



UNITED GRAND LODGE  
OF ENGLAND

# **CREATING A LODGE WEBSITE: A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

A well-crafted Lodge website can be an effective resource for engaging current members, attracting new members, and showcasing your Lodge's unique character. This guide will walk you through the steps necessary to create an effective Lodge website, from selecting a domain name to choosing a web hosting provider and from understanding different Content Management Systems (CMS) to maintaining your site for long-term success.

*Before developing a Lodge website, it is important to consult with your Province or District to ensure alignment with any guidelines or approval processes they may have in place.*

## **PURPOSE AND STRATEGY**

### **WHY LODGE WEBSITES MATTER?**

A Lodge website is a powerful tool that can provide numerous benefits, enhancing both internal and external engagement. Here's how a well-designed website can make a difference:

- **Engage Existing Members**

A Lodge website can serve as a central hub for communication, keeping members informed about the latest initiatives, meetings, events, and updates. By regularly updating the website with news, announcements, and event calendars, you can ensure that all members are up-to-date and actively engaged in Lodge activities.

- **Showcase Your Lodge's Personality and History**

Your website reflects your Lodge's unique character and heritage. It can tell the story of your Lodge's history, traditions, and values, providing a rich narrative that resonates with both members and visitors. Sharing stories, photos, and videos of social activities and community involvement can create a sense of belonging and pride among members and their families.

- **Highlight Community Involvement**

A strong online presence allows you to highlight your Lodge's contributions to the local community. Whether it's charity work, community service projects, or partnerships with local organisations, showcasing these initiatives on your website demonstrates your Lodge's commitment to making a positive impact, thereby enhancing your reputation and encouraging community support.

- **Attract Potential Members:**

An engaging and informative website can be a powerful recruitment tool. By presenting a compelling picture of what your Lodge stands for, what it offers, and the benefits of membership, you can generate excitement and interest among potential members. Clear information about how to join, what to expect, and testimonials from current members can help attract and convert interested individuals.

## PLANNING YOUR WEBSITE

Before developing your Lodge website, careful planning is essential to ensure it meets your objectives and serves its intended audience effectively. Here are some considerations you should take into account:

- **Define the Purpose of the Website**

Start by clearly defining the primary goals of your website. Are you aiming to enhance internal communication among members, promote your Lodge to the public, support community initiatives, or recruit new members? Identifying the main objectives will guide the design and content strategy.

- **Identify Your Target Audience**

Understanding who your website is for is crucial. Are you targeting current members, potential members or the general public? Each audience may have different needs and interests, and your website should cater to these effectively. Tailor your content, features, and functionalities to meet the specific needs of your audience.

- **Determine Roles and Responsibilities**

Decide who will be responsible for managing and updating the website. This includes content creation, technical maintenance, and responding to inquiries. Assess whether you have members within your Lodge with the necessary skills or if you need to seek external assistance. Clearly defining roles that ensures your website remains current, relevant, and functional.

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Before diving into the process of creating your Lodge website, it's essential to consider several crucial factors that will lay the foundation for success.

### **Resource Assessment:**

1. **Personnel:** Evaluate who will be responsible for managing the website and plan for a smooth transition in case of personnel changes. With a proper handover plan, you can avoid disruptions in website management, leading to outdated content and security vulnerabilities.
2. **Budget:** Assess your budget for website development and ongoing maintenance. Consider factors such as hosting fees, domain registration, and any additional costs for plugins or themes.
3. **Time:** Understand the time commitment required for both initial planning and ongoing maintenance. Ensure you have the necessary time and resources to dedicate to the project to avoid delays and setbacks.

*Risk: Poor planning in terms of personnel, budget, and time can create major risks for website development and maintenance. If there's no plan for handling staff changes, it can cause disruptions,*

*outdated content, and security issues. Budget problems might mean you can't afford quality hosting, domain registration, or necessary plugins, leading to a lower-quality site. Also, not allowing enough time for planning and upkeep can cause delays and rushed work, which hurts the site's performance and user experience. Properly addressing these areas is key to having a strong, secure, and well-maintained website.*

#### **Content Strategy:**

1. Content Planning: Develop a comprehensive content strategy that outlines the types of content you'll include and how you'll meet the diverse needs of your target audiences.
2. Content Sources: Determine where you'll source content from—whether it's generated internally or curated from external sources. Be mindful of overreliance on external content, which can impact quality and relevance.

*Risk: Failure to plan effectively may lead to inconsistent messaging, disengagement, or challenges in addressing unforeseen issues. Relying too heavily on external sources may compromise content quality and relevance, affecting the overall effectiveness of your website.*

#### **Design and Branding:**

1. Visual Identity: Ensure that your website design reflects your Lodge's unique identity and aligns with your branding elements such as logos, colours, and imagery. Consistency in design conveys your Lodge's identity and background effectively.
2. Consistency: Maintain a consistent look and feel across all website pages to provide visitors with a cohesive browsing experience. Inconsistent design elements can confuse users and detract from your Lodge's brand image.

*Risk: Inconsistent branding may lead to confusion among visitors and dilute your Lodge's distinct identity, impacting user engagement and perception.*

#### **Maintenance and Updates:**

1. Ongoing Maintenance: Establish a plan for routine website maintenance, including content updates, software patches, and security measures. Regular maintenance ensures your website remains current, secure, and functional.
2. Training: Provide adequate training for your team or designated webmaster on managing and updating the website efficiently. Familiarise them with the chosen content management system (CMS) to minimise errors and ensure timely updates.

*Risk: Inadequate training may result in inefficient website management, potential errors, and challenges in maintaining up-to-date content.*

By addressing these key considerations before embarking on your Lodge website project, you'll be better equipped to create a successful online presence that effectively engages your audience and reflects your Lodge's identity and background.

## GETTING STARTED

### STEP 1: CHOOSING YOUR DOMAIN

Your domain is the address of your website on the internet. Choosing a domain that is unique, memorable, and representative of your Lodge is crucial.

- *Include Lodge Name and Number:* Incorporate your Lodge's name and number in the domain to make it specific and easily recognisable.

Example: "www.lodgename1234.org.uk"

- *Keep It Simple and Memorable:* Ensure your domain is easy to spell and remember to facilitate easy access by users.

*Please note: Provinces, Districts, and Lodges cannot use "ugle" in their domain names but should choose a domain that better reflects their specific identity. This policy is designed to maintain the integrity of official UGLE branding.*

#### Providers for Purchasing a Domain

Popular Providers:

- Fasthosts: Known for its reliable service and competitive pricing.
- GoDaddy: Offers a variety of domain extensions and additional services.
- Google Domains: Provides easy integration with other Google services.

Cost Considerations:

- Domain costs can vary depending on the provider and the chosen extension.
- Typical costs for an .org.uk domain range from £10 to £20 per year.
- Explore the main providers and choose the most convenient one for your needs.

#### Extension

We recommend selecting one that includes "uk" to indicate the location.

The .org.uk domain extension is commonly associated with non-profit entities, community groups, and associations.

### STEP 2: SELECTING A WEB HOSTING

Web hosting is like renting space on the internet to store your website's files. A good hosting provider ensures your website is accessible, secure, and reliable.

