

WEBSITES

Your MetGL / PGL / DGL Webmaster should be your first point of call – they will have lots of advice, may well be able to help you with images etc, and there may be Provincial rules and guidelines that they can make you aware of.

When you set up the site, the over-riding guideline is to 'be open and seen to be open'. Therefore:

1. Do not include the phrase “secret society” (especially “Freemasonry is not a secret society” which just means that “Freemasonry” and “secret society” come up in each other’s search results), and similar phrases like “Freemasonry is not a religion / political pressure group / etc.”
2. No logins either on, or accessible from, the site. (You do of course need logins, for example: for your admin area, but this needs to be at a separate address that is not linked to from the site in any way). [nb: from a security point of view, if general users don't know where the login is, they can't try to hack into it].

General

Ideally, the URL should be .org.uk and it is entirely up to you what details are entered for the owner details – there are no rules about it, but some lodges prefer to have it in the name of the lodge, others just have it in the name of the webmaster or whoever registered it.

If your budget runs to it, then use a Content Management System (CMS), for example WordPress or Joomla (the latter is more powerful – if you need it) which makes it easier to maintain and means more people can be roped in.

Suggestions on Content

This is your lodge’s website so aim to bring out the character of the lodge in it. Ensure that it is clearly marked / headed as your lodge’s site (e.g.: have ‘xxx Lodge No. xxx’ in the header) and look to incorporate distinguishing features of your lodge – e.g.: your banner (or items from it), particular treasurers, etc.

Try not to have overly long pages – it is easier for users to flick through several pages than to be endlessly scrolling down.

The navigation should be consistent – ideally, the same navigation should be shown in the same position on each page.

Similarly your header, footer, and the page width should be consistent.

Possible pages you might want to include (this is by no means an exhaustive list):

- Home / Welcome Page: this can set the tone and guide users round the rest of the site, but try not make it too cluttered
- About Us / History / etc.: as much information as you want to give about the lodge as it is now, its history, the personalities, officers, etc.
- Meetings: where and when you meet; you could include a map (e.g.: Google map or Streetmap) either linked to or embedded in the page
- Charity: linking to those charities that you contribute to, particularly non-masonic charities, will bring this aspect to life
- Links: as many or as few as you want
- Contact Us: have all of your contact details together, and just link to the page from the rest of the site when required. Ideally use an e-mail contact form with human check (to reduce spam)

Images [also see the Data Protection paragraph below]: The addition of images will really bring your site to life – whether they are included throughout the content, or are in a specific Gallery section. Remember to caption all images, particularly with names of people shown, otherwise they will be meaningless to non-members and to future members.

Data Protection

Adults have the right to opt out of having their details displayed - ie: you don't have to get permission to put their details up, but you must remove them if they ask you to.

Similarly with images, if you make it clear that the image is going to be used for the site when it is taken then no further action is required.

Children are the exception and require all sorts of protection – it is easiest not to include them.

Cookies

The EU has brought in a law banning the use of cookies on websites unless users explicitly consent to their use. This law is extraordinary as virtually every website in the world uses cookies, and needs to do so for them to work correctly – as well collect analytics on how the site is used, sharing through social media, etc.

Rather than re-doing all sites, we think it prudent to see how the law will be enforced before making any changes, especially as cookies can often be disabled via browsers.

You are free to copy and use our 'Privacy & Cookies' policy which can be found in the footer of all our sites, and which we will update as this develops.

Getting your UGLE Charter Mark

If required, make sure your Metropolitan / Provincial / District webmaster is happy with your site before or when you go live.

Only once it is live should you e-mail Alex Maclean Bather (amacleanbather@ugle.org.uk), who will initiate the process for getting your UGLE Charter Mark and do the initial check-through of your site.

Please note: your site must be live, and not password protected. Please do not send your site through as a printout or on a CD.

Typically you can expect to receive your Charter Mark within 1-3 months, but please realise that at certain times of year, for example in the run-up to Grand Lodge meetings, it will take longer.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a very useful tool for driving traffic to your website and for connecting with a younger and more diverse audience.

If you are worried about abuse and spam messages then remember that Twitter, Facebook, etc. all have methods of reporting and blocking users and, ultimately, you can just shut your account. (UGLE's experience has been overwhelmingly positive).

All social media must be treated as if it is a normal website – i.e. be open and seen to be open, with no logins / private areas on publicly accessible areas.

Ensure that anything that is set up for your lodge is done so in conjunction with your Provincial Website Committee so that they can participate as necessary.

Twitter

This is a very immediate form of communication, as many people follow twitter on their phones, and is extremely useful to quickly disseminate information. You should though always consider carefully, and make thorough checks, before tweeting, remembering that an ill-advised tweet can be re-tweeted to a global audience in a matter of minutes, if not seconds.

Start by following other masonic feeds, such as [@UGLE GrandLodge](#), [@Freemasonry2Day](#), [@GrandChapter](#) and [@FreemasonsHall](#)

If you look through who they are all following, you will find feeds for the main masonic charities, and hopefully your own PGL.

If you look through who is following them, particularly your PGL, you will probably find a few local lodges and others of interest to follow.

When tweeting, for example, about charities that your Lodge has been supporting, include their Twitter name (@mycharity) so that they can easily pick up your tweet and re-tweet it to their followers. If you alert them before doing this, then you will greatly increase the chances of this happening and your tweet gaining a much wider audience.

You can retweet (RT) any tweets from others to your own followers (nb: always retweet, and never copy and tweet as your own: tweeters want / need to know the reach of their tweets)

Facebook

Set up a Page or an Open Group; a Private Group can be used as an Administration Area (its existence will not show up to non-members and users can only join if invited to. Invitations to join must only be to personal contacts – the group cannot be advertised).

Start by liking the main masonic pages, such as [UnitedGrandLodgeofEngland](#), [FreemasonryToday](#), [SupremeGrandChapter](#) and [FreemasonsHall](#).

If you then look through who they like, then you will find the main masonic charities, other PGLs, and possibly even some of your lodges. If you like them, then they in return, should like you back, and your audience will start to build.



YouTube allows you to share videos with a wider audience and is also a useful place to store videos so that you do not use up your own bandwidth when users view them.

You can subscribe to UGLE's channel at: [UGLEchannel](#) and please feel free to feature any of our videos on your website.



A blog is a website where opinions and stories are shared, and is updated often. It's a great place to start when entering into the world of social media. The key is to make your blog about things you would talk about in public.

A blog can be particularly useful for the following reasons:

1. It helps with search engine ranking, as you can have links to your site and it's updated regularly
2. People researching online like to connect with people who know what they're talking about. If you have a blog that helps answer their questions, people will be more likely to have a positive interaction with you
3. It adds personality (especially when included in a general website, such as that of a Lodge)
4. It provides a place to centralise content, and share it from there to all the social sites
5. Connect with like-minded people - blogging helps bring together people who have shared interests. Through blogs a lot of idea sharing takes place that wouldn't otherwise be possible

Apps

An app can be a useful tool, for example when you have a lot of information that doesn't change often, or forms that users regularly need to complete.

It must be remembered that an app is still very much in the public domain and all guidelines, in particular data protection, are still applicable.