

# How to Get Started in Amateur Radio

By Oliver K6OLI (Updated September 2019)

Go to the ARRL website and search for test sessions in your area:

<http://www.arrl.org/find-an-amateur-radio-license-exam-session>

Depending on what your learning preferences are, you can either choose self study (Options 1-3) or take an in-person class (Option 4).

## Option 1 (free)

Give yourself about 10 days before the test and devote 1-2 hours a day to studying.

- Download Dan KB6NU Romanchik's ***The No-Nonsense Technician-Class License Study Guide*** (free) from [www.kb6nu.com/study-guides/](http://www.kb6nu.com/study-guides/) and read it!
- Practice with flash cards on <https://hamstudy.org/> (free) until you have seen all questions and then take practice tests. If you score higher than 85% on a regular basis you are ready to take the test.

## Option 2 (ca. \$30)

- Read "**The ARRL Ham Radio License Manual**" on your own for a few hours a day for a few weeks. The manual is available from the [ARRL directly](http://www.arrl.org/ham-radio-license-manual) or from [Amazon](http://www.amazon.com), for example.
- Take the practice tests at <http://www.qrz.com/hamtest/> or <https://hamstudy.org/> If you score higher than 85% on a regular basis you are ready to take the test.

## Option 3 (ca. \$25)

- Take an online class. For example, HamTestOnline has worked well for quite a few hams: <http://www.hamradiolicenseexam.com/index.html>

## Option 4

In Southern California there are some excellent choices for taking classes:

- The Goodkin 1-Day Ham Radio Class is very popular, it costs \$75 (as of 09/2019). Information available here: <http://hamclass.goodkin.net/>
- Gordon West has his own self-study line, but he also has registered instructors. Information here: [http://www.gordonwestradioschool.com/main/page\\_ham\\_classes.html](http://www.gordonwestradioschool.com/main/page_ham_classes.html)
- Contact your local radio club (see below), many offer classes with exams following the class.

# Take the test

So you studied hard, your practice tests are going well, you are ready to take the test. Here is some advice to make test day go smoothly:

- Get your FRN at least 2-3 days before your test, print it out or write it down and bring it on test day. An FRN is a unique identification number the FCC uses to keep track of your licenses. You can take the test without an FRN, however, then you have to provide your Social Security Number on your test forms and the FCC will then issue you an FRN with your license anyway. If you have a GMRS license you already have an FRN, use that one. Apply for your FRN here: <https://apps.fcc.gov/coresWeb/publicHome.do>
- On test day bring \$15, I.D., two pencils, an eraser and a calculator. And your FRN if you have it. You may take one, two or all three level exams on the same day for one \$15 fee. However, if you fail any element and you decide to take it again another \$15 will be assessed because it counts as a new test session. More details here: <http://www.arrl.org/what-to-bring-to-an-exam-session>
- Take the test, ace it and thank the nice people who administer it because they are volunteering their time!

# After the test

After you passed the test you must wait until your license appears in the FCC database before you can transmit. Buy yourself a radio you like and read the manual, even set up stations and listen, but do not transmit until the FCC has issued you a license!

We strongly suggest that you join an amateur radio group or club. You will find in most cases, amateur radio operators are lovable people who are willing to help each other out, learn from one another and answer any questions you might have.

A couple of suggestions to get you started

- **ARES** - the Amateur Radio Emergency Service is a great place to start. ARES LAX Northeast meets every second and fourth Saturday of the month at Huntington Hospital. Check it out at <http://www.arrlax.org>
- Find a **local radio club** and check out some of their events: <http://www.arrlax.org/index.php?page=clubs>
- Tune into some **repeater networks** and listen. The Winsystem is great to listen and learn: <http://www.winsystem.org>

Feel free to reach out to us at ARES LAX with any questions!

73 de Oliver K6OLI

District Emergency Coordinator

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