When picking a hosting provider, it is important to consider the following factors:

- **Cost:** Assess your budget and choose a provider that offers plans fitting your financial resources. Remember, the cheapest option might not always be the best in terms of reliability and support.
- **Customer Support:** Opt for providers offering 24/7 customer support. Ensure they provide multiple contact methods like phone, email, or live chat.
- **Server Uptime:** Look for a provider that guarantees high server uptime, ideally 99.9% or more. High uptime means your website will be available to visitors almost always.

When choosing a hosting plan for your Lodge's website, it's essential to understand the differences between the available options to select the one that best fits your needs and budget.

- **Shared Hosting** is the most budget-friendly option, as multiple websites share the same server resources. However, this means your website may experience slower performance during peak traffic times or if other sites on the server consume excessive resources.
- **VPS (Virtual Private Server) Hosting** offers more precise resource allocation compared to shared hosting. While you still share a server, your website's performance is less affected by other sites, similar to having your own dedicated apartment in a shared building.
- **Dedicated Hosting** provides exclusive use of all server resources for your website, resulting in the fastest and most reliable performance. This option is the most expensive, comparable to owning your own house.

When choosing a hosting option for your website, consider your budget, performance needs, technical expertise, scalability, and security requirements. Shared Hosting is the most budget-friendly and suitable for small websites with low to moderate traffic, but it may suffer from performance issues. VPS Hosting offers better performance and scalability for moderate traffic and requires some technical knowledge. Dedicated Hosting provides the best performance and security for high-traffic websites but is the most expensive and requires advanced technical expertise. Select the option that aligns with your website's current needs and future growth plans.

Most domain providers also offer web hosting services, making it convenient to manage both your domain and hosting from a single provider. This integrated service can simplify the setup process and streamline management.

### STEP 3: INTRODUCTION TO CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

A Content Management System (CMS) is a software application that enables users to build and manage websites without needing extensive coding knowledge. It allows for easy control over the appearance and functionality of the site, making it accessible for both beginners and experienced developers. CMS platforms are highly flexible and provide a range of tools and features to support website development and maintenance.

Plugins are essential components in a CMS that extend the functionality of your website. They are like add-ons that can be easily integrated into your site to provide specific features without the need for custom coding. However, there are several considerations to keep in mind when using plugins:

- **Security Risks:** Poorly coded or outdated plugins can make your website vulnerable to hacking and data breaches. Always choose plugins from reputable sources and ensure they

are regularly updated. Read feedback of other organisations or companies who have used the plugin to gauge its reliability and effectiveness.

- **Compatibility Issues:** Plugins may not always work well together, leading to conflicts that can break your website or cause unexpected errors. Ensure that new plugins are compatible with your CMS version and other installed plugins.
- **Regular Updates:** Regularly updating your CMS, plugins, and themes is crucial to patch security vulnerabilities and maintain compatibility.
- **Theme Compatibility:** The theme you use can also affect plugin compatibility. Some themes include custom functionalities or styles that may clash with certain plugins.

When considering CMS platforms, it's important to note that WordPress, Wix, Joomla, and Drupal are just a few examples among many available options. WordPress, known for its popularity and extensive support, suits users looking for flexibility despite its learning curve. Wix offers simplicity with its drag-and-drop interface and managed services, while Joomla and Drupal provide advanced functionality but require more expertise. Remember that numerous other CMS platforms exist beyond these, each with its own features and suitability for different needs. Concerning expenses, various options offer different pricing structures, ranging from affordable plans to more variable costs. Ultimately, the decision depends on your specific needs and preferences and the features and complexities of the platform you choose.

To help you get better at using your chosen Content Management System (CMS), we've put together links to their official training resources: [WordPress](#), [Wix](#), [Joomla](#), and [Drupal](#). These resources offer easy-to-follow guides, tutorials, and helpful info to help you make a great Lodge website. Dive into these resources to improve your CMS skills and make your Lodge shine online!

## ***STRUCTURE AND CONTENT***

### **NAVIGATION**

Navigating your website should be effortless for visitors, ensuring they can easily find what they're looking for. When creating your website's navigation, simplicity is key. Avoid overwhelming visitors with too many menu items or complex structures. Stick to clear, descriptive labels for each page to make it easy for users to understand where they'll be taken when they click.

- **Main Menu**

Ensure your main menu sits at the top of your page and is visible no matter where visitors are on your site. Keep it simple by focusing on the most important pages and putting them at the beginning of the menu. If you use drop-down menus to organise subcategories or related pages, ensure they're easy to use and connect smoothly to the main menu. Keep things straightforward and avoid making the navigation too complicated. This way, visitors can easily find what they're looking for without getting lost.

- **Breadcrumbs and 'Back to Top' Buttons**

Include breadcrumbs on each page to show users their location within the site hierarchy. Breadcrumbs help users understand their navigation path and easily backtrack if needed. Adding a



'Back to Top' button at the bottom of long pages allows users to quickly return to the top without endless scrolling.

- **Search Functionality**

A search function is also a valuable addition to your website's navigation. This allows visitors to quickly find specific information without having to browse through multiple pages. Make sure the search bar is prominently placed, typically at the top of your site.

- **Internal Linking**

Establishing a well-structured system of internal links between relevant pages is crucial for guiding users to additional information and enhancing navigation. For instance, within your "About the Lodge" section, you can include links to more detailed pages providing details on how to join, upcoming events, or the history of the Lodge. These internal links allow users to explore further details on topics of interest, ensuring a seamless browsing experience. By strategically placing internal links throughout your content, you enhance user engagement and reduce the likelihood of users encountering dead-end pages or struggling to find relevant information. Additionally, internal linking contributes to improving search engine visibility and website rankings, as search engines can better understand the structure and context of your content. Therefore, implementing a robust internal linking strategy is essential for providing a positive user experience and maximising the effectiveness of your website's navigation.

- **Consistency**

Consistency is crucial in navigation design. Ensure that the navigation layout, style, and terminology are consistent across all pages. This helps users feel more comfortable and familiar with your site, improving their overall experience.

- **Accessibility**

Ensuring your website's navigation is accessible to everyone, including those with disabilities, is crucial. Use proper HTML tags for menus and provide keyboard navigation options so users can easily move around your site using only their keyboard. Also, ensure there's enough contrast between text and background colours, making it easier for everyone to read. Visual cues like icons, arrows, or highlights can help users navigate but keep them simple and easy to understand. These elements should make navigation easier, not add confusion. Additionally, use descriptive hyperlinks that clearly explain what users can expect when they click on a link, such as "Learn more about our Lodge's history" instead of "Click here." This helps all users, especially those using screen readers, understand the links' content and context.

- **Visual cues**

Visual cues can aid navigation. Use icons, arrows, or highlights to indicate active pages or to provide additional context for menu items. However, ensure that these visual elements are intuitive and do not add unnecessary complexity.

- **Supporting Website Goals**

Navigation should also support your website's goals. If you want to promote events or membership, make sure those pages are easily accessible from the main menu or homepage. Highlight important calls to action to guide visitors towards key activities on your site.

- **Regular Reviews and Testing**

Review and update your navigation regularly based on user feedback and website analytics. Pay attention to which pages users' access most frequently and adjust your navigation accordingly to make these pages more prominent and accessible.

