

Making a Good Hobby Better Through Post-Licensing Enrichment

BY TIM BUSCH, NØCKR

Having developed a successful and well-received One-Day Amateur Radio Technician Class, with well over 200 new hams licensed in the past two years, I immediately started receiving requests from the new hams on upgrade classes and “how-to” activities. As a result, I began developing an enrichment program to help our newest hams make their hobby experience even better.

As soon as they become licensed, we encourage all our new hams in the area to check into our Sunday evening “New Ham Net.” On the net, they have an opportunity to learn the phonetic alphabet, establish communication, compare notes with other hams, and ask questions of more experienced operators. The net has been so successful that we’re talking about expanding our one-hour time slot to accommodate more check-ins.

We’ve also had excellent participation at the Get On The Air (GOTA) station during Field Day. GOTA operation is a giant leap toward eliminating mic fright. At our club’s (Cedar Valley Amateur Radio Club) first big Field Day event in 2015 (category 19A), we had 30 new hams stop by the GOTA station.

Beyond these activities, I am putting together a series of mini-classes. Each segment of this new program teaches specific skills related to ham radio. Following is a partial list:

- Programming Radios and Getting on the Air
- Soldering 101
- Multimeter 101
- Build and Use a Roll-Up J-Pole Antenna
- Build and Use a Satellite Antenna
- Foxhunts
- Operating Digital Modes
- Remote Operation
- Software-Defined Radios
- Transitioning from VHF/UHF to HF Operating
- Chasing Awards
- Learn CW
- Contesting
- Build Projects



The kit used in Cedar Valley Amateur Radio Club’s Soldering 101 and Multimeter 101 mini-classes. [Tim Busch, NØCKR photo]

Each class is intended to be no more than two hours at a sitting, so they can be held before a monthly club meeting. The variety of subject matter allows many club members to get involved in leading a topic. Materials kits are prepared in advance, so students walk away with practical items they can use at home.

I’m still in the development stage of several of these sessions, but the overall requirements are not a major undertaking, and they can be delegated among club members.

The best promoters of Amateur Radio are the newest members of the hobby. Keeping them interested and excited will be a nice growth engine for your club. This enrichment program is a great way to encourage more club activity.

I am happy to help others set up classes or answer questions about this program. Drop me an email at NØCKR@ARRL.net for more information.

Tim Busch, NØCKR, is an Amateur Extra class ham and was first licensed in 1974.