

**United Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of Victoria
Supreme Grand Chapter of Royal Arch masons of Victoria
Social Media Guidelines**

Social media platforms have become an increasingly popular channel for communication in the 21st Century. They provide ways to share content with a wide audience and provide excellent tools for sharing information about Freemasonry and Masonic activities.

As with any powerful tool, social media needs to be used with caution, as incorrect use can have a damaging impact on Freemasonry's public image. This document has been written to assist you to use these platforms effectively, confidently, and within the compass of propriety.

Scope

These guidelines apply to posts made by Freemasons on all social media platforms, whether those platforms are open to the public (such as Facebook and Twitter), or just to Freemasons.

The term 'post' refers to any action taken on social media, whether sharing social content, making a comment on content someone else has shared (including 'liking' Facebook posts and Tweets), or re-sharing content to your own connections. This document also applies to Masonic websites, particularly those that invite comment.

One purpose of this document is to emphasise the highly public nature of social media channels and ensure Freemasons use these powerful channels for public conversation in a responsible way.

Your Duty

As a citizen every Freemason has a duty not to engage in conduct which is contrary to the law of the land. As a Freemason he also has a duty not to engage in activity which may bring Freemasonry into disrepute.

In these times, it is more important than ever that Freemasons are ensuring their political beliefs and their membership of Freemasonry are not conflated.

On social media, this is particularly prevalent, and members are advised to take every step necessary to make sure that political beliefs are not posted or shared on Masonic accounts. Such an action brings Freemasonry into disrepute by undermining the key fact that Freemasonry is a non-political organisation.

It is important to note that any interactions a Freemason has on social media may be visible to anyone in the world. While it is possible to restrict the audience of your posts, it is not possible to control how someone will react to them. Your private post can easily be shared and reposted publicly by anyone who has access to it. The same can apply to what was intended to be a private email.

Even if an original post is deleted or edited, someone could already have shared it in its original form. Everything you say or do is permanently recorded, and there is no such thing as a truly private post.

You are an ambassador for Freemasons Victoria. Expectations that apply to your daily conduct apply equally within the digital media sphere, as comments may be taken out of context and taken as representative of the views of Freemasons Victoria.

Here is a list of behaviours and topics to avoid when posting on social media. These apply to your personal accounts, as well as to accounts for Lodges, Districts, or other Masonic entities.

They apply to any Freemason who has identified himself as a Freemason online, whether he is posting in Masonic or non-Masonic channels.

The list is not comprehensive, but is intended to act as an introductory guide to topics or behaviours that are considered inappropriate for posting to any audience on social media.

When posting on social media platforms, a Freemason must NOT:

- produce, link to, or refer to any content that is illegal, defamatory, or likely to offend others,
- cause or contribute to any hostile or unproductive arguments, or exercise any private piques or quarrels (good natured debate may be fine, but you should be prepared to abandon the exchange if it ceases to be friendly),
- discuss or allude to any of the Masonic Signs or Words (see the First Degree Obligation),
- claim to speak for any Masonic body (for example, a Lodge, a District, a charity or committee or Freemasons Victoria) on whose behalf he is not expressly authorised to speak,
- identify anyone else as a Freemason without his explicit consent,
- contain any personal information about any Freemason without his explicit consent, such as address or telephone number,
- attempt to use Masonic channels as a vehicle for personal profit, or for any other form of self-promotion,

Best Practice

This section provides some guidance on the kinds of content to share using social media platforms. This is by no means an exhaustive list - rather, it is intended to stimulate the mind to consider what other types of content might be interesting to your social media audience.

That is to say, a Freemason may share content or participate in conversations online as long as the content presents Freemasonry in a positive light, does not contravene any of the principles outlined in the section above, and is relevant to the channel in which it is being posted.

Subject Matter

A Freemason may publicly share any Masonic content that contributes to a positive public image of Freemasonry such as charitable work and events, good causes supported by Freemasons, and information about Masonic history.

Social media channels can also be used to share information only relevant to Freemasons, but care should be exercised to use a more restricted channel, such as a closed or secret Facebook group. Topics that might be discussed there include:

- discussions about Masonic allegory and symbolism (as long as there is no mention of any Masonic Signs, Tokens or Words),
- background information about other Masonic Orders (as long as it does not ruin the experience for those who are not members),
- unusual visits to other Lodges (for example, for a special ceremony, or because a group of members of a Lodge or District have travelled a long distance to visit another Lodge).

Style

A good guide to whether content will be enjoyed by one's audience is the acronym RICE: content should be relevant, interesting, concise, and entertaining.

Relevant: posts not about Masonic topics (or not involving Freemasons) do not belong on Masonic social media channels. This includes (but is not limited to) the news, sports, and general history (unless those involved are Freemasons). In addition, Freemasons who are members of multiple Masonic Facebook groups should resist the temptation to share their posts to all such indiscriminately, choosing only to post to channels where the information is of direct relevance to the purpose of the group (for instance, information about appointments within your District does not belong in a group set up to discuss ritual).

Interesting: posts should include content others would want to read. That is to say, you should avoid posting for no reason, or sharing content that is inaccessible or difficult to digest.

Concise: social media are frequently consumed by busy people who are on the move, so posts should be to the point. If linking to an external site, provide a brief summary of the contents of that site, to enable viewers to decide whether they want to visit the page in question or not. When sharing news or engaging in conversation, keep to the point. Brevity is one of the fundamental principles of all social media platforms: Twitter limits all messages to 140 characters, and Facebook only shows the first few lines of a post by default (these can be expanded, but a casual viewer may not be engaged enough to do so).

Entertaining: social media are, by definition, intended to be sociable. This means that content shared and topics discussed should engage (and in some cases amuse) the reader. Lengthy diatribes about a niche topic are unlikely to fall into this category; although there is nothing wrong with discussing these topics, it is better to do so conforming to the principles above and provide links to external content for anyone who wishes to read in greater detail.

Source: Social Media Policy & Guidelines UGLV.