

How to get licensed for amateur radio!

You've made the decision to become a licensed amateur (ham) radio operator, but what do you do next?

First, congratulations on making such a **great** decision! The hobby of ham radio can be used for many things, including chatting with other hams, contesting, and even helping with emergency communications. This is especially important when you consider the recent hurricanes in Houston, Florida, and Puerto Rico and the raging wildfires in California!

Next, if you don't have a license at all, you will want to study for your Technician Class license. This is the beginner's class license. A number of companies put out physical books or flashcards to study from or you can do all of your studying online for free at places such as hamstudy.org. Feel free to do a search online, as there are plenty of free sites on which you can study for the test. Another option, if you don't want to study or learn alone, is to find an amateur radio class in your area you can attend. There is often a fee for the class/testing.

After you have studied and you feel prepared, you can reach out to the local Amateur Radio club in your area. Many offer testing, as long as they are given enough notice to line up VEs.

HOLD IT! What is a VE?

A VE is a Volunteer Examiner. These are the people who administer the tests. They have gone through training to deliver the tests and hold separate certification which allows them this honor. They are often licensed through organizations like the ARRL (Amateur Radio Relay League) and are qualified to give you your test.

Once you pass your test (which you find out the day you take it), the FCC will then list you in its database and you are officially a ham! You will be issued a callsign, which is uniquely yours. Vanity calls are also available if you don't like your call and you want something different, or you want a call which means something to you, such as your initials, name, etc. Examples: N0EL, KF0SAM, K0OL.

Finally, you are able to communicate on amateur radio frequencies open to your license class. Don't worry, there's a handy chart available online or for purchase through most places which have the books (they are also IN the books). You can take part in contests or even work with your local ARES!

Of course, if you already have a license and you wish to upgrade, the steps are very similar. We look forward to talking to new and upgraded amateurs!