



UNITED GRAND LODGE  
OF ENGLAND

# **UGLE WEBSITE GUIDELINES FOR PROVINCES AND DISTRICTS**



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## **INTRODUCTION**

The digital landscape is constantly evolving but while new trends continue to emerge, having a clear and concise website has always been a key method of communicating with your target audience.

Whether you are designing a new website or regularly update your current platform, we hope these guidelines will be helpful. They focus on the main components you may want to consider including in your site.

While there is no one-size-fits-all approach, you can also take inspiration from other Provincial, District and Lodge websites.

- Provinces: [www.ugle.org.uk/about-us/provinces](http://www.ugle.org.uk/about-us/provinces)
- Districts: [www.ugle.org.uk/about-us/districts-groups](http://www.ugle.org.uk/about-us/districts-groups)

### **WHAT WE EXPECT OF LODGES**

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 and it is important that you support them by sharing the relevant information with them, where necessary.

The first port of call for a Lodge should be your Metropolitan/Provincial/District webmaster, or the people involved in running the website. They will have lots of advice, may be able to help you with images, and there may be Provincial/District rules and guidelines that they can make you aware of.

Moreover, there are separate *UGLE Brand Identity Guidelines*, which offer instructions regarding use of logo, typography and letterhead.

## **PLANNING YOUR WEBSITE**

### **OBJECTIVES**

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

- Do not include the phrase "secret society" (especially "Freemasonry is not a secret society", which just means that "Freemasonry" and "secret society" come up in each other's search results)
- Similarly, do not use phrases like "Freemasonry is not a religion/political pressure group"
- In summary, say what we ARE – not what we ARE NOT
- Ideally, the URL should be .org.uk
- Also, choose a URL name that is easy for the public to understand, so if you are a Province it should be "Bedfordshire Freemasons" for example, not Bedfordshire PGL – which means nothing to the general public and is internal language.

The rest of the process can start with some basic questions such as:

#### ***What do we want to get out of this site?***

Define the main reason for the website and the objective. Are there any secondary purposes? Think of the essential content related to the site purposes. For instance, one of your primary objectives may be to obtain new members by getting people to submit an 'interested in joining' form? Your secondary objective may then be to raise the profile of the work of your Province or District among the public.

### **DEFINE PERSONAS**

#### ***What do your users want to get out of it?***

Define the users' needs and the content lifecycle. Who is going to navigate your site? There may be diverse types of users who require different content.

A member may be interested in the latest news regarding Freemasonry, while a potential prospect may want to discover the benefits of joining Freemasonry, or a member of the public might just want to learn more about Freemasonry in general. It is important to categorise each 'persona' so that the site content will satisfy all the audiences.

Personas are fictional characters, which you create based on your research to represent the different user types that might navigate your website. Creating a persona will give you a better understanding of the needs and requirements of the people who may engage with your website. If you would like to find out more about creating personas, please visit this link: [theblog.adobe.com/putting-personas-to-work-in-ux-design-what-they-are-and-why-theyre-important](https://theblog.adobe.com/putting-personas-to-work-in-ux-design-what-they-are-and-why-theyre-important)

### **CONTENT STRATEGY**

#### ***Use interactive content***

People do not like to visit a website if they have to go through a lot of text-based content. They look for visual elements. So, your web pages should have the right mix of visual and text content. Use high-quality images and keep them up to date.

With regards to potential members finding out more, you could have a detailed section explaining what it means to be a Freemason, including quotes/case studies and photos of current members to humanise the website, which explain why they joined and what they love most. Remember to mention

that women can join too! Include an explanation of female Freemasonry (and how we are happy to be two separate groups – and provide links to the two female Grand Lodges).

If you also include a news section on your website, again make sure it is regularly updated with stories from your Province/District. You have to give people a reason to go to your site.

### ***Break the content down***

Use headings and subheadings to break the text elements down and guarantee the right content hierarchy and easy navigation. With the Lodges in the Province/District, you could consider having an interactive map designed to show where they are located across the county.

