

# EARN YOUR AMATEUR RADIO LICENSE – IT'S EASY!

Being an amateur radio operator is a fun and a very rewarding hobby. In the US, you can start with an "Amateur Technician Class" license issued by the FCC. Enjoy clear 2-way FM communication using repeaters, in some cases hundreds of miles away, with just a small handheld radio like the one pictured below. You can even talk to astronauts on the International Space Station. You might decide to jump in with "both feet" first using a larger home-based radio like the bottom image. Join us!

**Find the dates, times, and locations of upcoming license exams in our area.** Plan to take a test that is not less than three to four weeks away. This should provide enough time to prepare for the exam. If you have a disability, be sure to inform the contact person so that s/he may make arrangements to accommodate you for this test. Furthermore, realize that the exam is not given by the FCC or its agents, but rather it administered by VE's or "Volunteer Examiners". The VE's are hams that hold licenses that are at least one grade (up to Extra Class) higher than the test they are administering. VE's are not compensated for their time and do this work for the benefit of the community and hobby. In Livingston County, at the Livingston County Amateur Radio Klub, no testing fee is collected. Ask for a list of items that will be expected of you to furnish on the exam date (suitable forms of ID, etc.)

**Decide if a self-paced learning or a quick class room session is best for you.** Some clubs offer one and two-day licensing. The quick licensing method consists of one or two weekends, spent in class followed immediately by an exam. If this method appeals to you, use the link in the last step (above "Tips") to contact a club near you to see if it offers ham licensing classes

**Obtain the test question pool.** Download from <http://www.ncvec.org/downloads/2006tech.pdf> for free or purchase a softcover copy from your local Radio Shack or bookstore. Make sure the book contains the current "Technician Question Pool" (the current pool as of this writing for Technician exams should be identified for use during the period between July 1, 2006 and June 31, 2015. The question pool has recently been updated.). Print out the pool questions if there isn't always a computer available for use when you have the opportunity to study. If the test

date chosen falls after the current test question pool expires, ask which pool the test will be based upon.

**Prepare for what is expected.** The test itself is highly structured. It consists of 35 questions and is a multiple choice format. The questions come from the pool of 392 questions described above. Each question has four possible answers. Only one answer however, is correct. A passing score requires that 26 of the 35 questions be answered correctly. The question pool (downloaded or purchased in book form) lists each of the 392 questions and all four possible answers for each question, *word for word*. The 'only' difference between the pool questions and an exam's questions are the order of which the answers are presented.

- Study the question pool to prepare for the test. Pool questions described above present the correct answer letter in a "key" at the top of the question. Read the question. Review the answers and select the answer that you feel is correct. Check your selection against the answer provided in the key. Highlight the correct answer (or strike through each of the three incorrect answers). As mentioned above, the actual exam poses the questions and answers "word for word" as the pool questions. The only difference is the order of the answer choices. Do NOT try to learn by associating a question number to an answer letter: "question 46 is answer b, question 211 is answer d" and so on. After highlighting the correct answers, during subsequent reviews, read the question and *only* the highlighted answer. Do not read the incorrect answers. This will assist associating the correct answer with each question.
- Dedicate time each day reading the questions and only the correct answers. Studying twenty to 30 minutes once or twice a day should be sufficient preparation an exam that is 3 or 4 weeks away.
- Take practice examinations online. It's free and an excellent method to determine if you're ready for the test. Some exam sites to check out:  
<http://www.aa9pw.com/radio/> (look for the technician Exam link on the left side),  
<http://www.radioexam.org> (tests you section by section),  
<http://www.eham.net/exams/> and <http://www.qrz.com/testing.html>. The QRZ site exam gives INSTANT feedback as you answer each question. Try them all and use those you like best. When able to score 80% or better CONSISTENTLY, you

are ready. If you can't score 80% or better, either wait until you can, or take the exam as practice anyway. This will let you know what it is like when you are ready. Who knows, you might just pass!

**Take the exam.** Bring the required documents (identification and any certificates if upgrading) and exam fee to the session. As of this writing, everywhere else, the exam fee is \$15. Here in Livingston County, the Amateur Radio Tests are free of charge. If you fail, you can take the test again right away - no need to wait for the next exam session. If you miss it by more than a couple questions - it might be best to study a bit more before retesting.

## Tips

- The American Radio Relay League <http://www.arrl.org> (ARRL) is a large group that promotes ham radio and ham operators' interests in matters with the FCC and other government agencies, etc. The ARRL has a significant amount of low cost and FREE study materials. Much of it can be downloaded to your PC or MAC for review - or even printed for review when a computer isn't handy.
- There are currently three levels of licensing. Each has its own test of increasing complexity and provides progressively more privileges upon successful completion. The entry level is Technician Class, the next is General Class and the top level is Extra Class. All license classes provide voice communication privileges on HF (high frequency) bands without the requirement to learn Morse Code. To get started, the Technician Class license is all you need.
- A club is also an excellent place to start. Find a club and learn about meeting location, dates and times. You can go to nearly any club meeting and be warmly welcomed. Clubs are always looking for new members and may have loaner equipment available to borrow or check out. Most members are eager to help out a new ham, too.
- If you passed the exam for a Technician license, don't leave! Ask to take the General license exam. You can take the exam for the next higher class license (only if you pass the lower class exam) at the same test session. Likewise, passing the General license exam will permit you to take the Extra license exam, too. Some people have walked into an exam session without any amateur license at all and left the session as an Extra class!

## Warnings

- Ham radio is family friendly. Foul language, etc. very rarely happens, unlike Citizens Band (CB) radio.
- As mentioned above, ham radio is NOT CB. If you're a CBer, we'd love to count you among our ranks - but please, leave the CB lingo and mannerisms on 27Mhz. Most hams distance themselves from CB due to the reputation it has, and do not want it associated with ham radio. Use of CB lingo, etc. in ham bands will most assuredly leave you talking only to yourself. Like they say, "When in Rome, do as the Romans"
- The FCC and OO's (Official Observers) actively patrol and enforce the rules in ham radio. OO's are hams that act in an official capacity and will notify you of infractions committed via postcard. It's a "heads up" for you - no fines or anything like that - it's purely informational. An FCC letter however, can be very expensive.

## SPECIAL PROGRAM FOR LIVINGSTON COUNTY RESIDENTS

### If you are 21 years old or YOUNGER:

- **Take your Technician Exam at The Livingston Amateur Radio Klub!**
- **After you Successfully Pass your exam, you will receive a Free Dual Band UHF/VHF Radio, and A ONE Year Membership to the group!**
- **This offer is FOR LIVINGSTON COUNTY RESIDENTS ONLY, AND ONLY UNTIL DECEMBER 15, 2016.**
- **Contact Les ([W8MSP@ARRL.NET](mailto:W8MSP@ARRL.NET)) or Jim ([K8JK@ARRL.NET](mailto:K8JK@ARRL.NET)) for more details!**