Finally, test your navigation. Before finalising your design, test it with real users to ensure it is intuitive and meets their needs. Make adjustments based on their feedback to create the best possible navigation experience.

Usability testing is essential to make sure a website is easy to use and works well. It involves watching real users as they navigate the site to find any problems or confusing parts. This helps identify issues that might frustrate users. You can improve the website by doing usability testing, making it more user-friendly and enjoyable. Regular testing ensures the site meets the needs of its visitors, leading to better engagement, more conversions, and a positive user experience.

See the resources below to learn more about how to conduct usability testing:

- [Usability testing – UX Design Institute](#)
- [Usability testing - Hubspot](#)

## MOBILE FRIENDLY

In today's digital age, ensuring your website is mobile-friendly is essential. A mobile-friendly website is one that displays correctly on smaller screens such as smartphones and tablets. Here are some simple, practical tips:

- **Choose a Responsive Theme:** Start by selecting a responsive theme or template. Most modern CMS platforms offer themes that automatically adjust to different screen sizes. Look for themes labelled as "mobile-friendly" or "responsive."
- **Optimise Images:** Use a plugin or tool to compress your images. On WordPress, plugins like Smush can help reduce image sizes without compromising quality. This ensures faster loading times on mobile devices.
- **Simplify Navigation:** Use simple, easy-to-use navigation menus. Most CMS platforms let you create a "hamburger" menu, which is a compact menu style suitable for mobile screens. Ensure your menu is concise and includes only the most essential pages.
- **Use Readable Fonts:** Stick to the default font settings of your chosen theme, as these are usually optimised for readability. If you do change fonts, ensure they are legible on small screens and maintain a minimum font size of 16 pixels.

- **Enable Mobile Previews:** Before publishing, use the preview function to see how your content looks on mobile devices. CMS platforms like WordPress and Wix have built-in mobile preview options that let you see changes in real-time.
- **Keep Content Simple:** Break up long text into smaller paragraphs and use headings to structure your content. Avoid cluttering your pages with too many images or videos, which can slow down loading times.
- **Use Mobile-Friendly Forms:** Ensure any forms on your site are easy to fill out on a mobile device. Use plugins like Contact Form 7 on WordPress to create responsive forms that work well on all devices.
- **Test Regularly:** You can use tools like [Google Lighthouse](#) to optimise your website for mobile devices and eventually identify and fix issues.
- **Minimise Pop-Ups:** Avoid using pop-ups on mobile as they can be difficult to close on small screens and may frustrate users. If necessary, use light, mobile-friendly pop-ups or banners that are easy to dismiss.

By following these simple tips, you can ensure your website is mobile-friendly, providing a better experience for users on smartphones and tablets.

## CONTENT STRATEGY

Creating an effective content strategy for your Lodge's website is essential for engaging visitors, providing valuable information, and encouraging new memberships. Your website should serve as a comprehensive resource, highlighting your Lodge's unique qualities, activities, and community involvement. The following guide outlines key sections to include on your website, along with detailed suggestions for content and organisation, ensuring your site is both informative and inviting.

### 1. Homepage

The homepage serves as the initial point of contact for visitors and plays a crucial role in shaping their perception of your website. It's essential to create a strong first impression that encapsulates your Lodge's identity and purpose. Here's how to craft an engaging homepage:

- **Display your Lodge's logo prominently:** Your logo is a visual representation of your Lodge and should be easily recognisable. Place it at the top of the page, ensuring it stands out and establishes your brand identity from the moment visitors arrive.
- **Include a tagline or brief statement that encapsulates your Lodge's identity and uniqueness:** A succinct tagline can quickly convey what your Lodge is about and what sets it apart.
- **Include clear calls-to-action (CTAs) leading to essential sections:** Guide visitors to the most important parts of your website with prominent CTAs. Whether it's "Join Now," "Learn

More," or "Contact Us," these buttons should be easy to find and encourage users to take the next step.

- **Use high-quality images and graphics that represent your Lodge:** Visual elements are powerful in capturing attention and conveying messages. Use professional-quality photos that reflect the spirit and activities of your Lodge. This adds a personal touch and can make your site more engaging.
- **Consider a visually appealing layout to capture attention:** A clean, well-organised layout helps visitors navigate your site easily. Use a design that balances text and images, employs whitespace effectively, and highlights key sections without overwhelming the user.
- **Section for latest news and upcoming events:** Keep your homepage dynamic by including a section that features recent news and upcoming events. This not only keeps current members informed but also showcases the Lodge's active involvement in the community to potential members.

## 2. About Us

The "About Us" section is where you share the history and background of your Lodge. It's an opportunity to highlight what makes your Lodge unique and why someone should consider joining:

- **Share the history and background:** Provide a narrative of how your Lodge was founded, its milestones, and its evolution. This historical context can foster a deeper connection with visitors.
- **Highlight what makes your Lodge unique:** Focus on the unique aspects of your Lodge, such as special traditions, notable achievements, or community contributions. This helps differentiate your Lodge from others.

## 3. How to Join

The "How to join" section should provide clear and detailed information on how to become a member:

- **Provide information on how to become a member:** Outline the steps required to join, including eligibility criteria, application process, and any fees involved. This should be straightforward and easy to understand.
- **Include your contact details or a web form:** Make it easy for potential members to reach out with questions or to start the application process. A contact form can streamline this interaction, but ensure it is tested and fully functional.

## 4. News & Updates

Keeping members and visitors informed about the latest Lodge news, announcements, and updates is crucial:

- **Regular updates:** Consistently post news and updates to keep the content fresh and relevant. This shows that the Lodge is active and engaged.
- **Engaging content:** Include a variety of content such as announcements, member spotlights, event recaps, and community news. This keeps the section interesting and informative.

## 5. Lodge Activities

Showcasing events, meetings, and community initiatives is essential for demonstrating the Lodge's vibrancy:

- **Showcase events and meetings:** Highlight past and upcoming events, including details and photos. This not only informs members but also attracts potential members interested in your activities.
- **Include a calendar for easy event tracking:** An integrated calendar can help members keep track of events and plan their participation. Ensure it is easy to navigate and regularly updated.

Regularly updating the News and Calendar sections engages current members and highlights your Lodge as vibrant and active, making it appealing to potential members. An active content strategy shows that there's always something happening, creating a dynamic and inviting atmosphere. Conversely, outdated sections can deter potential candidates by giving the impression of inactivity or neglect.

## 6. Contact Us

The "Contact Us" section should make it easy for visitors to reach out to your Lodge:

- **Provide contact information:** Include a phone number, email address, and physical address if applicable. This makes your Lodge accessible to visitors.
- **Include a contact form:** A simple form can facilitate inquiries and provide a quick way for visitors to get in touch. Ensure the form is user-friendly and tested for functionality.
- **Links to social media accounts:** Connect your visitors to your Lodge's social media profiles. This encourages further engagement and provides additional platforms for communication.

## CONTENT WRITING TIPS

Effective content writing is crucial for engaging potential candidates and existing members on your Lodge's website. Well-crafted copy not only captures attention but also clearly and persuasively communicates your Lodge's values, activities, and benefits. Good content helps build trust, foster community, and encourage participation. This chapter will provide in-depth guidance on crafting content that meets the diverse needs of your audience, ensuring clarity, readability, and engagement.

