



**WISCONSIN MASONIC HANDBOOK**  
**CHAPTER 2**  
**CONDUCTING THE BUSINESS OF A**  
**LODGE**

**A. INTRODUCTION**

A well-run communication begins at the door. A Worshipful Master should ensure that each member and visitor is greeted before lodge opens, that the visitor is introduced to the brethren present. Every member of the lodge who attends a meeting, whether he participates or just listens, should feel happy, comfortable and, most of all, wanted in the lodge. Every visitor should be made welcome in the same manner.

Keep in mind, the sole requirement for admission to your lodge is a current official uniform receipt card for dues or other dues card from the Grand Jurisdiction of which the visitor is a member or a demit less than two years old. If the visitor does not have a dues card in his possession, ascertain if another brother Mason can vouch for the visitor. A brother made welcome and comfortable will return again and will carry away the true spirit of brotherly love and affection.

**B. STATED COMMUNICATIONS**

Stated communications are those held at the regular periods provided for in the By Laws of a lodge. No more than two stated communications may be held in any one-month nor may a lodge have more than one stated communication on the same day. A lodge has the option of not holding stated communications during certain months of the year if so specified in the By Laws. The By Laws of a lodge must specify the day of the week of each month and starting time for stated communications and the months of the year such communications will not be held. Remember, changes in the By Laws require the final approval of the Grand Master. (Refer to Chapter 61, Masonic Code of Wisconsin)

A Worshipful Master may postpone a stated communication because of an emergency, an Act of God, or other good cause in his sole discretion. In addition, a Worshipful Master may set a different date for a stated communication if the date specified in the By Laws for the stated communication falls on a holiday provided he announces the date for the change at the last stated communication prior to the holiday.

## **C. SPECIAL COMMUNICATIONS**

A special communication may be convened by the Worshipful Master, or by either the Senior or Junior Warden when lawfully acting as Master, upon notice to the members, given orally, in writing, or at a previous stated communication, but only the work for which the "Special" is convened may be conducted at the meeting. Two special communications on the same day may not be convened unless one of them is for the purpose of conducting a Masonic Memorial Service. A special and stated communication may be held on the same day. Only a communication to conduct a Masonic Memorial Service or Lodge of Sorrow may be held on Sunday.

## **D. OPENING AND CLOSING**

A lodge can only open and remain open to transact business or do work when there are present at least three Master Masons who are members of the lodge, one of whom must be the Worshipful Master or a Warden, except in the case of a special communication to conduct a Masonic Memorial Service, when it is permissible for the Worshipful Master of the lodge to permit a Past Master to open and close the lodge and conduct the Masonic Memorial Service. The ranking officer present may permit any Master Mason to open the lodge and conduct its business and do its work if there is present at all times the Worshipful Master or one of the Wardens.

At a stated communication, a lodge must open and close on the Master Mason degree, on which degree all of the business of the lodge shall be transacted; it may call down to a lower degree for examination or work. It may close the lodge of Master Masons (the Master's discretion) and open a lodge of a lower degree for the purpose of examination and/or degree work. The lodge shall then be closed in due form on the last degree worked in. By tradition, in Wisconsin, current Grand Lodge Officers and Past Grand Masters may close in short form.

All business of a lodge must be conducted in the Master Mason degree. A special communication for work may be opened and closed in the degree in which the work is to be performed.

The Official Cipher describes the short form procedure used in changing from one degree to another. However, the cipher may not be used or kept open in the lodge room during opening or closing of a lodge, except during rehearsal practice.

## **E. ORDER OF BUSINESS**

A suggested order of business for a stated communication is located in the Chapter 26 or 27 of this HANDBOOK. The Worshipful Master should plan his agenda in advance for each stated communication by using the Agenda Worksheet. The appropriate blanks are to be filled in prior to the meeting to assure complete but concise meetings that remain to the point.

## **F. GUIDELINES FOR A WELL RUN COMMUNICATION**

No attempt is being made to cover all of the circumstances under which formalized rules of order should apply, but, some of the more common cases, which should be considered by the presiding officer of a lodge, have been listed below:

1. The Flag of the United States of America should be displayed on a standard in the East at the Worshipful Master's right. It is improper to use the Flag as a drapery for the Altar or for decorative purposes. The Flag should be given preference over any other banner, emblem, or device used for a similar purpose in a lodge room or when displayed on a Masonic building.
2. The Worshipful Master's hat is an emblem of authority. Consequently, it should be worn with dignity. It should always be removed during prayer and at the mention of the name of Deity, as a sign of reverence and respect; also when giving the Obligations, as a token of the sacredness of the pledges being taken by the candidate. It should be removed in the presence of the Grand Master or his representative if the Grand Master or his representative is covered, and it may also be removed for comfort and convenience.
3. The Worshipful Master may present the gavel to a brother for the purpose of proceeding with the work-such as conferring of a degree. No one but the Grand Master, or his official representative, is entitled to the transfer of authority in a lodge. Responsibility of a Worshipful Master of a Masonic Lodge remains with him at all times.
4. When a brother rises to speak, he shall give the proper sign, respectfully address himself to the Worshipful Master, and be recognized before he begins to speak.
5. A petition for the degrees or affiliation is presented to the lodge at a stated meeting, read, reported, received, noted in the minutes, and may be referred to an Interviewing Committee without any action by the lodge.

6. When a motion is made and seconded, it should be restated or rejected by the Worshipful Master. He may, if he so desires, decline to entertain a motion.
7. Motions and reports may be referred to committees at the discretion of the Worshipful Master.
8. No motion can be permitted which could be in violation of the Masonic Code of Wisconsin or the By-Laws of the constituent lodge. The Worshipful Master is the judge of all questions of order.
9. All debate ceases at the will and pleasure of the Worshipful Master.
10. There shall be no debate after the motion is put by the Worshipful Master.
11. Every member present, entitled to vote, shall be required to do so unless excused by the Worshipful Master when balloting on a petition for the degrees.
12. No appeal lies to a lodge from a decision of the Worshipful Master. An appeal may be taken only by those against whom the decision has been made and this may be taken only to the Grand Master who will review it subject to final action at the Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge.
13. The Worshipful Master may cast the deciding vote in case of a tie. He may also choose not to do so if he so desires.
14. Balloting and voting regulations are frequently an area, which is misunderstood. As the regulations are numerous, a reference list has been provided for your use.
  - Table of Votes, Appendix Part 6, Masonic Code of Wisconsin.
  - Voting in Lodges, Chapter 71, Masonic Code of Wisconsin.
  - "Ballot" and "Ballot Box" in Index, Masonic Code of Wisconsin.
  - See applicable annotations for each section consulted.