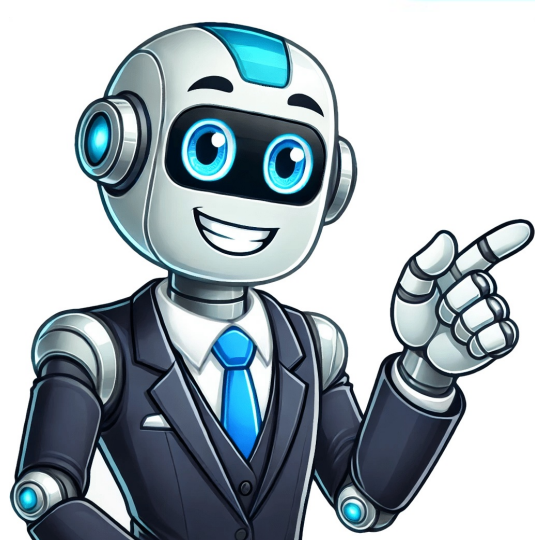


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Scroll down to learn more There are about 5 million Freemasons worldwide, and approximately 40,000 in California. While lodges almost always have a regular meeting place, they can actually meet anywhere as long as they follow a few rules. Historically, that’s included some strange places, like the underground cave in the town of Volcano, Calif. Trying to understand the degrees of Freemasonry can feel like navigating a secret world. With centuries-long roots and intricate hierarchies, this oldest fraternal organization is richly layered with symbols and stages. This blog post will serve as your comprehensive guide, unraveling the complexities of Masonic ranks from Entered Apprentice through to the Honorary 33rd degree and beyond. Ready for an enlightening voyage? Let’s set sail on this fascinating journey into the heart of Freemasonry. The Masonic system comprises three fundamental elements often referred to as craft degrees – these include Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason. Each degree represents a unique phase in Mason’s progression toward understanding and embodying core values such as integrity and service. Intriguingly, there is much more beyond these base levels. While the third degree, or Master Mason status, is considered the highest rank within Freemasonry, members may further broaden their horizons through supplemental degrees offered by appendant organizations like the Scottish Rite or York Rite. For example, some dedicated masons advance their standing within this fascinating fraternal order by pursuing everything from Lodge of Perfection (4°-14°), Council of Princes of Jerusalem (15°-16°), Chapter of Rose Croix (17°-18°) right up to Consistory (19°-32°). One particularly revered accolade is the honorary 33rd-degree award bestowed by Scottish Rite – an honor reflecting recognition for exceptional service but not indicating higher rank than a Master Mason. Despite having numerous ranks and degrees which could suggest hierarchy or inequality amongst its members’ standings at first glance that’s far from reality inside lodge doors. Indeed it’s altogether quite the opposite; Freemasonry endorses equality above all else with each member – regardless if they’re an Entered Apprentice or have reached 33rd-degree honors – being treated equally without any suggestion of superiority or inferiority. The three craft degrees of Freemasonry – namely Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason, form the foundation of a mason’s journey within the organization. The Entered Apprentice degree marks the beginning of a Masonic journey. It is the initial stage in Freemasonry where an individual transitions from being an outsider to becoming a part of this esteemed fraternity. The new member takes his first step into Craft lodges, rich with centuries-old traditions and practices derived from medieval craft guilds of stone masons. In this phase, Freemasons introduce their neophyte brother to core values like moral integrity, equal regard for all members, and service commitment towards humanity and country. A key aspect of being an Entered Apprentice is learning about these core principles while assimilating themselves into the group’s customs and rituals. Through study, participation in lodge activities and mentorship by senior Masons, Apprentices enhance their understanding of Freemasonry’s symbolic teachings rooted in historical degrees that stem from both Christian and Jewish beliefs on personal growth and moral perfection. The journey through Freemasonry continues with the Fellow Craft, the second degree in Masonic Ranks. Traditionally, this stage reflects a time of learning and self-development. Members at the Fellow Craft level delve deeper into the history and symbolism associated with Freemasonry while enhancing their understanding of personal growth values encapsulated within Masonic teachings. The Fellow Craft degree strives to instill an appreciation for intellectual curiosity, crafted through the pillars of wisdom, strength, and beauty – core principles that shape the moral fabric of every Freemason. From its ancient roots within stone mason craft guilds to today’s highly-respected fraternity worldwide, exploration at this rank offers members rich insights into their roles as staunch upholders of exemplary integrity and service. The Master Mason degree is the highest and most significant rank in Freemasonry. As a Master Mason, you have completed your journey through the craft degrees of Entered Apprentice and Fellow Craft, and you now possess the knowledge and experience to fully understand the teachings of Freemasonry. This degree represents moral perfection and symbolizes personal growth within yourself and your community. It is important to note that