

Step Guide - Step 5: Preparing the Prospective Candidate for Interview

This Step follows an initial approach to, or from, a prospective candidate and comes before the formal applicant interview. It is normally carried out by a prospective candidate's sponsors (ie, his proposer & seconder), assisted by others if the sponsors wish. If the potential candidate was not previously known to any members, it is recommended the Lodge Membership Officer be one of the sponsors.

The sponsors and the candidate are each asked to satisfy themselves that Freemasonry and the particular Lodge are right for the candidate and that he is right for them. Be open, honest, clear and direct about the commitment involved in becoming a Freemason. Anything that happens outside of Lodge meetings can be described. Avoid describing the ceremonies, or practices such as Masonic Fire that are included at the festive board, and their meaning in detail, so as not to diminish the impact of Initiation. Meet informally with the prospective candidate on a number of occasions to explain and discuss: - The nature of Freemasonry, what it is and what it is not. - The expectations and duties of membership, including the commitment in time and money.

Features of your Lodge. - Satisfy yourself that the prospective candidate would be suitable as a member of the Craft and for your Lodge. Screening includes: - Confirming that the prospective candidate is who he says he is and meets the qualifications for membership of the Craft, checking that there is nothing in his background that would preclude him. - Confirming that he understands enough about Freemasonry to make an informed choice to join. - Satisfying yourself that he has appropriate and sufficient motives for joining. - Managing his expectations so that they are realistic and compatible with Masonic values. - Satisfying yourself that he is suited to your Lodge. - Confirming that he can meet the time and cost commitments expected by the Lodge. - Explaining the significance of membership and the step he is contemplating. - Confirming with his spouse or partner that she, or he, approves of his prospective membership.

IMPORTANTLY ESTABLISH

- Whether he is a "free man", of mature age. - He must be a mature male, able to make his own decision to become a Freemason. (If he is 18 years or over, but below the age of 21, his Initiation will have to be authorised by the ProvGM.
- Whether his application is voluntary. - He must come willingly, without having been coerced. He must have good motives and not seek personal advantage from membership of the Craft.
- Whether he believes in the Supreme Being. - A core requirement of membership is to believe in the Supreme Being. If there is any doubt on the definition of Supreme Being, sponsors should seek formal guidance via their Lodge Secretary.
- Whether he is law-abiding and accepts, acknowledges and respects the legitimacy of the head of state. - Members are expected to be law-abiding citizens who live by a moral code and the law of the land, are respectful of the head of state and who acknowledge the legitimacy of the civil authority of the country in which they reside or are visiting.
- His willingness to take a solemn obligation on a Holy Book. - Candidates take an obligation on the VSL that confirms that they will not reveal to others the traditional modes of recognition of a Freemason.
- His willingness to conform to the Rules and Customs of the Craft.

- His personal characteristics, qualities and values. - To get the applicant to talk about himself and his values before telling him about our values and our expectations of members.
- His reasons and motives for joining and his expectations of membership. - To bring to light whether he has applied to join any other Lodge, whether or not he has been turned down by another Lodge, and the reasons why.
- His membership of other organisations. - To identify membership of any organisation incompatible with the Craft. To identify special interests that may be relevant to the particular Lodge.
- His other duties, affiliations and commitments. - To identify whether being a Freemason might conflict with his other duties, affiliations and commitments.
- His existing links with Freemasons. - To identify any background in or experience of Freemasonry.
- His suitability for this specific Lodge. - To determine whether the applicant meets any special requirements or characteristics defined by the Lodge. For example, affiliations with other organisations such as schools, youth organisation, university, armed services.
- Whether he is available and can afford the costs. - To ensure he is available when the Lodge meets, is fully aware of the time and financial commitment involved and is able, free and willing to make that commitment.
- The likely contribution he could make as a member. - To identify the strengths the applicant will bring to the Lodge and any likely future contribution he may be able to make.
- His appreciation of the normal journey, via degrees & offices, to the chair. - **To ensure he is aware of the normal Masonic journey**, including Exaltation into the Royal Arch, and what might be asked of him as a member.
- Attitude of his family towards Freemasonry and his membership. - To ensure that his family are supportive of his membership and are unlikely hinder the applicant's participation if he joins.
- Encourage the prospective candidate to ask questions. - Answer, or obtain answers, to his satisfaction.

Screening is not a formal interview, nor a tick box exercise. If issues arise that give any cause for concern, discuss them in confidence with the Lodge Membership Officer. If all parties are happy to proceed with an application for membership, invite the prospective candidate to complete the Grand Lodge Registration Form. Then complete the questions for Proposers and Seconders on page three of the form. Submit the completed Grand Lodge Registration Form to the Lodge Secretary, who will complete the administration required by the Book of Constitutions.

Your prospective candidate is now an applicant. Report to your Lodge Membership Officer, to confirm the above steps you have taken, and the responses you have received. Brief the applicant on what to expect at the interview and **plan to attend the interview with your applicant to support him.** If you believe that the prospective candidate does not meet the qualifications for membership, refer the matter to the Lodge Membership Officer.