- **Understanding Your Target Audience**

The first step in writing compelling content is to understand your target audience. Your Lodge's website will likely have two primary audiences: potential candidates and existing members. Each group has different needs and interests, which your content should address.

*Potential Candidates:*

Potential candidates are interested in learning about the benefits of joining your Lodge and the

process involved. They will be looking for clear, persuasive content that explains why they should become a member. Focus on providing:

- Reasons to join: Highlight the benefits of membership, such as community involvement, personal growth opportunities, and networking.
- How to join: Offer a straightforward guide on the steps to becoming a member, including any requirements.

#### *Existing Members:*

Current members will be more interested in updates about Lodge activities, investment of donation funds, community engagement, Lodge's initiatives and event information. For them, your content should include:

- News and updates: Keep members informed about recent developments and future plans.
- Event details: Provide comprehensive information about upcoming events, including dates, times, locations, and how to participate.

- **Using Headings for Readability**

Headings are essential for breaking up text and making your content more digestible. They help readers quickly find the information they are looking for and improve the overall readability of your website.

- **Tips for Using Headings:**

- Hierarchical Structure: Use a hierarchical structure with main headings (H1) for primary topics, subheadings (H2) for sections, and sub-subheadings (H3) for finer details. This creates a clear and organised layout.
- Descriptive Headings: Make sure your headings accurately describe the content of the section. This helps readers scan the page and understand the structure at a glance.
- Consistent Style: Use a consistent style for headings throughout your website to maintain a cohesive look and feel.

- **Bullet Points for Easy Reading**

Bullet points are an effective way to present information in a concise and easy-to-read format. They help break up dense paragraphs and highlight key points, making your content more accessible.

When to Use Bullet Points:

- Lists and Series: Use bullet points for lists and series of items, such as benefits of membership, steps to join, or key features of an event.
- Highlighting Key Information: Employ bullet points to draw attention to important details, making it easier for readers to absorb the information quickly.

- **Avoiding Masonic Abbreviations**

If potential candidates are part of your target audience, it's important to avoid using Masonic abbreviations and jargon that may not be familiar to them. This ensures your content is clear and accessible to all readers.

- **Tips for Clear Communication:**

- **Spell out Abbreviations:** When mentioning any Masonic terms, spell out the full term on first use, followed by the abbreviation in parentheses. For example, "Worshipful Master (WM)".
- **Simplify Language:** Use simple and straightforward language to explain Masonic concepts, avoiding unnecessary jargon.
- **Provide Context:** Offer brief explanations or links to more detailed resources for any terms or concepts that might be unfamiliar to newcomers.

By incorporating these strategies into your content writing, you can create a Lodge website that is engaging, informative, and accessible to both potential candidates and existing members. This approach will help you effectively communicate your Lodge's values, activities, and membership benefits, enhancing the overall user experience.

## KEY INFORMATION

When building or optimising a Lodge website, it's essential to include certain key content to ensure that visitors have a comprehensive understanding of our organisation and its values. Here are the crucial elements that should be featured:

### OUR MISSION

Clearly display the United Grand Lodge of England's (UGLE) mission statement to communicate our overarching purpose and commitment to Freemasonry. This helps set the tone for what visitors can expect from the organisation.

### WHAT WE ARE

*We are a unique members' organisation that has thrived for over 300 years. Having no political or religious affiliations, we comprise members of all ages, races, religions, cultures and backgrounds. We meet in our individual Lodges throughout the country where we have ceremonial traditions which encourage us both to be more tolerant and respectful and actively to fulfil our civic and charitable responsibilities; we also make time to eat, drink and meet together, and form lifelong friendships.*

### WHAT WE AIM FOR

*To attract those from all backgrounds and walks of life, enabling them to develop into more thoughtful and confident people. To inspire and challenge them to practise the core values we celebrate – Integrity, Friendship, Respect, Service– in their private and public lives. To cement our*

*reputation as a force for good in our communities and society at large and as a thriving organisation that people aspire to join.*

#### HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS

*Over the next 7 years, we will enhance our reputation as a thriving organisation that people aspire to join and broaden our membership across all age groups.*

#### OUR CORE VALUES

Our core values are the underlying principles behind who we are, what we stand for, and what we do. They are vital to understanding Freemasonry.

Our core values they should always be presented in the following order:

**INTEGRITY:** *Honesty, trustworthiness, honour, reliability, and conscientiousness form the foundation of a virtuous character. They foster trust, maintain integrity, and demonstrate commitment, ultimately leading to a life of strong principles and dependable actions.*

**FRIENDSHIP:** *Freemasonry gives members many opportunities to make a wide circle of friends for life who share common interests and values. It provides a bond of friendship and a sense of belonging. This promotes a feeling of enjoyment and fulfilment.*

**RESPECT:** *From its earliest days, Freemasonry has respected the beliefs of its members. It promotes an environment where diversity is valued. It is a space where different beliefs and backgrounds converge, fostering an atmosphere of inclusivity, tolerance and harmony.*

**SERVICE:** *Whether participating in events, fundraising for a charitable cause or volunteering for public or community organisations, service is at the very heart of Freemasonry. Our members make valuable contributions by donating time, resources and skills.*

#### WHY BECOME A FREEMASON?

***Building friendships, supporting communities and enabling personal growth through timeless tradition.***

*Freemasonry offers the opportunity to engage with like-minded people from different backgrounds who you wouldn't usually meet.*

*Freemasons actively engage in charitable events and activities. They dedicate time, resources and skills to support communities by being part of something that makes a difference to the world.*

*It provides an opportunity to explore your potential through improved self-knowledge and confidence on an enduring foundation of ethical and moral values.*

*Those values, upheld by its members, offer a framework for making better choices in life and living a more fulfilling and purposeful existence.*

#### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs SECTION)



Include a FAQs section to address common inquiries. This section can provide clarity on various topics, such as membership requirements, meeting schedules, and the benefits of joining a Lodge. It serves as a valuable resource for prospective members and helps streamline communication.

## **What is Freemasonry?**

### **WHAT WE ARE**

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We meet in our individual Lodges throughout the country where we have ceremonial traditions which encourage us both to be more tolerant and respectful and actively to fulfil our civic and charitable responsibilities; we also make time to eat, drink and meet together, and form lifelong friendships.

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To attract those from all backgrounds and walks of life, enabling them to develop into more thoughtful and confident people. To inspire and challenge them to practise the core values we celebrate – Integrity, Friendship, Respect, Service – in their private and public lives. To cement our reputation as a force for good in our communities and society at large and as a thriving organisation that people aspire to join.

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Honesty, trustworthiness, honour, reliability, and conscientiousness form the foundation of a virtuous character. They foster trust, maintain integrity, and demonstrate commitment, ultimately leading to a life of strong principles and dependable actions.

#### ***FRIENDSHIP***

Freemasonry gives members many opportunities to make a wide circle of friends for life who share common interests and values. It provides a bond of friendship and a sense of belonging. This promotes a feeling of enjoyment and fulfilment.

