

Why Memorize the Ritual? And How To?

There are three main reasons to memorize ritual. I am sure that you can find others as well.

The First Reason is that it gives you a deeper understanding of the symbolic and allegoric messages that contribute to making a good man better.

The Second Reason is that it develops discipline and increases your intelligence. It establishes daily habits and stimulates your mind. There are many posts accessible on Google that explain the benefits of memorization for young and old.

The Third Reason is that IT IS NOT ABOUT YOU! Beyond being a way to pass on Masonic knowledge, a well memorized and delivered ritual enhances the experience and message not only for you but for the recipient as well as the observers!

When an initiate becomes a Mason, he is usually overwhelmed by the experience. It is impactful and inspiring yet, often, a blur. Shortly after his initiation is the time for the new Brother to be introduced, by his sponsors or mentor, to the process of making “a daily advancement” in Masonic knowledge, by memorizing key parts of his ceremony.

The obligation leads the list yet the working tools, the apron charge, or the address before the obligation are pieces that can be worked on in his first year. This can expand over time to include the similar parts in all degrees. As a Mason ages, he will find it easier to recall work he memorized early in his career.

So, what do I recommend for process and timing? First, if you have a method that works for you stay with it and move on. If not, or if you are curious, follow on. As my father, Brother Gerald Dresser, frequently said, it takes longer to tell it than to do it!!

The process is: Read, Read and Say, Read and Say and Write, Listen and Say then Move and Say.

This process lasts for a maximum of 15 minutes at least once a day, every day. Always take a break after 15 minutes!

Within 48 hours of being assigned work for a degree or having questions to answer to prove a degree, START. This is in compliance with being called on to make a daily advancement in Masonic knowledge.

Steps:

1. Read the complete part to yourself a minimum of three (3) times to learn the flow of the piece and to identify its natural breaks or sections.
2. Read the complete part aloud, privately, three (3) to five (5) times and progressively develop a flow and awareness of where to emphasize, where to pause, and where to breathe.
3. Write down every word that you are unsure of or that you do not know. This applies to particular Masonic words – inculcate, indefatigable, etc. If you go to **Dictionary.com** you can get a pronunciation as well as a definition! Repeat the pronunciation until your lips have it correct.

4. Write down, in order, the first line of every natural break or section you have established in part 1 at least four (4) times. This starts to build the structure. After four or five times you may find that you are looking at the Work less and less.
5. Now write out the complete first section four or five times. Refer to the Work as needed. Again after the fourth or fifth time, the words should be sticking. After the fifth time, move on to the second section.
6. Repeat this process for each section.
7. Now, string the parts together. Write out, and say softly, the first and second parts a few times. Then, the second and third parts and so on.
8. Bring out your cell phone. Every cell phone has a recording programme! Take out your phone and read your part into it. Use the same emphasis, pauses, etc. that you want in your delivery. Now, listen and repeat (at least, move your lips) your piece every chance you get. Go for a walk. Go for a drive. This is better stuff than on the radio! Try putting it to a rhythm or beat! By now you should have it down well.
9. Stand in front of a mirror and deliver your work. Look into your own eyes to see how you look. This prepares you to look into the eyes of the candidate or your examiner. Work on facial expressions and gestures. Now, turn out the lights and stand and deliver.
10. Turn your largest room into the lodge room and move around as you will to deliver the work or go to your lodge and practice. This will allow you to work on spacing, timing and gestures you may have worked on in front of the mirror.

That is the process. Now here is the timing.

1. Start within 48 hours of getting the assignment.
2. Work at it for no more than 15 minutes at a time.
3. Do only steps 1 and 2 for the first three sessions.
4. Do step 3 until you have the pronunciation down pat. Check any large word.
5. Do step 4 for 15 minutes or until it is memorized, whichever is less.
6. Do step 5 in 15 minute sessions until all sections are memorized.
7. Do step 7.
8. Do step 8.
9. Do step 9.

I suggest that we can all find 15 minutes once a day. Maybe more than once a day

The discipline is:

Get started!

Only 15 minutes at a time!

At least once a day!

This method makes your brain work many inputs and outputs which has been shown to increase memory. You will have visual and auditory inputs (seeing and hearing) and muscle and nerve outputs (writing and speaking).

Try putting your piece to a tune, rhythm or rap as we did learning our alphabet and poems.

Visit other lodges to watch another Brother do the same piece. Repeat the work silently. Copy what you see agreeable.

There, I told you it would take longer to read than to do, but I trust that this process will show you that you have the time and ability to memorize the work.

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Thanks to:

Mrs. Barbour – Grade Three at Roselawn Public School

Mr. Wilson – Grade Five at John McCrae Public School

R. W. Bro. David Dainard, author of At The Lectern