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

- ***Home / Welcome Page:*** This can set the tone and guide users round the rest of the site, but try not to make it too cluttered. There is also no issue with including a members' area login.
- ***About Freemasonry:*** An overview about Freemasonry in general. If you do not have any videos, you can embed the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE) Discover Freemasonry video found here: [www.ugle.org.uk/about-freemasonry/video-library](http://www.ugle.org.uk/about-freemasonry/video-library)
- ***About Us/History:*** Include as much information as you want to give about the Province/District as it is now, its history, the personalities, officers and so on.
- ***Why become a Freemason/How to join:*** Include information on who can become a Freemason, what being a Freemason really means, case studies from members, use the four key values – charity, friendship, integrity and respect, and include the Discover Freemasonry brochure – ideally your Provincial version as a PDF, the benefits of joining and how to join – ideally link through to an email contact form. You can also mention the Universities Scheme and information on Women Freemasons, with links to the two separate Grand Lodges. Take a look at the UGLE website for the most up-to-date content to promote.
- ***Meetings:*** Where and when you meet and upcoming events; you could include a map either linked to or embedded in the page. If you want to go that step further, you could categorise your Lodges to show special-interest Lodges. Remember that you want to get the right match for the potential member and the Lodge.
- ***Charity:*** Linking to those charities that you contribute to, particularly non-masonic charities, will bring this aspect to life.
- ***News:*** You should have a news section that shows examples of all the good work you do. If you have a social media presence, you should have a Twitter feed and encourage people to follow you on Twitter.
- ***Contact Us:*** Have all of your contact details together and just link to the page from the rest of the site when required. You should have a Useful Links section and include a link to the UGLE page.

We know that some Provincial websites also include information about progressive orders such as Mark Master Mason and Knights Templar, for example. It is important to think of the main objectives of your website – if you are looking at attracting potential new members, you will be better served by having this information on an internal or members' area, and your public-facing website should promote the Craft in the first instance and also make reference to Royal Arch. You could include a small note though to explain that these orders do exist and how people can join them if they wish, once they have become a Master Mason. Promotion of the Craft should be the main focus of your front-facing website, as more information just could confuse people.

## **MEDIA CENTRE**

The objective of a Media Centre on your website is to grab the interest of journalists and publishers who want to find out the latest news and the relevant media contacts. This section should also include relevant information regarding the organisation. Moreover, the page works as a large media bank, displaying corporate news and events within your Province or District.

Requirements:

- Provincial/District news
- Press releases
- Media assets
- Social media profiles
- Information about the Province/District from external sources
- Upcoming events calendar
- Organisation history
- Media contacts

Examples of Media Centre pages:

- [www.ugle.org.uk/contact-us/media-centre](http://www.ugle.org.uk/contact-us/media-centre)
- [nwmasons.org/press](http://nwmasons.org/press)

## **IMAGES**

Photos need to be key to your website – you want to include high-quality and engaging images to capture your users.

The addition of images will really bring your site to life – whether they are included throughout the content, or are in a specific gallery section. Remember to caption all images, particularly with names of people shown, otherwise they will be meaningless to non-members and to future members.

UGLE has its own image library. Access to these photos will eventually be available for you to use but at present if there are any particular photos you wish to use on your website, please contact our communications manager, Shaun Butler, via: [sbutler@ugle.org.uk](mailto:sbutler@ugle.org.uk).

With any photos you use on your website, it is important to make sure you have consent from everyone who is identifiable in the photo. If you make it clear that the image is going to be used for the site when it is taken, no further action is required. Children are the exception and require all sorts of protection – it is easiest not to include them. If anybody shown in a photo on your website requests that you remove them, then you must either take down the photo or obscure them sufficiently so that they are not recognisable in the photo. UGLE has a disclaimer form that it can send to you for your use.

## **SEO STRATEGY**

Search engine optimisation (SEO) is the practice of increasing the quantity and quality of traffic to the website through organic search engine results.

An SEO strategy involves making specific changes to the web copy (text element of a website) that make the site's content more attractive to search engines. A search engine, such as Google, wants to provide the best answers to the searcher's queries, delivering high-quality and relevant content on the search engine results pages.

Research the keywords that your audience types on search engines and incorporate them into the copy on the website. Try to understand your users' intent. Here is a free tool to research keywords: <https://app.neilpatel.com>

### **FRONT-FACING WEBSITE VS MEMBERS' AREA**

When you develop your main website, you also need to consider the type of content you include from a non-member perspective. Therefore, it is important to put yourself in their shoes and imagine the doubts that a prospective member or someone who does not know much about Freemasonry can face.