#### ***RESPECT***

From its earliest days, Freemasonry has respected the beliefs of its members. It promotes an environment where diversity is valued. It is a space where different beliefs and backgrounds converge, fostering an atmosphere of inclusivity, tolerance and harmony.

#### ***SERVICE***

Whether participating in events, fundraising for a charitable cause or volunteering for public or community organisations, service is at the very heart of Freemasonry. Our members make valuable contributions by donating time, resources and skills.

### **Why become a Freemason?**

People join Freemasonry for many different reasons, some join for the friendships they will make; friendships that last a lifetime and encompass the key milestones in life for better or worse. You will meet people who are different to you, those of different ages with radically different life experiences and interests, drawn together by common experience through Freemasonry.

Our members are, and have been for three centuries, drawn from all walks of life. From Captains of industry and chief executives to manual labourers and forklift truck drivers, so you will find people with a wealth of different outlooks from all races, religions, classes and backgrounds.

There are also those who enjoy the ceremonial aspects. Our meetings consist of centuries old lessons centered around you as an individual. How you live your life, the decisions that you make and how to become a better person are all found within our meetings. Freemasons are taught to look after those less fortunate than themselves, charity is our lifeblood and many members devote their time and energy to helping those less fortunate than themselves.

We also have a huge amount of fun along the way, we eat, drink and meet together and form lifelong friendships.

### **What goes on in a Lodge Meeting?**

There are three 'degree ceremonies' performed during masonic meetings. They are essentially one act plays and teach members how to be better people and each play represents a different stage in life.

As an 'initiate' or Entered Apprentice, Freemasons are taught we are all born equal, we learn that in life some do better than others and it is up to those that do well to look after the less fortunate. From this stems our belief in the importance of Service.

The next stage is to become a 'Fellow Craft' where Freemasons are taught the importance of improving yourself as a person, and finally as a 'Master Mason', where we learn that we have but one life, and the importance of using it wisely. The details of the ceremonies can easily be accessed online but nothing beats experiencing it for yourself. After the meetings members dine together informally in order to enjoy good food, good wine, and good company. And most importantly, to have fun together.

### **What happens in a Royal Arch (Chapter) meeting?**

The Ceremony of Exaltation sees members follow the clues from the Third Degree to complete their journey in Pure Antient Masonry, in a spectacular and unforgettable ceremony. Through ongoing participation, members will work together with old friends and new Companions to build on the principles of the Craft and unlock fresh perspectives on the meaning and value of Freemasonry.

### **Why do Freemasons wear aprons?**

The aprons stem from our historical and symbolic roots as stonemasons. Being leather, they were designed to protect them from sharp tools and rough stones. For today's Freemasons, the apron is a mark of their membership. They are presented with a white leather apron and as they progress this becomes more elaborate.

### **Can women be members?**

Only men aged over 18 are allowed to join the United Grand Lodge of England in England and Wales. The two leading women's Grand Lodges, that we have the closest relationship with, are: Freemasonry for Women (HFAF) and the Order of Women Freemasons. These two groups only admit women because that is the choice of their memberships. Both of the women's organisations, and ourselves, prefer to practice our Freemasonry in single sex environments. The United Grand Lodge of England regularly hires its facilities out for meetings of the two women's Lodges due to our mutual respect and close relations.

### **What is different about the way Freemasons give to charity?**

It is the sheer scale. We are one of the biggest charitable givers in the country and gave £51.1m to charities in 2020 alone.

The [Masonic Charitable Foundation](#), the Freemasons' Charity – our national charitable grant giving arm, tackles some of the most significant challenges facing society, in particular, reducing loneliness in later life and ensuring a positive future for young children. We work in partnership with some of the biggest charities in the country to deliver our support.

Freemasonry also does a huge amount for medical research into treatments for cancer, diabetes, heart disease and a whole range of other conditions. In addition it makes donations to support those affected by overseas disasters as well as those at home, such as the Grenfell Tower disaster.

During the pandemic, Freemasons worked together to help their communities. The United Grand Lodge of England, and its members, did all they could to help in the fight against Covid-19. We have seen remarkable stories from across the country of how our members came together – from helping to raise vital funds for the NHS and delivering food to the community, through to purchasing ambulances and manufacturing vital personal protective equipment (PPE).

To support Freemasonry's charitable response to the pandemic, UGLE and the Masonic Charitable Foundation, the Freemasons' charity, established the [Freemasons' COVID-19 Community Fund](#).

This Fund has helped to support a range of local and national charities and projects that are helping people through the current coronavirus pandemic and in total has donated £3m during the pandemic.

### **Is Freemasonry International?**

Freemasonry exists throughout the world and the United Grand Lodge of England has Districts in many overseas countries. Our members are free to visit any of our Lodges abroad and will often find a warm welcome from fellow members who know the local country very well.

In addition to our Lodges, many other countries have sovereign Grand Lodges, which our members are free to visit and whose members visit us in England and Wales when travelling.

### **How many Freemasons are there in the UK?**

The United Grand Lodge of England has 180,000 members. The Grand Lodge of Scotland has approx. 27,000 members and The Grand Lodge of Ireland has approx. 20,000 members, whilst the two female Grand Lodges in England comprise of around 5,000 members. Worldwide there are estimated to be around six million members.

### **How much does it cost to become a Freemason?**

On average the annual dues and other fees amount to £200 a year, although there are local variations.

### **Do you have to believe in a God?**

When becoming a Freemason, members are expected to be able to affirm a belief in a 'Supreme Being'. This is deliberately phrased so as to be fully inclusive and we celebrate the diverse nature of the beliefs of our members. There is no requirement to be an active practitioner of any particular religion.

### **Why is there a common misunderstanding of what Freemasonry is? What can we do to address it?**

#### **Common misconceptions arise from a combination of historical and cultural factors:**

**Historical Suspicion:** Freemasonry has long been viewed with scepticism, particularly by authoritarian regimes and religious institutions. During the 18th and 19th centuries, conspiracy theories about Freemasons secretly wielding power or influencing political events became widespread, perpetuating suspicions.

**Cultural Portrayals:** Popular culture frequently depicts Freemasons as a shadowy organisation with hidden agendas. Books, films, comics, and television often exaggerate or invent their practices, further cementing this perception.

**Misinterpretation of Privacy:** Freemasonry places a strong emphasis on privacy rather than secrecy. Members argue that their traditions are private to preserve meaning within the organisation, not to deliberately exclude or conceal from the public.

**Lack of Public Understanding:** Despite efforts in recent years to promote transparency—such as opening lodges for public tours and highlighting their charitable work—Freemasonry remains poorly understood. Increased awareness and understanding of what Freemasonry actually is, is getting better, but will take time and patience and requires the dedication of members to speak in a clear and honest way about what their membership is and not perpetuation of cliché misconceptions. Masonic venues are often open for public tours, masons attending events and copies of the ceremony books available for purchase on well known online stores.

Together, the interplay of historical mistrust, cultural misrepresentation, and a lack of understanding perpetuates the enduring notion of Freemasonry as a secretive, male only, organisation—overtime these misunderstanding are being addressed.

