
In addition to being a fun and educational activity, it is also a safe activity. There are no private chatrooms in amateur radio.

How much does it cost?

Basic study materials for passing the FCC test are free! There is, for example, no charge to download a PDF copy of my *No Nonsense Technician Class License Study Guide* from <http://kb6nu.com/study-guides/>. Other resources are available for free on the Internet.

Once they have their first license, most hams find it best to start with simple equipment and grow over time. A handheld VHF FM transceiver can be purchased for as little as \$30 new, and excellent used equipment is often available at low prices. All things considered, the cost to get the first license and radio should be less than \$100. For a relatively low cost, kids will gain a hobby that will benefit them all throughout their lives.

Conclusion

If your son or daughter has expressed an interest in amateur radio, we hope you'll be supportive. You may even want to consider getting a license of your own, so that you can share this experience with your son or daughter. Many parents have done this and made amateur radio a family affair.

For more information

There are many good sources of amateur radio information on the World Wide Web. Here are two:

American Radio Relay League (ARRL) (www.arrl.org/youth). The ARRL is the national association of amateur radio operators in the United States and supports youth in amateur radio.

Ham Radio (dot) World ([hamradio-world](http://hamradio-world.com)) is the website of the Lea family. Mother, father, and all three of the Lea siblings are licensed radio amateurs. This site has some cool videos and blog posts about their adventures in amateur radio.

About the Author

Dan Romanchik, KB6NU, got his first amateur radio license at the age of 16. He is the author of the "No Nonsense" amateur radio license study guides and Assistant Section Manager for Training for the ARRL Michigan Section Training Manager. Over the years, he has helped thousands get their first amateur radio license or upgrade their licenses.

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A Parent's Guide to Amateur Radio

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 using 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. Kids as young as seven years old have gotten amateur radio licenses and many hams are active into their 80s and beyond.

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.

For example, did you know that most of the astronauts sent up to the International Space Station (ISS) in the last five to ten years have been licensed radio amateurs? They use the amateur radio station on board the ISS to communicate with school groups all over the world.

How do you get into amateur radio?

With just a little study, your kids (and you as well!) can learn all they need to know to get a Technician Class license. There are

plenty of resources available today to help, including [The ARRL Ham Radio License Manual](#), the Technician Class license manual published by the American Radio Relay League.

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 basic regulations, operating practices, and electronics theory. Knowing Morse Code is not required to get this license. Technician Class licensees have all amateur radio privileges above 30 MHz, including the very popular 2-meter band.

They can also operate voice and digital modes on the 10m band and Morse Code (CW) on the 80m, 40m, 15m, and 10m bands. These privileges allow them to experience the magic of shortwave radio.

Many amateur radio operators then choose to upgrade to the General Class license. Amateurs with a General Class license are allowed to operate on shortwave frequencies, which are the frequencies normally used for cross-country and worldwide communication. To get a General Class license, you must pass another 35-question multiple-choice examination. This exam covers intermediate regulations, operating practices, and electronics theory, with a focus on shortwave applications.

What do kids get out of amateur radio?

Being involved in amateur radio is beneficial for kids in many ways. They will, for ex-

ample, learn about electronics and radio propagation; expand their knowledge of geography and enhance their personal communication skills. An interest in amateur radio gives them knowledge that will help them succeed in school and in life. It often kindles an interest in math and science, which can then lead to a career in science or engineering.

In addition to technical skills, kids will also learn social skills. It's often said that amateur radio is a "contact sport." In making contacts with other amateur radio operators, your child will make friends with other hams around the country and around the world. This, in turn, will help them learn about other cultures and the world we live in.

Amateur radio also teaches children the value of public service. Part of amateur radio's reason for being is to provide emergency communications and public service communications. By taking part in those activities, your child will learn how satisfying public service can be.