A few questions they may have are:

- What is Freemasonry?
- Who are the Freemasons?
- What are the benefits of joining?
- What is the joining process?
- What are the requirements for joining?

Moreover, sharing stories from current members could build trust and credibility among prospective members.

If you have a members' area, the aim of this part of the website should be to enhance the retention of current members. It should provide value for members, giving them a reason to return to the site consistently. In this area, you should provide them with exclusive content to let them make most of their membership. The members' website necessarily has two fronts: the homepage before sign-in and the homepage after sign-in.

Here are some elements to include in your pre-sign-in pages:

- A strong 'call to action' that invites users to join (example: 'Stay informed about the latest news and events')
- Value proposition for non-members (example: 'Get into the Freemasonry community and connect with thousands of Freemasons')
- Image and heading to offer visual clues that this is a members' site and where to login.

## DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

### USER EXPERIENCE

Usability is part of the broader term “user experience” and refers to the ease of access and use of the website. The key point is to have a website that a user can navigate without facing any obstacles.

#### ***Keep the design simple***

Avoid any unnecessary clutter. A clean and functional layout of the website will ensure quick navigation. A simple site can also be used on different devices, so it is important to make sure that your website is supported on all major web browsers.

Try not to have overly long pages – it is easier for users to flick through several pages than to be endlessly scrolling down. Your logo should be visible in the top-left corner. Most sites have their logo in the top-left corner and therefore users expect to see it in that location.

You will also want to include a strong call to action on the homepage and make sure it stands out by using a bold colour and large font size. Ensure that the image you use on the homepage is attractive and in high resolution.

#### **Dos and Don'ts**

- ✔ Do: Mind the global navigation\*
- ✔ Do: Use consistent design
- ✔ Do: Ensure legibility and readability
- ✔ Do: Make sure it is structured and not too wordy
- ✔ Do: Design a distinct and personality for your website
- ✔ Do: Use space creatively
- ✔ Do: Make it accessible
- ✔ Do: Keep it up to date – new content means new visitors to the site
- ✔ Do: Use infographics
- ✔ Do: Ensure that the site is mobile-friendly
  
- ✘ Don't: Make it too cluttered
- ✘ Don't: Use unnecessarily complex and detailed backgrounds that may distract users' eyes
- ✘ Don't: Make it hard to find on Google
- ✘ Don't: Use 'internal' language on the public-facing part of your website
- ✘ Don't: Forget to check your content on a regular basis to ensure it is up to date and there are no broken links \*\*

\* *Global navigation is the main menu at the top website, which allows users to access the top categories and navigate the platform.*

\*\* *A broken link is a link that does not redirect to the target page anymore. The most common reasons why this happens could be that the website is no longer available, a webpage was moved without a redirect being added, or the URL structure of a website was changed. When you click on a broken link, you will find a web page with a 404 error or similar message explaining that it is not available.*



***Ensure that you have a prompt and easy-to-use navigation menu***

The main menu should stand out on the top of the page and the sections must be instantly visible to the users. Limit the number of elements so that users can easily scan the different sections.

The navigation should be consistent – ideally, the same navigation should be shown in the same position on each page. Similarly, your header, footer and the page width should be consistent.

Have your social media icons at the top and make sure you are posting regularly with relevant content.

**DEVICE-FRIENDLY**

Ensure that the site is responsive for mobiles and tablets, and that users can have an optimal experience on smaller screens.

There are many variables that impact a website’s performance on mobile or tablet screens. The list below outlines the most common ones:

- Make the button size large enough to work on mobile.
- Turn autocorrect off for forms: The autocorrect functionality can make a user’s interaction with your website more inconvenient. If you do not turn it off in the form on your website, a user’s phone will try changing their name or street name to more common words and slow down the process of filling out your form.
- Use large font sizes: Reading on a small screen can be harder if the font is too small. A font size of at least 14px should guarantee good readability. However, whatever font size you go for, you should test out how that looks to see if going bigger could be better.
- Ensure excellent website speed: According to a survey conducted by Consultancy, 74% of users will abandon after waiting five seconds for a mobile site to load. You can test your site speed on this link: <https://tools.pingdom.com>

You can use this tool provided by Google to run a test to see if your website is mobile-friendly:

<https://search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly>

## **KEY REQUIREMENTS**

### **DATA PROTECTION**

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is now here, so what does it mean for you?