## VISUAL CONTENT

Visual content, including images and videos, is a powerful tool for capturing your audience's attention and enhancing the overall user experience on your Lodge's website. High-quality visuals make your site more appealing and help convey your message more effectively. This chapter will provide in-depth guidance on how to use visual content to engage visitors, maintain a professional appearance, and showcase your Lodge's activities and events.

### The Importance of High-Quality Visuals

- First Impressions Matter

The visual elements of your website often create the first impression for visitors. High-quality, professional visuals can make your site look more trustworthy and appealing. Conversely, low-quality images or videos can detract from your site's credibility and drive visitors away.

- Engagement and Retention:

Engaging visuals can keep visitors on your site longer and encourage them to explore more content.

- Storytelling and Connection:

Visuals can tell a story and create an emotional connection with your audience. By showcasing the people, events, and activities that define your Lodge, you can make your site more relatable and compelling.

### Relevance:

Ensure that all visual content is relevant to your Lodge and its activities. Irrelevant or generic images can confuse visitors and dilute your message. Use images and videos that accurately reflect your Lodge's identity and mission.

- **Quality:**

High-quality visuals are essential. Use images with good resolution that look sharp and clear on all devices. Videos should be well-lit, steady, and have good sound quality. Avoid using blurry or pixelated images, as they can make your site look unprofessional.

- **Consistency:**

Maintain a consistent visual style throughout your website. This includes using a similar colour palette, tone, and type of imagery. Consistency helps create a cohesive look and feel, enhancing your Lodge's brand identity.

### **Types of Visual Content**

- **Images:**

- **Photos of Events:** Capture and share photos from events, social and community activities. This helps showcase the vibrancy and engagement of your Lodge.
- **Member Profiles:** Feature images of members to highlight the community aspect of your Lodge.
- **Historical Images:** Share images that highlight the rich history and traditions of your Lodge.

- **Videos:**

- **Event Highlights:** Create short videos highlighting key moments from recent events. This can be a great way to show the dynamic nature of your Lodge.
- **Member Testimonials:** Video testimonials from members can provide a personal touch and give potential candidates insights into the benefits of joining.

### **Enhancing Visual Content with Captions**

- **Contextual Information:**

Include captions with your visuals to provide context and enhance understanding. Captions should be concise but informative, explaining what the image or video shows and why it's important.

- **Engagement:**

Well-crafted captions can also engage visitors and encourage them to explore further. Ask questions or include interesting facts to pique curiosity.

### **Technical Considerations**

- **File Formats:**

Use appropriate file formats for your visuals. JPEG or PNG is typically best for images, while MP4 is a good choice for videos. These formats balance quality and file size, ensuring quick load times.

- **Optimisation:**

Optimise images and videos to reduce their file size without sacrificing quality. This improves page load times and ensures a better user experience. Tools like Photoshop, [TinyPNG](#), or online video compressors can help with optimisation.

- **Responsive Design:**

Ensure your visual content is responsive and looks good on all devices, including desktops, tablets, and smartphones. Use flexible image sizes and responsive video embeds to adapt to different screen sizes.

### **Legal and Ethical Considerations**

- **Permissions:**

Make sure you have the necessary permissions to use any images or videos. This is especially important for photos of people or copyrighted material. Obtain written consent from members if you plan to use their images or testimonials.

- **Attribution:**

If you use images or videos from external sources, provide proper attribution. This includes crediting the photographer or creator and ensuring compliance with licensing agreements.

- **Accessibility:**

Ensure that your visual content is accessible to all users, including those with disabilities. Use alternative text (alt text) for images so that screen readers can describe them to visually impaired users.

By following these guidelines, you can effectively use visual content to enhance your Lodge's website, making it more engaging, informative, and visually appealing. High-quality images and videos will not only capture attention but also help tell your Lodge's story, connect with your audience, and promote your activities and values.

## **BRAND CONSISTENCY**

Brand consistency is crucial to creating a professional and recognisable online presence for your Lodge. It involves the uniform use of logos, colours, fonts, and other visual elements across all your digital platforms. This chapter will delve into the importance of brand consistency and provide detailed guidance on how to implement it effectively on your Lodge's website. A unified look across all pages, including the homepage, about us, how to join, news, events, and contact pages, is essential.

### **Understanding Brand Consistency**

1. **Why Brand Consistency Matters:**

Brand consistency helps build trust and recognition among your audience. When visitors see the same logos, colours, and fonts across your website and other marketing materials, it creates a cohesive and professional appearance. This unified look reinforces your Lodge's identity and makes it easier for people to remember and associate your visual elements with your Lodge.

## 2. Key Elements of Brand Consistency

- Logos:

Your Lodge's logo is the cornerstone of your brand identity. It should be prominently displayed on your website to reinforce your brand and make a strong visual impression.

- High-Resolution Logos: Ensure your logo is high-resolution to maintain clarity and professionalism on various screen sizes. A pixelated or blurry logo can detract from your site's appearance and credibility.

- Proper Sizing: Use appropriately sized versions of your logo for different placements, such as the header, footer, and favicon (the small icon in the browser tab). This ensures that the logo looks good and is easily recognisable wherever it appears.

- Colours:

Consistent use of colours is essential for brand recognition. Stick to your Lodge's official colour palette throughout your website.

- Primary and Secondary Colours: Identify your primary brand colours (usually one or two main colours) and secondary colours (used for accents and highlights). Use these consistently for backgrounds, buttons, links, and other elements.

- Accessibility Considerations: Ensure sufficient contrast between text and background colours to make your website readable for all users, including those with visual impairments.

- Fonts:

Fonts play a significant role in the overall look and feel of your website. Limiting the number of fonts helps maintain a clean and professional appearance.

- Font Selection: Choose one or two fonts that reflect your Lodge's personality and are easy to read. Typically, one font is used for headings and another for body text.

- Consistency: Use the selected fonts consistently throughout your website, including in headings, subheadings, and body text. This uniformity contributes to a cohesive and polished appearance.

- Tone and Voice:

Consistency in tone and voice throughout your written content, whether your Lodge's communication style is formal and traditional or casual and welcoming, ensures that your message is conveyed clearly and cohesively.

## Benefits of Effective Branding



- **Professional Appearance:** A consistent brand presentation makes your Lodge's website look polished and professional, which can enhance credibility and trust among visitors.
- **Memorable Identity:** Consistent use of logos, colours, and fonts helps create a strong and memorable identity. Visitors are more likely to remember and recognise your Lodge when they encounter your brand elements consistently.
- **Improved User Experience:** Brand consistency contributes to a better user experience by providing a familiar and cohesive environment. Visitors will find it easier to navigate and engage with your website when visual elements are predictable and harmonious.
- **Reinforced Messaging:** Consistent branding reinforces your Lodge's values and background, helping to communicate a clear and unified message to your audience.

By maintaining a consistent brand presence, you reinforce your Lodge's identity and create a memorable and professional impression for your audience.

## ***LEGAL AND COMPLIANCE***

### **DATA PROTECTION**

Masonic websites must deal with personal data in accordance with best practice. The most important principles are that we are always transparent with members and others by telling them how their data will be used, and that we store all personal data in a secure way. You will find guidance on data protection documents here [b.ugle.org.uk/data-protection](http://b.ugle.org.uk/data-protection), which are intended to help provide practical answers to common questions. It is not legal advice, and is not a substitute for independent legal advice, if thought necessary.

