



HOW TO BECOME A HAM

It might be easier
than you think!



By Val Campbell K7HCP

(Revised November 2023)

SO, LET'S GET STARTED

Amateur Radio Operators, sometimes called Hams, are licensed by the US Government, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The FCC has authorized Amateur Radio Volunteer Examiner Coordinator (VEC) organizations to coordinate Volunteer Examiner (VE) test sessions held in our local communities and conducted by volunteer examiners, your fellow Hams, local to your neighborhood. All that is required is to pass a written exam of a few dozen multiple choice test questions with a score of 74% or greater. No Morse Code required. Then, typically within a week of passing your VE session test element and after paying a small registration fee the FCC will issue you your new Ham Radio call sign. Once licensed your license is good for 10 years. At that time, for a small renewal fee, you can renew your license for another 10 years. That is all there is to do to become a HAM. So let the fun begin.

TEST QUESTION POOL

Each of the license class test elements are comprised of a pool of questions, each with four multiple-choice answers. Typically, two of the answers are distracters and two are reasonable answers. However, only one of the two reasonable answers is the correct answer.

The question pool contains at least 10 times as many questions as the actual test that you will be given. For example, element 2, the Tech Class test, consists of 35 questions randomly selected from a pool of about 400 questions. Element 3 (General Class) test consists of 35 test questions from a pool of about 500 questions and element 4 (Extra Class) test consists of 50 questions from a pool of over 600 questions.

Once every 4 years, one of the license classes (elements) test pool of questions/answers is updated. The following year another license class (element) test pool will be updated. On the fourth year none of the test pools are updated. Therefore, every four years each of the 3 question pools comes up for review and update. Then the results are re-published (see available/recommended publications below). So be sure to get the most current publication available for any of the test elements because the content changes somewhat every four

years as the question pool/answers are updated over time to keep up with changes to rules and regulations and technology advances.

STUDY CLASSES

Currently the Ogden Amateur Radio Club (OARC) strives to conduct several license study classes each year, at least one in the spring and one in the fall. At least one of those study groups each year is for Want-To-Be Hams, with focus on the entry level license, the Technician Class license. Other licensing study session classes may focus on General Class or Extra Class license up-grades as well as also supporting the entry level Technician Class license. The location of OARC license study groups/classes varies from class to class. Some of the classes are conducted virtually over Zoom. For up-to-date study class information and details visit our club website at <http://OgdenArc.org>, Licensing Classes & VE Testing tab.

The licensing class sessions are free of charge however you may choose to purchase a lesson manual. See publication options discussed below.

TEST SESSIONS

The Ogden Amateur Radio Club (OARC) facilitates 3 or more VE test sessions in Weber County each year. Three of the test sessions are pre-scheduled on the 1st Wednesday of February, June and October each year usually at the **Utah Military Academy - 5120 S 1050 W Riverdale** at 6:00 PM. There is a \$14 administration fee to take the exam. Be sure to pre-register for the VE test session via the link posted on the OARC website VE Test page.

Additional VE test sessions may also be scheduled to support some special events such as a local Hamfest or Swap Meet that may take place in any given year. A VE test session may also be scheduled to follow the conclusion of some of the larger OARC sponsored Amateur Radio licensing study classes that may occur at various times throughout the year. For up-to-date test session information and details visit our club website at <http://OgdenArc.org>, Licensing Classes & VE Testing tab.

BUT WHY WAIT?

You may not want or need to wait for the next licensing class for you to get started. Several different publishers provide books to assist you with your self-directed studies, regardless of license class desired. For example, the ARRL (<http://ARRL.org>) bookstore has ARRL publications, manuals for TECHNICIAN (element 2), GENERAL (element 3) and EXTRA (element 4) class licenses. Other recommended publishers include the following:

- ✓ Stu Turner Ham Radio School >>> [Tech Study Guide \(Stu Turner\)](#)
- ✓ Gordon West (WB6NOA) publisher >>> <http://GordonWestRadioSchool.com>
- ✓ W5YI publisher >>> <http://W5YI.org>
- ✓ KB6NU publisher >>> www.KB6NU.com/study-guides

Additionally, you may want to look for any of these publications on <http://Amazon.com> or at Barnes and Noble book stores. Additionally, the Davis County Amateur Radio Club (DCarc) and the Utah Amateur Radio Club (Uarc) bookstores may also have these manuals available for purchase.

WHICH IS BEST?

Which of the publisher's manuals are the best, you ask. Well, it is a matter of preference. The **ARRL** publications tend to provide in-depth documentation and technical information surrounding each study question along with the four multiple-choice answers. If you want to learn, really learn the material and end up with a complete understanding of the material presented, then this is the preferred method of study.

On the other hand, Gordon West and W5YI tend to get right down to business presenting the study test questions with the four multiple-choice answers, just as they appear in the actual VE Test and then indicates which of the four answers is the correct answer to each question and why.

The study guide that some ham radio licensing classes have used for a one day cram class is the Tech Study Guide by KB6NU >>> www.KB6NU.com/study-guides

The study guide currently being used by the OARC licensing class is the "Ham Radio School" Tech Study Guide (Stu Turner)

ON LINE STUDY TUTORIALS

Another method to quickly learn the test material is to go online. At <http://QRZ.com> you will find a very good online practice study test that will take you through the entire question pool for whichever test element (class) license you desire. The practice test will automatically score your test and guide you through the areas where you need improvement. The online test URL is: <http://www.qrz.com/hamtest>

Two other quality online practice tests are located at <http://AA9PW.com> and <http://hamtestonline.com> . At the OARC club website <http://OgdenARC.org>, click on the "VE Testing and Licensing Classes" icon for additional information and quick links to all of the recommended sites.

ON LINE STUDY VIDEOS

ARRL's YouTube Channel provides a guide self-study based on ARRL's Ham Radio License Manual curriculum. The Technician License Training Course has recently been added to this channel. <http://www.arrl.org/news/technician-license-training-course-added-to-arrl-s-youtube-channel>

Andy Vallenga, KE4GKP, "The Ham Whisperer" offers a [video course](#) based on the FCC question pool sequence to assist with Technician license preparation.

Additionally, do a search at [ARRL.org](#) for "technician class license training videos".

Also consider doing the same search at [YouTube.com](#) .

COME OUT AND JOIN THE FUN

Every 3rd Saturday OARC members, visitors and guests meet to share their mutual interest in this exciting hobby called Ham Radio.

Regardless of your specific interests in the hobby, be it worldwide communications on the shortwave bands or local communications via handheld transceivers and/or mountain top repeaters, this hobby has something to offer you. Some are interested in participating in the hobby to support emergency communications preparedness for civic, church or public service organizations. ARES and RACES are two national organizations that promote this kind of activity and some cities and municipalities support a CERT program.

Others simply enjoy sharing the technical challenge that the hobby has to offer and the life long friendships that we establish participating in the endless list of exciting activities that Amateur Radio offers.

Mark the 3rd Saturday on your calendar and come visit us at the next Ogden Amateur Radio Club (OARC) meeting. Visitors are always welcome.

www.OgdenARC.org

73, Val Campbell K7HCP



08