The General Data Protection Regulation consists of a legal framework that sets guidelines for the collection and processing of personal information from individuals who live in the European Union (EU). Because the regulation applies regardless of where websites are based, it must be complied with by all sites that attract European visitors, even if they do not expressly provide products or services to EU residents. Click on this link if you want to find out more: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation)

Members are increasingly expecting their Lodges and other masonic entities to follow data protection best practice. 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. As a rule of thumb, whether at Lodge, Province or District 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**

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)

### **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.

## **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.

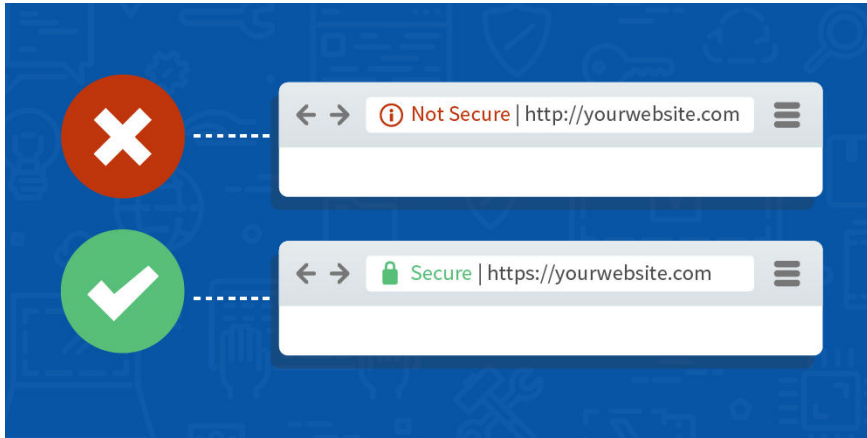
### ***Free accessibility-testing tool***

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

## **ADVERTISING**

It is important to preserve the integrity of your website and its content. Therefore, we advise that you do not include advertising from outside companies anywhere across your site. The only advertising allowed should be that aimed at promoting upcoming events or meetings within your Province or District.

## SSL CERTIFICATE



Users are increasingly vigilant about the misappropriation of their personal data, with internet browsers now regularly flagging up insecure sites. You therefore need to make sure that your site is secured with a valid SSL certificate, which will encrypt user data as well as authenticating your site.

You will notice that your website's URL will then be preceded by 'https', rather than the regular 'http', and internet browsers will also highlight its secure status, typically by displaying a padlock on the address bar.

Without SSL, your URL will display as 'not secure', which refers to a lack of security for the connection to that page. It is warning users that information within the site is unprotected and could potentially be stolen, read or modified by hackers or third parties. Therefore, you will need to get a valid SSL certificate – this link explains several ways to do that:

<https://support.google.com/domains/answer/7630973?hl=en-GB>

## **IMPLEMENTING AND MAINTAINING YOUR WEBSITE**

### **DRIVE TRAFFIC TO YOUR WEBSITE**

There are several ways to increase traffic to your website, including:

- Upload fresh content to your site regularly. For instance, you can have a blog or news section to upload stories from Lodges. This will help to spread awareness and trust among people who do not know much about Freemasonry.
- Use your social media channels to promote your website's content.
- Develop an SEO strategy and search for the best-performing keywords.
- A newsletter can be a powerful tool to keep members up to date and generate traffic to the website. Ensure that your newsletter includes engaging calls to action and clickable links. Just be careful not to bombard people with relentless emails about every update.
- Ensure the website is responsive in every screen size and the load speed is less than three seconds.

### **MEASURING SUCCESS**

When you want to measure the success of your website, Google Analytics results are very useful. It is essential to measure the traffic to your site to understand the users that are visiting your website.