while some members may pursue additional degrees or achieve leadership ranks, all Master Masons are considered equal within the organization. Freemasonry values equality above all else, fostering a sense of unity among its members who come from diverse backgrounds. Beyond the three Craft degrees of Freemasonry (Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason), there are additional degrees within different Masonic bodies that delve deeper into the teachings and principles of Freemasonry. Let’s uncover the mysteries behind these higher degrees and their significance in the Masonic journey. The Lodge of Perfection is an integral part of the Scottish Rite Masonry and encompasses degrees ranging from the 4th degree to the 14th degree. These degrees, known as Ineffable Degrees, focus on the contemplation and investigation of the ineffable name of Deity. Each degree within the Lodge of Perfection has its own unique significance, such as Master Traveler, Perfect Master, Master of the Brazen Serpent, Provost and Judge, Intendant of the Building, Master of the Temple, and many more. Through elaborate plays with costumes, scenery, special effects, and dramatic production techniques, these degrees present Masonic philosophies that aim to help individuals understand life’s reason and purpose. The Council of Princes of Jerusalem is an important part of the Masonic degree system, specifically associated with the 15th and 16th degrees. These degrees focus on historical events related to the ending period of the Babylonian captivity of Israel and the subsequent rebuilding of the Temple. Notable degrees within this council include the Knight of the East and the Prince of Jerusalem. Through these degrees, Freemasons explore ancient history while also deepening their understanding of moral values and personal growth. It is worth noting that these additional degrees serve as honorary distinctions within Freemasonry but are not considered higher in rank or prestige than the Master Mason degree. The Chapter of Rose Croix degrees in Freemasonry, which is the 17th and 18th degrees, hold a special place within the Scottish Rite. These degrees go beyond the fundamental Craft degrees of Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason, delving into more profound philosophical teachings. In these degrees, members explore topics such as religion, philosophy, ethics, and history through plays that feature costumes and dramatic effects. The purpose is to provide a deeper understanding of Masonic principles and help individuals grasp the reason and purpose behind life itself. The Chapter of Rose Croix degrees are considered high honors within Freemasonry but should not be seen as superior in rank or prestige to the Master Mason degree. They represent an opportunity for personal growth and self-development within this ancient fraternity. The Consistory degrees (19°-32°) are a crucial part of the Scottish Rite Masonry. These degrees, known as traditional and chivalric degrees, play a significant role in teaching important lessons and principles within Freemasonry. The traditional degrees (19-29) focus on core values like Reverence for God and Integrity, while the chivalric degrees (30-32) symbolize the transition from an operative craft guild to a speculative moral science. Each degree within the Consistory holds its own significance, such as Knight of Valor or Grand Inspector. It is essential to understand that these degrees are considered high honors but do not hold a higher rank or prestige than the Master Mason degree. Honorary degrees in Freemasonry are awarded to select members who have made significant contributions to the organization and its core values. The 33rd degree in Freemasonry is an honorary degree that is awarded to members who have exemplified exceptional dedication and service within the organization. While it is considered a high honor, it is important to note that it does not hold a higher rank or prestige than the Master Mason degree. The Scottish Rite confers this honorary degree, which signifies a member’s commitment to personal growth, moral integrity, and devotion to humanity. Beyond the 33rd degree, there are no additional degrees within Freemasonry. Instead, members can continue their masonic journey by exploring leadership roles or pursuing avenues of personal and spiritual development through various Masonic bodies such as the Shrine or York Rite. Masonic ranks hold significant meaning within the Freemasonry organization, symbolizing a member’s progression and mastery of the craft. A closer examination of these ranks provides insight into the rich history and traditions upheld by Freemasons. At its core, Masonic ranks are designed to guide members through an initiatory journey of self-discovery and personal growth. The three Craft degrees – Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason – form the foundation of Freemasonry. Each degree represents a different stage in the member’s development, focusing on moral lessons, symbolic rituals, and philosophical teachings. The highest rank achievable is that of Master Mason, demonstrating one’s dedication to embodying the principles espoused by Freemasonry. Beyond these foundational degrees lie additional degrees conferred by appendant bodies such as the Scottish Rite or York Rite. These supplemental degrees provide further insights into esoteric knowledge and offer opportunities for deeper exploration within specific areas of interest. It is important to note that while these additional degrees are considered prestigious honors within Freemasonry, they do not hold a higher rank or status than that of Master Mason. Freemasonry values equality among its members; there are no hierarchies present in terms of individual worth or importance. Instead, Masonic ranks serve as symbols representing each member’s personal journey rather than a measure of superiority over fellow brethren. By delving into the history and significance behind each rank within Freemasonry, one gains a greater appreciation for this ancient institution’s commitment to fostering personal integrity and spiritual growth. Freemasonry encompasses a rich tapestry of additional Masonic bodies and organizations that extend beyond the three craft degrees. These additional bodies offer Freemasons further opportunities for spiritual growth, fellowship, and philanthropy. Some notable examples include the Scottish Rite, York Rite, Knights Templar, and the Shrine. The Scottish Rite is one of the most well-known appendant bodies in Freemasonry. As mentioned, it offers members a chance to delve deeper into esoteric teachings and symbolism. The York Rite focuses on the chivalric order within Freemasonry that traces its origins back to medieval times. This organization emphasizes ideals such as honor, courage, charity, and religious devotion. The Shrine (formally known as Shriners International), focuses on fun-loving brotherhood while also supporting charitable causes through their network of hospitals for children. These are just a few examples of the many other Masonic bodies available to Freemasons seeking further engagement within their fraternity. Each organization offers unique experiences and opportunities for personal growth while upholding shared values such as integrity and service to humanity. Freemasonry is rich in symbolism, and understanding these symbols is crucial to fully grasp the craft. One of the most recognizable symbols of Freemasonry is the square and compass, which represents moral and intellectual values. The square symbolizes morality, reminding Freemasons to act with fairness and honesty in their daily lives. The compass represents wisdom, guiding members to use knowledge and judgment in all aspects of life. Another significant symbol often associated with Freemasonry is found on the U.S. one-dollar bill: the pyramid with an eye at its peak. This symbol, known as the Eye of Providence or the All-Seeing Eye, has roots in ancient Egyptian civilization and signifies divine providence watching over humanity. The trowel is yet another emblematic tool used by Masons during ceremonies. It reminds members to spread kindness, unity, and brotherly love among themselves and society at large. Understanding these symbols allows Freemasons to connect with a shared heritage of values while serving as reminders for personal growth within their journey within Freemasonry. George Washington, the first President of the United States, was a Freemason and held the rank of Master Mason. Benjamin Franklin, one of America’s founding fathers and an influential diplomat, was a member of several Masonic lodges. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, the renowned composer, was initiated into Freemasonry in Vienna in 1784. Simon Bolivar, known as the “Liberator,” was a Freemason and played a crucial role in South America’s independence movements. Sir Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister during World War II, belonged to several Masonic lodges throughout his life. Henry Ford, the founder of the Ford Motor Company and pioneer of the assembly line production system, was a Freemason. Mark Twain, a celebrated American author and humorist, was initiated into Freemasonry in 1861. Harry Truman, the 33rd President of the United States, served as Grand Master of Masons in Missouri before his presidency. Salvador Allende Gossens, Chile’s first socialist President elected democratically, was an active member of Freemasonry. These notable individuals demonstrate the diverse range of industries and backgrounds that have been touched by Freemasonry throughout history. This comprehensive guide has provided a detailed understanding