



Traveling Gavel Rules 2024-2025

Purpose

The Traveling Gavel is a long-running program in Massachusetts DeMolay that encourages chapter to travel to across the state with a little friendly competition. Each chapter has their own hand-carved wooden gavel that prominently features the chapter's name on it. Gavels traditionally serve a dual purpose: 1) they symbolize the power of the person who yields it as a figure of authority and have been used by judges, legislators, and others since Medieval England, and 2) they serve as a useful tool through which those in power can command attention and respect with a simple "rap".

Your chapter's Traveling Gavel is no mere decoration to display in the East of the Chapter room, it builds upon the centuries of history gavels have in the Anglo-American world. Maintaining your chapter's gavel and collecting others is a symbol of the strength of your chapter and your Master Councilor's leadership, as well as a tool that you can occasionally use in the chapter room. (Feel free to give it a light rap, but please do be careful and mindful of how fragile they are!)

Rules and Regulations of the Traveling Gavel Program

1. Each chapter will start with a gavel that is not their own.
2. In order to steal a gavel from a host chapter, the visiting chapter must have a valid visitation team which consists of:
 - a. At least 3 (three) active DeMolays **OR** all the active DeMolays of the Chapter if they have less than 3 active DeMolay **AND**
 - b. 1 (one) registered advisor.
3. A steal may only occur at business meeting of the chapter. We understand that chapters are meeting on a continuum of different styles of meetings, so the following non-exhaustive rules shall apply. Any questions in whether a meeting is eligible should be determined by the advisors of both chapters by asking the question: "would the average person consider this more of a business meeting or a fun event?"
 - a. De Jure - A meeting with any of the following attributes is automatically considered a business meeting eligible for a steal and may not be challenged:
 - i. The First or Second Degree was performed,

- ii. The Chapter was formally opened on either the First and/or Second Degree, or
 - iii. The dress code was suit and tie
 - b. De Facto - A meeting where the chapter votes to attend an event, spend funds, or elects officers is presumptively a business meeting. However, the host chapter may rebut that presumption if they can show that the agenda was minimal, and the event was primarily for fun
 - c. Ineligible - A gathering of the chapter solely for fun is never eligible to steal a gavel from.
4. Only one gavel may be stolen from a chapter during one business meeting. Should multiple chapters have eligible visitations, the chapter that travelled the furthest will receive the gavel. The distance between the Lodge of the Host Chapter and the Traveling Chapters using Google Maps is the distance for purposes of this program.
5. The Traveling Gavel Program will maintain a list of where each gavel is on the website within a reasonable time frame of a steal. Recording using these following rules are to help assist in that process:
- a. Visitor Recordation - The Presiding Officer of the Visiting Chapter must record their gavel steal using Formstack within 48 hours of the visitation.
 - b. Host Recordation - The Presiding Officer of a Host Chapter may record that their gavel has been stolen within 48 hours of the visitation. If they record AND the Visiting Chapter fails to record within 48 hours, they have an absolute right to take back their gavel with only one member and advisor. They will take back their gavel regardless of any other chapter visiting. Should the Host Chapter assert this right and have an otherwise valid visitation, they are allowed to take BOTH their gavel and a second gavel with them.
 - c. State Visitation - Whenever the State Master Councilor or his designee informs a chapter that they will be visiting in the next 48 hours, the chapter must present all their gavels and when they stole them at that meeting. Nothing in this rule relieves a Visiting Chapter from recording under Subsection (a).
6. Whenever one or more chapters meets in joint meeting pursuant to a vote of the Chapter, none of the chapters taking part in that meeting may steal a gavel from each other. If another chapter that has not designated themselves as part of the joint meeting visits with an otherwise valid visitation team, they may steal only one gavel of their choosing from the combined joint chapters, provided that a gavel held by one chapter is considered held by all other joint chapters for the duration of the joint meeting.