

GUIDELINES FOR INVESTIGATING COMMITTEES

Those who are charged with the duty of investigating the character and other qualifications of applicants for the privileges of Masonry hold positions of distinction and trust. Of all the committees appointed by the Worshipful Master, none is more important to the preservation of this great Fraternal Order Way of Life than this committee, whose duty is to determine the fitness of a candidate prior to balloting on his petition.

They are, of necessity, the inspectors to examine the material wherewith to add wisdom, strength, and beauty to the Universal Masonic Temple. Carelessness, indifference or negligence in the discharge of this responsible duty are of the nature of misdemeanors.

Every member in the Lodge is part of the Investigating Committee, especially the voucher of the petitioner. The member who vouches for a profane should be certain of his fitness for membership. Also, it is the duty of every Master Mason who is aware of something which would cause a profane to be unfit for membership, to inform a brother of that Lodge or the Investigating Committee, so these things can be Verified or clarified. For it is the responsibility of every member to exercise scrupulous care in guarding the door of Masonry from gaining access and introducing Godless ideology. It is our duty as Masons, to jealously examine a profane's fitness for membership, for on this examination rests the honor, glory, and reputation of our institution.

Every member and the Investigating Committee is urged to constantly bear in mind that membership in the craft is much too priceless to be shared without due consideration. So think and act for the good of Masonry at all times.

1. When visiting a candidate at his home, the committee should first determine the family's attitude toward his desire to join the Masonic Order. If there is serious opposition to him joining which cannot be overcome by the committee and there is every likelihood that his membership in the Lodge would cause internal family problems, the petition should be returned or rejected.
2. Ascertain whether the petitioner's home surroundings are such as to permit him financially to continue his membership without depriving his family of the essentials of life. While a man's financial circumstances or his educational background ought not bar him from participating in Masonic privileges or render him unwelcome in the Craft, his standard of living may be so different from those of the other members as to make her uncomfortable in their presence.
3. The applicant should be given the understanding that his character is subjected to the closest scrutiny, and that friendship, personal consideration, or favoritism, must not control or bias Masonic action. He is informed that he must pass the scrutiny of the investigation and the ordeal of the ballot, as all have done who has gone this way before him. If there be a doubt in regard to his fitness to become a Mason, let the

lodge have the benefit of the doubt. Remember that the dignity, honor, and reputation of the institution are in your hands.

4. The committee should determine how long the petitioner has been acquainted with his proposer. If the acquaintanceship has been but a brief one, it is all the more reason why the committee should make a thorough search of the petitioner's background. References should be carefully checked, as well as business affiliations. This of course should be handled in a discreet manner, especially if questions are directed to non-Masons who may not be favorably disposed towards the Institution.
5. Ascertain the petitioner's motive for wanting to become a Mason and what is his conception of the Fraternity. Of course, one who is new to the Order may not be expected to offer a considered opinion, but he should have at least some idea of the type organization he is expecting to join.
6. Is the petitioner charitable by nature? Does he contribute to needy causes as his finances permit? Also, is he charitable in thought and actions towards his fellowmen? Is he bigoted or prejudiced? All these questions, discreetly put, will help bring out the true character of the man.
7. Is he prompt in meeting his financial obligations and honorable in his business dealing with others? Can he afford to become a Mason? The answers to the first two questions can be obtained by investigating his references, both business and personal. As to whether he can afford to become a Mason, this can be determined by pointing out that no man should join the Masonic Order, if he must deprive his family of the necessities of life. Naturally, no Lodge wishes to cause hardship for others, nor handicap itself by adding to its rolls members who are apt to become financial liabilities.
8. Does the petitioner realize that membership in a Lodge calls for payment of dues and these are to be met promptly? Along with this question, the committee might also ascertain what, if any, provisions he has made for his family, money wise etc. should something happen to him.
9. Does his occupation permit him to attend meetings regularly?
10. Does the petitioner believe in a Supreme Being? Does he attend a church? Masonry does not require a man to adhere to any particular creed or religion, he must believe in God and in the immortality of the soul.
11. The Worshipful Master should be kept honestly and fully informed. A complete report of the investigation committee should be presented at the regular lodge meeting.
12. A fearless discharge of this duty may, for a time, subject the committee to the frowns of the rejected and his friends, but faithfulness and courage will, in the end, command the plaudits of every lover of the Fraternity.
13. Don't overlook any references, the last one may be the one needed. Reports on the petitioner should be obtained from courts, police department, credit bureaus, and other places necessary.
14. The investigation should be so conducted that, even if rejected, the applicant gains a higher respect for the Fraternity.