

Some Simple Instructions for Creating Lodge Webpages

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In order to have a **webpage**, there are several things that you need. You need 1) a **website**, 2) some form of making **webpages**, 3) some way of placing them up on the **internet**, and 4) to let people know about your website. Really, that's it. However, there is a lot of knowledge that goes into that, and I'll cover them for you.

First, a couple of definitions. A '**webpage**' is a document that you look at on the internet. A '**website**' is the whole location. A webpage is technically, just the one document, and the website can hold thousands. That said, most people use these words interchangeably, and people generally know what you're talking about.

1) Website

A website is just a special location for a document that you want people to read using a simple address. You can spend a lot of money for it, or you can get by for free. If you spend money, you get control and have a website that looks like [http://www.cowles 296 af am.org](http://www.cowles296af.com), which tells a lot with its 'DNS' name. If you do not want to spend money, you can have something that looks like <http://www.windstream.net/youremailaddresshere/>. It doesn't look as nice, but it is free as long as you pay your internet bill, and if people are just linking to it from the Grand Lodge web page, then they probably won't even notice the address.

I'll cover how to set up the free stuff in a bit.

2) Some form of making webpages

If you can create a document in MS Word, or on whatever the Mac uses, you can write a webpage. You can be simple, or you can be complex. People make a very big mistake in thinking that they need a computer person to design their web page. That's not what you need. Think of creating a webpage like you would have a glossy brochure designed and printed for your business. The same rules about colors, design, layout, and content apply. There are some things that need to be done to make the page look better on the internet, but for the most part, if you can design an advertising brochure, or know someone who can, then you're in business.

3) Some way of placing them up on the internet

That is really up to the people that host your website. You need to see how they want it done. Most will come right out and tell you how to do it, but usually it involves a process called 'ftp' which stands for 'file transfer protocol.'

4) Let people know about your website

You can either just quit when the page is up, or you can take the address of your new website, and get it to the Grand Lodge, and they will add it to the list of existing lodge websites. I won't tell you how to get rich making a business website here — If I had good secrets on how to do that, I'd be off fishing somewhere that my cell phone doesn't work.

The free way to get a website

Most internet service providers offer you some free space for webpages on the internet. Use it to get your feet wet. I use windstream for my email, and so I'll use them as an example.

- 1) I went to their webpage, www.windstream.net.
- 2) I clicked on Customer Service
- 3) I clicked on FAQ's (This stands for Frequently Asked Questions)
- 4) I saw 'How do I publish files to my personal webspace' and so I clicked on it.
- 5) That brought up a page with a link to 'How to create your web page', and that's what we're trying to do here.

From there, it's just a matter of following their instructions.

Creating the webpage

They can be simple, and they can be very complex. I will introduce you to a simple webpage, and you can take it from there. Create a document in MS Word. Save it as an HTML document with a filename of index.html. That's it, really. You can make them a lot more complicated and you can use a large number of different programs, but that makes it a lot harder on yourself. If you don't have MS Word, see if you have a friend with it.

The other two steps are to put the webpage up on your website, and to tell somebody about it. For that, you need to refer to your internet service provider's help.

Advice

Assuming that you just get email on your computer, and don't want to go much further than that, I suggest what we call in the computer profession 'nephew art'. Like Groucho Marx said: "If it is so easy a five year old can do it, then get me a five year old."

Bear in mind that if they're busy, it may take a while. Once you have your feet wet with your first webpage, then a lot of the other webpage terms will have a lot more meaning to you.

Using other peoples' webpages

You can put a lot into your webpage, or you can also find one with a design you like, save it to your computer, change it to match your lodge, and use that. There are issues with this, however, and you need to pay careful attention to them. If you don't understand the issues, DON'T DO THIS.

First, do not use other people's graphics. Using them can be a copyright violation, and some of them do not correctly represent Nebraska masonry. The Grand Lodge has Masonic graphics that are officially sanctioned for you to use. Use them. If you use somebody else's graphics, you need written permission. That's written on a piece of paper, and not just an email.

Second, do not just blindly change names and use the page as your own. You represent Masonry, and not only will you be violating copyrights, but you can be really embarrassed when the text

your copy isn't what you thought it would be. Replace all of the text with your own, and also pay close attention to the meta tags, so that you aren't hosting dirty words. If you don't know what meta tags are, then this option is not for you.

Third, watch out for advertising content. Advertisers try to push their material out to every place they can. Some of it is objectionable. Computers do not necessarily understand how to match words on searches. Usually they work by matching words in the website. A search for 'mason' will pull up ads related to words like mason, freemason, masonshavesmellyfeet, and a host of other things. A classic example is that of a news story about a cat being eaten by a coyote that featured ads for recipe books. It's your website, you've paid for it, you don't need to host material you don't control.

Photos

Do not put pictures of people up on the internet. Pictures of things, places, and animals are OK, but people may have an objection to having their picture up. You may think there is no harm in putting a picture up on the internet, but what if somebody unscrupulous takes this picture, and uses it for an objectionable website? Imagine seeing your picture up on a diet website as the "don't let this happen to you" example! There are legal documents that people should sign before putting their pictures up, and you need to store these like any other legal document and be able to produce them on demand. It's far easier to just not put up pictures of people.

Other terms and concepts

Many people want a specific domain name. That's OK — it just costs money. Usually, you can register your domain for \$5 to \$10 per year. Try godaddy.com, or search for it on the internet. However, once you've registered the domain, you need to pay for somebody to 'host' it, and you also have to make sure nobody forgets to pay the bill, or forgets the password to the account. As far as hosting goes, I've had really good luck with hurricane electric (www.he.net) for about \$10 a month.

A question of style

We're called blue lodges for a reason. Blue should figure into your page.

There is a way to display text called a 'blink tag'. Do not on any circumstance ever use it. It is annoying beyond belief, and its inclusion into the webpage standards was a mistake.

Make your page easy on the eye, easy to read, well organized, and without a lot of clutter. Remember, if you were designing a product brochure, you'd let the designer use good style to come up with an effective document that makes you money. The same rules apply.