In particular, the answers will vary depending on the local circumstances. Districts have to comply with any applicable local laws. As a rule of thumb, whether at Lodge, Province, Districts or Lodges outside the UK level, we must all take care to use members' personal data only in a way that the relevant members would expect.

With any enquiry forms on your website, you need to make clear what you will be doing with the personal data of any users who submit the form. You should also make reference to the data protection notice for more information.

### **PRIVACY AND COOKIES**

#### **For Lodges in England and Wales**

You must tell users what cookies are on your website, explain the purpose of the cookies and, except for cookies that are necessary for the functioning of the website, ask users for their consent. Almost all websites use cookies and need to do so for them to work correctly – as well as collect analytics on

how the site is used, sharing through social media and so on. Further guidance can be found here: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-pecr/cookies-and-similar-technologies>

You are free to copy and use our privacy and cookies policy, which can be found in the footer of all our sites and which we will update as this develops: [www.ugle.org.uk/privacy-cookies](http://www.ugle.org.uk/privacy-cookies)

### **For Lodges outside the UK**

Though you should check the local regulations, we suggest being transparent with your audience regarding the cookie data you are collecting and why you are collecting it. Don't collect data for anything commercial such as advertising (unless you have express consent) and don't collect or use data for anything users wouldn't expect or be content with.

### **TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

There is no legal requirement to have terms and conditions on simple websites that do not sell products or services or publish user-generated comments. Terms can however be a useful way of setting out rules – for example, guidelines on when someone can link to your website or copy content.

### **COPYRIGHT NOTICE**

If you want to deter people from using any material from your website, you will need to include a copyright notice, which makes it clear that the copyright of your website and its material is in your ownership and cannot be used without permission.

As an example, the UGLE seal, photographic images, graphics and content are protected by copyright. Therefore, we outline in our copyright notice that material belonging to the United Grand Lodge of England may not be copied, used, or distributed in any form or manner without our express permission.

### **Use of Photography**

*Some of the photographs, images, videos, and other multimedia content on the website are licensed to UGLE and cannot be used on other Masonic websites without the owner's permission. You must seek prior permission from UGLE before using or distributing any photographs, images, videos or other multimedia content from the website.*

### **ACCESSIBILITY**

*"The power of the web is in its universality. Access by everyone regardless of disability is an essential aspect."*

Tim Berners-Lee, W3C director and inventor of the worldwide web

It is important to make your website accessible to everyone, so here is some best practice guidance to consider:

#### ***People with auditory impairments***

Do not use sound to convey vital information. Provide a transcript for audio and subtitles for videos.

#### ***People with motor-coordination impairment***

It can be difficult to click on small items within a tiny clickable range. Avoid this.

#### ***People with visual impairment***

- Use easy-to-read fonts and font size (a size of 12-14 points/pixels for the body is generally recommended for body text)
- Be mindful of colours for action items – if there are any call-to-action buttons, ensure the colours do not confuse users (such as placing a red 'Cancel' button next to a green 'Submit' button)
- Contrast is key
- Make sure you add ALT attributes to graphics – there are software programs that read text on a website aloud, using the ALT labels
- Underline your links or make sure there is a colour contrast between hyperlinked text and regular text
- Emphasise the structure of pages by using clear headings and subheadings
- Keep pages short, because it can be hard for users of screen readers to scan text.

#### ***Free accessibility-testing tool***

This tool will allow you to check your accessibility site score: [www.webaccessibility.com](http://www.webaccessibility.com)

## ***OPTIMISATION AND ANALYTICS***

### **SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION (SEO)**

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is a fundamental aspect of building a successful Lodge website. It involves various techniques aimed at improving your website's visibility on search engines like Google or Bing, making it easier for potential candidates and existing members to find your site. This chapter will provide comprehensive guidance on the key elements of SEO and how to optimise your Lodge website for better search engine rankings.

#### **Understanding SEO Basics**

- What is SEO:

SEO is the process of optimising your website to rank higher in search engine results pages (SERPs) for relevant keywords or phrases. The goal is to increase organic (non-paid) traffic to your site by improving its visibility to search engine users.

- Why SEO Matters

A higher ranking in search results can lead to increased traffic, more visibility for your Lodge, and ultimately, more potential candidates and engagement with existing members. By optimising your website for search engines, you can ensure that it reaches the right audience and fulfills its objectives effectively.

- Key Elements of On-Page SEO

- URL Structure:

The URL of your web pages should be concise and descriptive, including relevant keywords that reflect the content of the page. For example, a page about joining the Lodge could have a URL like "lodgenamenumber.org.uk/how-to-join."

- Title Tags and Meta Description:

Title tags and meta descriptions are HTML elements that appear in search engine results. They should accurately summarise the content of the page and include relevant keywords to improve click-through rates. Tools like the Yoast plugin for WordPress can help optimise these elements for better SEO performance.

- Heading Tags:

Heading tags (H1, H2, H3, etc.) help structure your content and provide context to search engines about the main topics covered on a page. Include relevant keywords in your headings to improve SEO and make it easier for users to understand the content.

- Descriptive Hyperlinks:

Use descriptive anchor text for hyperlinks within your content. Instead of generic phrases like "click here," use keywords or phrases that accurately describe the linked page's content. This helps search engines understand the relevance of the linked page and improves user experience.

- Internal Linking:

Internal linking involves linking to other pages within your website. It helps search engines discover and index new pages, establishes a hierarchy of importance for content, and improves navigation for users. When creating internal links, use descriptive anchor text and link to relevant pages.

## Implementing SEO Best Practices

- Keyword Research:

Identify relevant keywords and phrases related to your Lodge and its activities. Use tools like [Google Keyword Planner](#) or [Ubersuggest](#) to research search volumes and competition for these keywords. Incorporate them strategically into your website's content, including headings, titles, and meta descriptions.

- Content Quality:

Create high-quality, relevant content that addresses the needs and interests of your target audience. Focus on providing value and answering questions that potential candidates or existing members may have. Engaging, informative content is more likely to rank well in search results and attract organic traffic.

- Mobile-Friendliness:

Ensure that your website is optimised for mobile devices. With an increasing number of users accessing the internet via smartphones and tablets, mobile-friendliness is crucial for SEO. Use responsive design principles to ensure that your site displays properly on all screen sizes and devices.

- **Site Speed:**

Page speed is a critical factor for both user experience and SEO. Slow-loading pages can lead to higher bounce rates and lower search engine rankings. Optimise your website's performance by minimising image sizes, reducing server response times, and using caching techniques.

- **Regular Updates:**

Keep your website's content fresh and up-to-date to maintain its relevance and authority in the eyes of search engines. Regularly publish new content, update existing pages, and remove outdated information. This signals to search engines that your site is active and valuable to users.

### **Monitoring and Improving SEO Performance**

- **Analytics:**

Use tools like Google Analytics and Google Search Console to monitor your website's performance and track key SEO metrics. Analyse data on organic traffic, keyword rankings, and user engagement to identify areas for improvement and optimise your SEO strategy.

- **User Feedback:**

Gather feedback from users, including potential candidates and existing members, about their experience with your website. Use this feedback to identify usability issues, content gaps, and areas for improvement in your SEO efforts.

