



### [The Freemasons' Fidelity Tartan](#)

The Freemasons' Fidelity Tartan is intended for use by Blue Lodge Freemasons worldwide. The design alludes to the symbols of Freemasonry for Lodge, formal, and public applications by referencing elements of the Craft. While some of the symbols of Freemasonry have meanings that can only be obtained within a tiled Lodge, elements like the Plumb, the Level, and the Square are publicly recognized. The design displays allegorical representations of the Craft in an asymmetrical set of patterns divided into four unique spaces. This alludes to the duality of our natural rough or unfinished state and the resulting process of becoming square in Freemasonry.

The four unique patterned areas hold allegorical significance within each set of black & white accent lines. The first section of the design represents the Masonic journey from darkness to light. The pattern draws from a dark rich color of blue at the edges to a brighter tone of blue at the center. Light radiates out from the center, emanating towards the dark edge. The design also provides a reference to the directional aspects of Freemasonry found in the North, the South, the East, and the West.



The second section of vertical patterns represents the three degrees of Freemasonry. The Entered Apprentice Degree is found at each vertical edge in the single checkered dark blue patterns and white accent lines. The Fellowcraft Degree is represented by the lighter pair of checkered blue patterns containing the vertical set of light blue & black lines. The Master Mason Degree is represented by the three central checkered blue patterns containing the two vertical light blue lines.

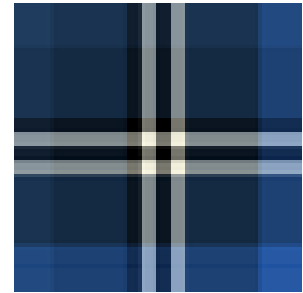
The third section of horizontal patterns represents existence as described throughout the Masonic lectures, expressed by the hermetic phrase "as above, so below." The trinity of Faith, Hope, & Charity, the stages of life, the Masonic funeral rites, and the allegory of Jacob's Ladder each address these divisions. The pattern reflects across itself from the world above, to the Earthly plain, to the world below.





The fourth section of the pattern represents the Plumb, the Level, and the Square. The vertical pair of light blue & black lines denotes the Plumblineline of Rectitude. The horizontal pair of light blue & black lines illustrates the Level of Equality. The nexus of these symbols forms the Square of Virtue. The Square is duplicated in 90° sections, creating a 360° radiant or all-encompassing Masonic landmark. The checkered background of alternating blue tones is circumscribed within darker shades to display how the instruments of Freemasonry necessarily draw our attention towards light.

The black & white pairs of lines that divide each section are representative of the Mosaic Pavement of Freemasonry. The pattern is a simple and reserved checkered accent that brings order to the design. Each black & white cross-section is set within the darkest tone of blue and the mosaic only achieves true color within this small area of the pattern, where the light and the darkness find balance.



Fidelity Tartan restricts the for-profit, goods, products, or charitable use of the Freemasons' Fidelity Tartan design by approval of The Scottish Registry of Tartans and U.S. Copyright holder. Please visit the [Concept & Creation](#) section of the website for more information, visit the [Contact](#) page or email [fidelitytartan@gmail.com](mailto:fidelitytartan@gmail.com).

### [Tartan History](#)

A tartan is a cloth pattern or design native to Scotland. These woven patterns appeared somewhere between 200 A.D. & 400 A.D., making the art nearly 1800 years old. While the Scots are not the only peoples in the world to develop woven patterned cloth, the significance or meaning of the tartan has a unique cultural context. Over time, the tartan became so popular as to become a signifier of Highland Scottish kilts and family affiliation. Tartans came to symbolize cultural identities and were adopted across Scotland. The woven material was not only used for kilt making, but dresses, plaid jackets, hats, scarves, banners, battle flags and more.

The [Jacobite Uprising](#) or Scottish rebellion against the English Monarchy concluded with a defeat of Bonnie Prince Charlie's Scottish forces at the Battle of Culloden on April 16, 1746. To suppress rebellious Scots, the British government forbade the wearing of tartans in the "Act of Proscription" that same year. The intention was to outlaw Highland Dress as a means of disrupting core cultural values of the Scots, alongside pacifying them with the "Disarming Act" or removal of weapons to prevent further rebellion against the British. Tartan cloth reemerged as the industrialization of weaving techniques expanded. William Wilson & Sons of Bannockburn manufacturing documented, standardized, and produced tartan designs in Scotland as early as 1765. By 1819 Wilson's Key Pattern Book outlined over 250 tartans. While around 100 had official names, it included patterns collected from all over Scotland reaching back across the centuries.

In the early 1800's the affiliation of tartan patterns, clans, and families was reestablished as a means of preserving Highland culture. In 1815 the Highland Society of London requested that Scottish Clan Chieftains submit samples of their clan tartans for documentation. This process of registration has persisted as the mechanism of formal recognition. What makes a tartan authentic or official is neither its age nor its origin. But rather the recognition and certification of the tartan by the [Scottish Register of Tartans](#). This organization governs the naming, uniqueness, design intention, and any restrictions to the use of the tartan.

An example of this that many Americans are often surprised to discover is that Irish tartans and the wearing of kilts in Ireland is a relatively modern event. While the peoples of Ireland and Scotland share many Celtic cultural similarities across the Gaelic language, food, and lifestyles as a matter of regional proximity, the wearing of tartan kilts did not take hold until after the 1900's. In fact, the Irish County tartans that we recognize today were established in 1996 as a broader reconnection with Irish Celtic heritage during Ireland's political conflicts with England. [Irish tartans](#) are an example of establishing group identity through symbolic connections.

### [All tartans are plaids, but not all plaids can be tartans](#)

The two common plaid variations we see in the U.S. are the [Buffalo-Plaid](#) and the Western plaid. Buffalo-plaid is the distinct red & black checkered pattern and represents Clan MacGregor. [Rob Roy MacGregor](#) wore this tartan in the 1700's as chronicled in the Sir Walter Scott [novel](#). In the early 1800's a supposed relative of the MacGregor's, [Jock McCluskey](#), settled in Montana. He became a famous bison hunter who often exchanged MacGregor blankets for buffalo pelts with the Sioux who prized the tartan for bringing good luck when worn in battle. Neither the Sioux nor other non-Celtic immigrants he traded with properly pronounced the Gaelic word for blanket 'plaide' [play-ed] and instead referred to them as plaid blankets. This became a common term for patterned garments and by 1850 Woolrich Woolen Mill began mass producing buffalo-plaid shirts which are still common to find today.

In the early 1900's manufacturing of woven patterned cloth expanded. The development of the Western cut cowboy shirt emerged as a fusion of post U.S. Civil War styles and frontier necessities. Jack A. Well founder of [Rockmount Ranch Wear](#), is an example of how the basics of what we now know as the Western plaid provided cowboys and rodeo riders with quality work and recreational gear. In our modern context we can find plaid materials or patterns in everyday clothes, designs, and products. The separation between a tartan and a plaid is twofold. First, a tartan is officially recognized by the Scottish Registry of Tartans discussed above. Second, a tartan has a specific meaning that conveys a message regarding group membership. The Freemasons' Fidelity design weaves the allegories of the Craft into the tradition of conveying meaning and is officially recognized by the Scottish Register of Tartans. We welcome and encourage Freemasons across the world to display it as a symbol of our solidarity and connection to our institution.

Worshipful Brother Ian D. Greenwood  
Fidelity Lodge No.19 A.F.&A.M. - March 14th, 2023.  
[Fidelity Tartan](#)