

## Is Freemasonry a religion?

No. This is a misconception. Freemasonry does not have any theological doctrines, offers no sacraments and does not claim to lead to salvation. It is not a substitute for religion, nor is it a forum for religious discussion. To be a Freemason you must, however, have a belief in a 'Supreme Being'.



Freemasonry is made up of men who come from many different religions. There is nothing whatsoever in being a Freemason that conflicts with a member's religious beliefs or practices.

Freemasonry promotes unity and tolerance amongst all men and does not discriminate against any religion. The principles and practices of Freemasonry are compatible with all compassionate religions that teach respect for the deity and tolerance towards one's fellow man. If anything, Freemasonry complements the philosophies of these faiths.

## What costs are involved in joining Freemasonry?

As with all organisations, annual membership fees are expected of members but are reasonably priced. Fees may vary from lodge to lodge depending on the style of the lodge. For example, a lodge that values fine wine and cuisine would have larger catering costs. When first becoming a Freemason, you will pay a one off joining fee and also purchase Masonic attire.

## What is the history of Freemasonry?

The precise origins of Freemasonry have been lost in time, however, its traditions date back to the Middle Ages and to the stonemasons who built the cathedrals and castles of Europe. To construct them, it was necessary for men to have considerable knowledge of geometry, arithmetic and engineering. These highly skilled masons formed themselves into lodges to protect the skills and secrets of their trade and to pass on their knowledge to worthy apprentices.

## In what kind of charitable works are Freemasons involved?

Charity and benevolence are a basic teaching of Freemasonry. Members have been involved in charitable activities in this country since European settlement. There are a number of Masonic charities actively involved in the community for the care of young people, orphans, the sick, the aged, medical research and services and those affected by natural disaster. Money is raised through initiatives at lodge meetings, dinners and other social events.

In any one year, Freemasons across Australia and New Zealand give generously and significantly to charities and not for profit organisations on a community and national level. Contact your local Grand Lodge for further details.



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# Why Freemasonry?

# What is Freemasonry?

Freemasonry is unique. It cannot be likened to any institution in that it offers experiences not found anywhere else.

Freemasons are ordinary men in the community, 18 years and over, of all religions and backgrounds, who share a concern for human values, moral standards and the rights of individuals.

It offers members with an insight and knowledge of history and philosophy, an appreciation for ancient ritual and symbolism, personal development, public service and hands-on involvement in charitable activities and community issues. Freemasonry also provides opportunities to socialise with men from all walks of life, without religious and political barriers.

Freemasonry is one of the world's oldest and largest fraternal societies. There are approximately five million Freemasons worldwide and 60,000 in Australia and New Zealand.

Freemasonry provides a code of conduct, based on moral and ethical standards, for living in today's society. Freemasonry is an organisation of men who strive to live by the fundamental principles of integrity, goodwill and charity. It is a not for profit organisation that is heavily involved in supporting charity and community service.



# Why do you call yourselves a fraternity?

One of the greatest things about Freemasonry is that men from all walks of life regardless of their race, creed, colour and social status can come together as

equals and share a common bond of friendship and fraternity as Freemasons.

The members are banned from any political or religious discussion whilst at lodge, to ensure peace and harmony is constant. This principle was expressed in the American Civil War, where Yankee and Confederate soldiers would come together at lodge, under the banner of Freemasonry, in peace and harmony, to practise the ideals of friendship and fraternity.



After the ritual of the lodge is completed, members come together and share a meal and family and friends are often invited to participate. Freemasons often refer to the term "Meeting on the level and parting on the square", which means they meet as equals and part as friends.

Freemasonry can provide men and their families a fun and active social life with like-minded people from all walks of life. Family and family values are an important part of a Freemason's life and families are frequently invited to take part in Masonic activities such as charity balls, family picnic days and other social get-togethers.

It must be noted that as a Freemason, a member's family is to be valued above all else and should at all times take precedence over his Masonic membership. However, it is important that a member's family understands his Masonic association and supports him in his development.

# What does Freemasonry offer me personally?

Freemasonry offers men an opportunity to develop insights into philosophical ideals, which espouse the core values of prudence, temperance, fortitude and justice.

Prudence is to help us make the right decisions; temperance keeps us on the straight and narrow; fortitude promotes self confidence and strong self esteem; and justice provides us with guidance in life.

Members are also provided with training in self-development, which includes public speaking, mentoring, tolerance, communication skills and self-confidence.

# Why and how is ritual and symbolism used?

Ask any member about Masonic ritual and he is likely to explain it as a unique and inspiring experience. Ritual is core in Freemasonry. This ritual is unique in that it uses a range of objects, symbols and scenarios to disseminate the values, traditions and philosophical precepts of Freemasonry. These rituals are centuries old and have been used in Freemasonry for hundreds of years. An example of such symbolism is the use of medieval stonemason working tools as a vehicle of instruction.

Symbols in the lodge room are used to define the rank of a Freemason. The most widely recognised symbol



of Freemasonry is the Square & Compasses. The square teaches us to conduct ourselves properly - as in 'square conduct', and the compasses teach us to keep our passions and prejudices within due bounds.

Members wear the symbol to remind themselves of their obligation to the lessons learned in their lodges and to identify their membership to other Freemasons and all people. Masonic symbols have wide meanings - some directly relate to the tools used by operative masons and some represent the need for order and direction in life.

# Is Freemasonry a secret society?

Freemasonry is certainly not a secret society but in common with most organisations it does regard some aspects of its activities as confidential. The policy until recently was for members to be self effacing and avoid publicity about the fraternity and its community work. This has been counter productive.

In the Middle Ages, people were predominantly illiterate. Therefore, symbols such as the square and compasses, modes of dress, hand shakes and signs were used to distinguish a mason from a non-mason, and thus protect the highly prized technical know how of their trade.

Developed long before our modern day modes of communication, these secret signs and passwords were later used by Freemasons to identify one another and to establish their degree or level of attainment in Freemasonry. These days, these modes of recognition are used solely as a ceremonial means of demonstrating that one is a Freemason when in lodge meetings.

That a Freemason does not reveal these so-called 'secrets' is basically a dramatic way of testing the good character of those who join. To become a Freemason requires a person to continually observe, with total sincerity, the high ideals of integrity and confidentiality.