traditional method.

Summary

Lodges in the Province of Worcestershire are encouraged to produce and maintain their own websites. The production and management of a Lodge website does requires time and effort, and the skills required can be gained in a relatively short period of time. Being a web master can be incredibly rewarding, as it involves working with ever-changing technology, and sharing information with those who know little about our fraternity. Web masters act as Masonic ambassadors and it is for that reason the Provincial Grand Lodge of Worcestershire has developed a Provincial Website Standard, against which all relevant websites are assessed, and supports its on-line community through the Worcestershire Web Masters and Internet Group.

Please note that the Worcestershire Web Masters and Internet Group does not recommend or endorse any software, product, or service provider. However, its members will provide advice and support on request.