Metrics that you would like to monitor may be:

- Bounce rate: Bounce rate is given as a percentage and represents the number of visits when users leave your site after just one page, regardless of how they got to your site or how long they stayed on that page. A bounce rate in the range of 26%-40% is excellent; 41%-55% percent is average; 56%-70% is higher than average, but may not be cause for alarm depending on the website. Anything more than 70% is disappointing for everything outside of blogs, news and events.
- Average time on page: The amount of time spent on a specific page.
- Session duration: The amount of time the user spent on the site overall. As an example of a good average session duration, the industry standard is two to three minutes.
- Page views: Records an instance of a page being loaded (or reloaded) in a browser.

For instance, a high bounce rate for one of your web pages should warn you that the content of this page may be not relevant for the user, and therefore they will not continue to navigate other pages. You could add different links to each web page of your site to offer visitors a pathway to step into the next page; this may impact positively on your bounce rate and session duration. If you notice that visitors do not spend much time on a particular web page, it may be that you should review the content and make it more appealing and engaging.

You can also monitor the page views metric to understand the most popular pages and review the ones with a small number of views.

### **TOOLS**

#### ***Google Analytics***

<https://analytics.google.com/analytics/web>

As outlined in the section above, Google Analytics is a free tracking and statistics tool that gives an insight into your website's traffic. The tool is divided into three main categories:

- *Acquisition*: This section shows the sources and channels where your audience comes from. For instance, your audience may land to the site from Google search, social media networks or email, for example.
- *Behaviour*: This section shows what the users are doing when they reach the website. For instance, the reports in this section give an overview of the most engaging pages of the website.
- *Conversions*: This section shows reports such as lead generation.

You will find a video tutorial on Google Analytics at the following link:  
<https://analytics.google.com/analytics/academy>

The Google Analytics Academy will help you to create reports based on your needs.

Useful reports may be:

- The top ten landing pages on your site, sorted by page views, bounce rate and average time on a page
- A pie chart that highlights the most popular channels used by users to reach your site
- A pie chart that highlights the top five pages visited by returning visitors
- Metrics such as the number of users and new users.

Reports should be provided on a monthly basis to monitor and analyse website performance.

### **Hotjar**

[www.hotjar.com](http://www.hotjar.com)

This tool reveals the online behaviour of users once they navigate to a website. In the free version, it can monitor up to three pages of a site and record up to 2,000 user clicks. The actions conducted by users through Hotjar give great insight about users' experience and the areas of a website that may require improvement.



## USEFUL LINKS

- Provinces: [www.ugle.org.uk/about-us/provinces](http://www.ugle.org.uk/about-us/provinces)
- Districts: [www.ugle.org.uk/about-us/districts-groups](http://www.ugle.org.uk/about-us/districts-groups)
- Speed site test: <https://tools.pingdom.com>
- Mobile-friendly test: <https://search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly>
- UGLE Discover Freemasonry video: [www.ugle.org.uk/about-freemasonry/video-library](http://www.ugle.org.uk/about-freemasonry/video-library)
- SEO tool: <https://app.neilpatel.com>
- SSL certificate: <https://support.google.com/domains/answer/7630973?hl=en-GB>
- GDPR regulation: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation)
- UGLE – data protection: [b.ugle.org.uk/data-protection](http://b.ugle.org.uk/data-protection)
- Privacy and cookies guidance: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-pecr/cookies-and-similar-technologies>
- UGLE privacy and cookies page: [www.ugle.org.uk/privacy-cookies](http://www.ugle.org.uk/privacy-cookies)
- Website accessibility test: [www.webaccessibility.com](http://www.webaccessibility.com)
- Google Analytics: <https://analytics.google.com/analytics/web>
- Google Analytics Academy: <https://analytics.google.com/analytics/academy>
- Hotjar: [www.hotjar.com](http://www.hotjar.com)
- Developing personas guidelines: <https://theblog.adobe.com/putting-personas-to-work-in-ux-design-what-they-are-and-why-theyre-important>
- Media Centre examples:  
[www.ugle.org.uk/contact-us/media-centre](http://www.ugle.org.uk/contact-us/media-centre)  
[nwmasons.org/press](http://nwmasons.org/press)

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*If you need any further guidance or help, please email Dean Simmons, web content manager, via [dsimmons@ugle.org.uk](mailto:dsimmons@ugle.org.uk) or Alessio Cofone, digital marketing executive, via [acofone@ugle.org.uk](mailto:acofone@ugle.org.uk)*