

Getting Into Amateur (Ham) Radio

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What is amateur (ham) radio?

Amateur radio, also known as ham radio, is a hobby enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of Americans and millions around the world. They enjoy communicating with one another via two-way radios and experimenting with antennas and electronic circuits.

All kinds of people are amateur radio operators, also known as "hams." Hams are young, old, men, women, boys, and girls. You never know who you'll run into on the amateur radio bands: young and old, teachers and students, engineers and scientists, doctors and nurses, mechanics and technicians, kings and entertainers. People from all walks are amateur radio operators.

How do you get into amateur radio?

With a little study, most people can obtain a Technician Class license. The Technician Class license is the most popular license for beginners. To get a Technician Class license, you must take a test with 35 multiple-choice questions. The test covers some very basic electronics, regulations, and operating practices.

If you are someone who can learn on your own, you can download my free study guide, *The No-Nonsense Technician Class Study Guide*. There are several versions of this study guide: PDF download (FREE!), Amazon Kindle and B&N Nook e-books (\$7.99), and a print version (\$14.99). Visit my website (www.kb6nu.com/tech-manual) for more information.

Once you have obtained a study guide and started studying, you can take practice tests online to measure your progress. Practice tests are available online at:

- QRZ.Com - <http://www.qrz.com/p/testing.pl>
- AA9PW.Com - <http://aa9pw.com/>

Three times a year, I teach a one-day Tech class in Ann Arbor. To get information about when the next class will take place, e-mail me at the address at the top of the page.

Is amateur radio appropriate for kids?

Amateur radio is a great hobby for kids. Before the advent of computers, amateur radio was the hobby of choice for technically -inclined kids, and even today, there are many kids who have amateur radio licenses.

Being involved in amateur radio is beneficial to kids in many ways. An interest in amateur radio will help them succeed in school and in life. Kids not only learn about electronics and radio, they'll learn geography and enhance their personal communication skills. Amateur radio often kindles an interest in math and science, which can then lead to a career in science or engineering.

Where can I take the test?

Amateur radio examinations are administered by Volunteer Examiners all over the country. To find an exam session near you, go to the ARRL website - <http://www.arrl.org/find-an-amateur-radio-license-exam-session>.

What can you do with a Tech license?

Technician Class licensees have all amateur radio privileges above 30 MHz, including the very popular 2-meter band. They can also operate phone (voice), Morse Code (CW), and digital modes on the 10m band and CW on the 80m, 40m, and 15m bands. The 80m, 40m, 15m, and 10m bands are in the shortwave portion of the radio frequency spectrum, and are the bands most commonly used for long-distance communications.

What about Morse Code?

Passing a Morse Code test is no longer a requirement to get an amateur radio license. Even so, you might want to consider learning it. It's not that difficult, and it's a lot of fun.

There are many computer programs available to help you learn Morse Code. The one I always recommend is G4FON Koch CW Trainer. Not only is it one of the best ways to learn the code, it's FREE! To download this program, go to www.g4fon.net.

Join a Club!

Finally, I would heartily suggest joining a club near you. Joining a club will help you find experienced hams that can help you pass the test and select and use equipment. Joining a club will make ham radio more fun, too!

ARROW (www.w8pgw.org) is the club in Ann Arbor. The Chelsea Amateur Radio Club (www.wd8iel.org) is also a fine club. To find clubs in other areas, go to <http://www.arrl.org/find-a-club>.

About the Author

My name is Dan Romanchik, and my amateur radio callsign is KB6NU. I love teaching amateur radio classes and helping people get started in the hobby. If you have any questions about the material above or ham radio in general, e-mail me at cwgeek@kb6nu.com or phone me at 734-930-6564.