of the degrees of Freemasonry. From the three craft degrees to the honorary 33rd degree, we’ve explored the ranks and symbols that make up this ancient fraternity. Whether you’re a Freemason yourself or simply interested in history and secret societies, this guide has shed light on the fascinating world of Freemasonry and its influence throughout history. Modern Freemasonry was established in England in 1717, although its exact origins are lost in the unrecorded history of medieval times. Its roots are found in guilds of stonemasons that, from the end of the 13th century, regulated the qualifications of stonemasons. As a stonemason grew in his craft, he was entered into the appropriate rank: apprentice, journeyman (now called Fellow Craft) and master mason. At each stage, the craftsman was entrusted with the secrets of each level, which include passwords and grips (or handshake) made known to him only upon due inspection of necessary proficiency by a master of the craft. This way, as stonemasons migrated across Europe to the next job, each man was assured proper pay and privilege commensurate with his skill level, and clients were assured of the quality of work. Today, Freemasonry shares this same system of secrets, ritual and growth, though the work has shifted from building edifices to building oneself in good character. How many Freemasons are there? According to the United Grand Lodge of England, there are 6 million Freemasons worldwide. Who Are The Masons? Masons (also known as Freemasons) belong to the oldest and largest fraternal organization in the world. Today, there are more than two million Freemasons in North America. Masons represent virtually every occupation and profession, yet within the Fraternity, all meet as equals. Masons come from diverse political ideologies, yet meet as friends. Masons come from varied religious beliefs and creeds, yet all believe in one God. Many of North America’s early patriots were Freemasons. Thirteen signers of the Constitution and fourteen Presidents of the United States, including George Washington, were Masons. In Canada, the Father of the Confederation, Sir John A. MacDonald, was a Mason, as were other early Canadian and American leaders. One of the most fascinating aspects of Freemasonry is how so many men, from so many different men, from so many different walks of life, can meet together in peace, always conducting their affairs in harmony and friendship and calling each other “Brother.” What is Freemasonry? Freemasonry (or Masonry) is dedicated to the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God. It uses the tools and implements of ancient architectural craftsmen symbolically in a system of instruction designed to build character and moral values in its members. Its singular purpose is to make good men better. Its bonds of friendship, compassion, and brotherly love have survived even the most divisive political, military, and religious conflicts through the centuries. Freemasonry is a fraternity which encourages its members to practice the faith of their personal acceptance. Masonry teaches that each person, through self-improvement and helping others, has an obligation to make a difference for good in the world. Where Did Freemasonry Begin? No one knows just how old Freemasonry is because the actual origins have been lost in time. Most scholars believe Masonry arose from the guilds of stonemasons who built the majestic castles and cathedrals of the middle ages. In 1717, Masonry created a formal organization when four Lodges in London joined in forming England’s first Grand Lodge. By 1731, when Benjamin Franklin joined the Fraternity, there were already several Lodges in the Colonies, and in Canada the first Lodge was established in 1738. Today, Masonic Lodges are found in almost every community throughout North America, and in large cities there are usually several Lodges. A Mason can travel to almost any country in the world and find a Masonic Lodge where he will be welcomed as a “Brother.” What Do Freemasons Do? The Masonic experience encourages members to become better men, better husbands, better fathers, and better citizens. The fraternal bonds formed in the Lodge help build lifelong friendships among men with similar goals and values. Beyond its focus on individual development and growth, Masonry is deeply involved in helping people. The Freemasons of North America contribute over two million dollars a day to charitable causes. This philanthropy represents an unparalleled example of the humanitarian commitment and the great and honorable Fraternity. Much of that assistance goes to people who are not Masons. Some of these charities are vast projects. The Shrine Masons (Shriners) operate the largest network of hospitals for burned and orthopedically impaired children in the country, and there is never a fee for