

The Tyler in a Master Mason's Lodge

In Symbolic Masonry, the Tiler or Tyler is a Master Mason whose duty it is to challenge all those who approach the Lodge Room door and verify that all who enter are Masons who are duly qualified. To be duly qualified, a Mason must have been advanced through the proper degree of work for the meeting, be current with his dues, be clad in the proper apron, and have permission of the Master to enter. In ancient stonemason guilds, Tilers guarded the door against eavesdroppers and cowans. They still serve this function today. The short definition for cowans is that they could be hired to build walls of loose stones without mortar or cement, were not yet apprenticed to a Master Mason, and had no right to attend or vote at secret guild meetings.

In a typical Lodge, the Tiler sits outside the Lodge Room door in a Tiler's room, armed with a symbolic sword resting at his side or mounted on the wall. By tradition, the ceremonial sword had a wavy blade representing a ray from a blazing star. Modern Tilers may bear a ceremonial straight military sword or curved cavalry saber donated by a brother. Others make do with a cross-shaped Christian sword donated by a Knight Templar. The Tiler has not been armed with a sword through all of Masonic history. In early Freemasonry, the Tiler was "armed with the proper implement of his office," which was appropriately, a trowel used for setting tiles.

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