

Use of the Internet by freemasons – Dos and Don'ts – the Province of East Lancashire's IT Policy

Freemasons have been making use of the Internet since the late 1990s and at the time of writing this document, its use has grown to see many Lodges and Provinces using email as their prime means of communication with members, including the distribution of Summonses and Minutes. Many Masonic bodies now have their own web sites and some of these are quite sophisticated and include the collection of subscriptions and dining fees.

The following Dos and Don'ts are based on the Province of East Lancashire's Technical IT policy which is available on the website at [[www.pglel.co.uk/communication/techtitpolicy.asp](http://www.pglel.co.uk/communication/techtitpolicy.asp)]. Any question or query in relation to the use of the internet or items not covered in this aide memoire should be referred to the Provincial Director of Communications by e-mail to [chadnorthcott@btinternet.com](mailto:chadnorthcott@btinternet.com).

	Dos	Don'ts
Web sites	The development of Lodge web sites can be made by following Provincial and United Grand Lodge guidelines and after formal approval has been given.	Don't make websites available to users until permission has been given from the Provincial Director of Communications ( <a href="mailto:chadnorthcott@btinternet.com">chadnorthcott@btinternet.com</a> )
Lodge & Chapter summons	When circulating Lodge & Chapter summons by e-mail ensure that they are sent as .pdf files as this reduces the opportunity for them to be changed.  Obtain the permission of the Lodge & Chapter members before using e-mail generally as summons contain personal information.	Do not send summons as word, excel or publisher etc file attachments. Save them as .pdf files before sending.
E-mails	E-mails should be brief any correspondence or information should be sent as a .pdf attachment.  Complete the subject line of the e-mail.  Ensure that viruses are eliminated and not transmitted to the recipient by using antiviral and security software.	When a large number of recipients are on the list use the bcc (blind copy) facility so that the full list is not made public.  Do not send without first proof reading the attachment AND the e-mail so that misunderstandings are avoided.  Do not use CAPITAL letters unless for emphasis.
Mailing lists	Where a high proportion of members are on email Lodges, Districts and the Province may use an official mailing list rather than informal personal distribution lists for mass emails.	Mailing lists should not be used for discussion forums because of the lack of control of who has access to the discussion.
The Big Online Services	Lodges may use such a facility for communication purposes including its use as a mailing list.	



Instant Messaging	As Instant Messaging is restricted between known parties and not available to unknown recipients its use is permitted.	Exercise caution if the other party is not known. Don't unwittingly bring Freemasonry into disrepute.
Photo Galleries	Lodges may use photo galleries either in a private members-only site or in a password-protected area of a public photo site.	The Province will give access to public "galleries" but only after the webmaster and/or Website Development Team are satisfied that the various permissions have been obtained from individuals appearing in the photographs.
Video streaming & Video recording	There may be occasions when addresses at Festive Boards could be video streamed and/or recorded but this must only be done with the written permission of the Provincial Grand Master or the Provincial Grand Master's Executive responsible for Communications.	Public video streaming should not be attempted by private Lodges.  Any live video streaming or video recording by Lodges and Chapters during a meeting is not allowed.
Facebook	The use of Facebook is acceptable with the public Facebook content being a subset of the information on the existing public web site.  Where a Lodge has a Lodge Communications Officer (LCO) the Facebook presence should be owned and managed by him.  There is no objection to groups of Brethren using Private Groups to work on particular projects if Facebook is their preferred medium for this activity.	Public postings by visitors to Masonic Fan Pages should be disabled.
Twitter	The use of Twitter can be used by the Province and Districts within the Province to alert members of new news items.  Lodge Twitter postings should primarily be for brief Lodge news items and links to articles on the approved public web site.	A Lodge Twitter ID should not follow that of a private individual. It may follow Provincial or Grand Lodge Twitter IDs.
Second Life	Brethren are expected to conduct themselves from a Masonic perspective in Second Life by the same standards they employ in real life.	Do not post items that can bring Freemasonry into disrepute.
Blogs	Blogs can be established by Executive members (Craft and Royal Arch) of the Province and by District Chairmen.	Individual Freemasons should not establish a blog for use in a Masonic context.
Forums		Because Forums are not easily controlled with the risk of negative, obscene, improper disclosure and out of date material they should not be used within the Province.

Wikis		A wiki should not be established within the Province by Lodges & Chapters as its integrity would not be easy to control.
MySpace		Myspace should not be used.
Javascript and XML (AJAX)	The use of AJAX (Asynchronous JavaScript and XML) is restricted to the Provincial Website	They should not be used by Lodges and Chapters
RSS	Moving forward the Province and individual Districts will make use of a RSS feed from the news areas of their web sites.	It should not be adopted by individual Lodges and Chapters.