treatment. The Scottish Rite Masons maintain a nationwide network of over 150 Childhood Language Disorder Clinics, Centers, and Programs. Many other Masonic organizations sponsor a variety of philanthropies, including scholarship programs for children, and perform public service activities in their communities. Masons also enjoy the fellowship of each other and their families in social and recreational activities. Several Masonic Principles Are: Faith must be the center of our lives. All men and women are the children of God. No one has the right to tell another person what he or she must think or believe. Each person has a responsibility to be a good citizen, obeying the law. It is important to work to make the world a better place for all. Honor and integrity are keys to a meaningful life What is The Masonic Lodge? The word “Lodge” means both a group of Masons meeting together as well as the room or building in which they meet. Masonic buildings are sometimes called “temples” because the original meaning of the word was “place of knowledge” and Masonry encourages the advancement of knowledge. Masonic Lodges usually meet twice a month to conduct regular business, vote upon petitions for membership, and bring new Masons into the Fraternity through three ceremonies called degrees. In the Lodge room Masons share in a variety of programs. Here the bonds of friendship and fellowship are formed and strengthened. Who Can Qualify to Join? Applicants must be men of good character who believe in a Supreme Being. To become a Mason one must petition a particular Lodge. The Master of the Lodge appoints a committee to visit the applicant prior to the Lodge balloting upon his petition. So Who Are the Masons? Masons are men of good character who strive to improve themselves and make the world a better place. They belong to the oldest and most honorable fraternity known to man. If you think you may be interested in becoming a member, you can begin by contacting a Lodge in your area or speaking to a Mason. If you’re considering joining the Freemasons, there are a few things you should know before taking the plunge. Freemasonry is a fraternal organization that has been around for centuries, with a rich history and tradition. It is a society that prides itself on its values of brotherhood, charity, and truth, and its members are expected to uphold these values in their everyday lives. In this article, I’ll explain all the things you probably should know before becoming a Freemason, starting with the obvious first question... What is Freemasonry? Freemasonry is a fraternal organization that has been around for centuries. It is a society of men who are united by a common set of values and beliefs. Here are some key things you should know about Freemasonry. History of Freemasonry The history of Freemasonry dates back to the late 16th century. Freemasonry is believed to have evolved from the guilds of stonemasons and cathedral builders in medieval Europe. These guilds were responsible for building some of the most impressive structures of the time, including cathedrals, castles, and bridges. Over time, the guilds began to admit non-masons into their ranks, and the organization evolved into what we now know as Freemasonry. Today, Freemasonry is a worldwide organization with millions of members. The Beliefs and Values of Freemasonry Freemasonry is based on a set of core values and beliefs. These include: Becoming a Freemason If you are interested in becoming a Freemason, there are a few things you should know before submitting a petition to join. This section will cover the requirements for joining and the initiation process. Requirements for Joining To join the Freemasons, you must meet the following qualifications: Be a male at least 18 years of age (the minimum age varies in some jurisdictions, sometimes up to 21). Believe in a Supreme Being. Be of good character and reputation. Be recommended by two members of the lodge you wish to join. It is important to note that Freemasonry welcomes members of every country, religion, race, age, income, education, and opinion. However, you must meet the above requirements to be considered for membership. The Initiation Process Once you have submitted your petition to join a lodge, it will be reviewed by the members. If your petition is accepted, you will be invited to attend an interview with a committee of members. This is an opportunity for you to share your reasons for wanting to join and for the committee to ask you questions. If the committee approves your interview, you will be scheduled for an initiation ceremony. The initiation process involves a series of rituals and ceremonies that will introduce you to the principles and values of Freemasonry. During the initiation ceremony, you will take an oath of allegiance to the organization and be presented with a