By implementing these SEO best practices, you can improve the visibility and effectiveness of your Lodge's website, attract more visitors, and achieve your organisational goals more effectively. Remember that SEO is an ongoing process, and continual monitoring and optimization are essential for long-term success.

### **GOOGLE ANALYTICS: MEASURING PERFORMANCE**

Google Analytics is a powerful, free tool that helps you track and understand the performance of your website. By using Google Analytics, you can gain valuable insights into how visitors interact with your site, which can inform your strategy for improving user experience and achieving your Lodge's goals.

#### **What is Google Analytics?**

Google Analytics is a web analytics service offered by Google that tracks and reports website traffic. It provides detailed statistics and data about your website's performance, including the number of visitors, their behaviour, and how they interact with your site. This information can help you make informed decisions to enhance your website and better serve your audience.

#### **Why Use Google Analytics?**

Using Google Analytics offers several benefits:

- **Track Visitor Numbers:** Monitor how many people visit your website, where they come from, and how they find your site.
- **Identify Top Pages:** See which pages on your website are the most popular and understand why visitors are drawn to them.
- **Real-Time Data:** Obtain real-time data on your website's performance, allowing you to see the immediate impact of changes or new content.
- **Understand User Behaviour:** Learn how visitors navigate your site, which pages they spend the most time on, and where they drop off.
- **Measure Goals:** Set and track specific goals, such as membership sign-ups or event registrations, to measure the effectiveness of your website.

### **Getting Started with Google Analytics**

#### **1. Create a Google Analytics Account:**

- Go to [Google Analytics](#) and sign in with your Google account.
- Click on "Get started today" and follow the prompts to set up your account.

#### **2. Set Up a Property:**

- A property represents your website in Google Analytics. Enter your website name, URL, and industry category.
- Choose your reporting time zone.

#### **3. Install the Tracking Code:**

- Google Analytics provides a tracking code that you need to add to your website.
- For most Content Management Systems (CMS) like WordPress, you can install a plugin (e.g., "Google Analytics for WordPress by MonsterInsights") to easily add the tracking code.
- Alternatively, you can manually add the tracking code to the header section of your website's HTML.

### **Key Metrics to Monitor**

Google Analytics 4 (GA4) introduces new metrics and reporting features that provide deeper insights into user behaviour and website performance. Here's how to monitor some of the key metrics in GA4 to help your Lodge understand its audience and improve its online presence.

#### **1. Acquisition Reports**

- **User Acquisition:** Understand how new users find your website, whether through search engines, social media, direct visits, or referrals from other sites.

- **Traffic Sources:** Breakdown of traffic sources such as organic search, paid search, direct, referral, and social.
- **Session Acquisition:** Insights into how sessions are initiated and which channels are driving the most traffic.

## 2. Engagement Reports

- **Engagement Overview:** Learn which pages are the most visited and how users navigate your site.
- **Pages and Screens:** Insights into the performance of individual pages and screens (for mobile apps).
- **Landing Pages:** Pages where users first enter your site, indicating which content draws the most interest.
- **Events:** Track specific user interactions on your site, such as clicks, downloads, or video plays. In GA4, events are central to tracking user behaviour.

### Regular Monitoring and Reporting

Regularly check your Google Analytics reports to stay informed about your website's performance. Set aside time each week to review key metrics and trends. Use these insights to make data-driven decisions to improve your website and better serve your audience.

Google Analytics is an invaluable tool for understanding how visitors interact with your Lodge's website. By regularly monitoring key metrics and setting up goals, you can gain insights into your website's performance, identify areas for improvement, and make informed decisions to enhance user experience. Even if you're new to website management, the intuitive interface and comprehensive reports provided by Google Analytics make it easy to start leveraging data to achieve your Lodge's online objectives.

For more information on how to make the most of Google Analytics, visit the [Google Analytics Academy](#).

## SECURITY

Ensuring the security and privacy of your Lodge's website is essential to protect sensitive data and maintain the trust of your members and visitors. Here's a compact guide to basic security measures for your website.

### IMPLEMENT HTTPS

- What is HTTPS?

HTTPS (Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure) encrypts the connection between your browser and the web server, ensuring data exchanged remains confidential.

- Why is HTTPS Important?

Using HTTPS protects data, builds trust with visitors (indicated by a padlock icon in the browser), and improves search engine rankings.

- How to Implement HTTPS:

1. Obtain an SSL/TLS Certificate: Get this from your web hosting provider or a certificate authority.
2. Install the Certificate: Follow provided instructions to install it on your website.
3. Update Your Website URL: Change your website URL from HTTP to HTTPS.

[Find out here for more information](#)

- Benefits of HTTPS:

- Data Privacy: Encrypts data sent between your website and visitors.
- Trustworthiness: Increases visitor trust, indicated by a padlock icon in the browser.
- SEO Benefits: Improves your site's ranking on search engines.

## **KEEP SOFTWARE UP-TO-DATE**

- Why Updates are Important:

Regular updates fix vulnerabilities in your website's core software and plugins, enhancing security.

How to Keep Your Software Up-to-Date:

1. Regularly Check for Updates: For most Content Management Systems (CMS) like WordPress, Joomla, or Drupal, updates for your website's software, themes, and plugins are available on the site backend (admin dashboard). Log in to your CMS and look for update notifications or check the 'Updates' or 'Extensions' section.
2. Install Updates Promptly: Apply updates as soon as they are available.
3. Automate Updates: Enable automatic updates if possible to ensure your site is always secure.

Implementing HTTPS and keeping your software up-to-date are critical steps to enhance your website's security and privacy. These measures protect sensitive data and help maintain the trust of your members and visitors. Ensuring secure connections and regular updates are essential for a safe



and trustworthy online presence for your Lodge. If needed, seek help from your web hosting provider or a professional in website security.

## ***OTHER RESOURCES***

### **GUIDELINES**

#### **Website toolkit**

The toolkit is designed to provide tips to optimise your current website as well as building a new website from scratch.

#### **Websites Guidelines for Provinces and Districts**

While these guidelines are primarily aimed at Provinces and Districts, a lot of the content will also be helpful for Lodges to implement across their websites.

If you wish to obtain these additional resources, please get in touch with your Provincial/District Communications Officer, who will be able to assist you.

### **CHARTER MARK**

The UGLE Charter Mark is the quality standard showing that you are an approved Provincial/District or Lodge website.

Approved sites will then have the right to carry a Charter Mark on their homepage, which is a small representation of the UGLE logo together with either your Province/District name or the words 'Accredited Lodge website'. The Charter Mark must also include a hyperlink to the United Grand Lodge of England website.

#### **Why do I need a Charter Mark?**

Whilst there is no objection to Metropolitan, Provincial and District Grand Lodges, or individual Lodges and Chapters, setting up websites, to ensure accuracy and consistency on policy matters it is important that you look to have your website approved.

#### **How can I get the Charter Mark logo displayed on my Lodge website?**

If you plan to get your website approved and obtain the Charter Mark logo for display, you should contact the Provincial/District Communication Officer of your Province/District, who will assist you through the process.

We recommend contacting your Province or District to obtain these resources.