white apron, which is a symbol of your membership. You will also receive a copy of the organization’s constitution and bylaws. After the initiation ceremony, you will be considered an Entered Apprentice, which is the first degree of Freemasonry. You will then progress through the other degrees of Freemasonry, including Fellowcraft and Master Mason. What are the Benefits of Being a Freemason? As a Freemason, you will gain access to a community of like-minded individuals who share your values and beliefs. You will also have the opportunity to develop your personal growth and development through the organization’s teachings and practices. Here are some of the benefits of being a Freemason: Community and Brotherhood One of the most significant benefits of being a Freemason is the sense of community and brotherhood that comes with membership. Freemasonry provides a supportive environment where members can connect and build lasting relationships with one another. The organization is known for its strong sense of camaraderie and fellowship, which is fostered through regular meetings, social events, and charitable activities. Personal Growth and Development Freemasonry is a system of moral and ethical teachings that seeks to improve the character of its members. Through the organization’s teachings and practices, you will have the opportunity to develop your personal growth and development. The organization’s teachings are based on the principles of brotherly love, relief, and truth, which are designed to help members become better individuals and better members of society. As a Freemason, you will have access to a range of educational resources, including lectures, seminars, and workshops, that will help you develop your knowledge and understanding of the organization’s teachings. You will also have the opportunity to participate in various rituals and ceremonies, which are designed to help you develop your character and strengthen your moral and ethical values. Some Common Misconceptions about Freemasonry As with any organization, there are several misconceptions about Freemasonry. Here are some of the most common myths and rumors about Freemasonry, as well as some clarifications to help you better understand the organization. Myths and Rumors Freemasonry is a Secret Society One of the most common misconceptions about Freemasonry is that it is a secret society. While the organization does have some secret rituals and ceremonies, it is not a secret society. Freemasonry is a fraternal organization that is open to men of good character who believe in a Supreme Being. Freemasonry is a Religion Another common misconception is that Freemasonry is a religion. This is not true. Freemasonry is a fraternal organization that is open to men of good character who believe in a Supreme Being. Members are free to come and go as they please and are not required to do anything that goes against their beliefs or values. Clarifying Misunderstandings Freemasonry is Not a Political Organization Freemasonry is not a political organization and does not endorse any political candidates or parties. Members are free to hold their own political beliefs and are not required to share them with other members. Freemasonry is Not a Business Network Another common misunderstanding is that Freemasonry is a business network. While members may form professional relationships with other members, Freemasonry is not a business network and does not exist to further the business interests of its members. Freemasonry is Not a Path to Wealth Some people believe that Freemasonry is a path to wealth. This is also not true. Members are not given any financial benefits and are also not required to give any money to the organization besides their dues. Yes, there is a cost to membership. Becoming a Freemason is a personal decision that requires careful consideration. It is important to understand the values and principles of the organization before joining. Here are some key takeaways to keep in mind: Freemasonry is a fraternity that values brotherhood, charity, and truth. Members are expected to exhibit the utmost tolerance and gentlemanly conduct both in Lodge and in their daily lives. Freemasonry is not a religion, but members are required to believe in a supreme being. The organization is open to men of good repute who are over 21 years old and able to support themselves and their families. Joining Freemasonry is a commitment to personal growth and service to others. If you are considering joining Freemasonry, take the time to research and learn more about the organization. Contact your local lodge to request an application and attend a meeting to get a sense of the culture and community. Remember, becoming a Freemason is a lifelong commitment that requires dedication and a willingness to live by the principles of the organization.