

# Amateur ("Ham Radio") Exams and Licensing

## Technician, General, and Amateur Extra Classes

The amateur and amateur-satellite services are for qualified persons of any age who are interested in radio technique solely with a personal aim and without pecuniary interest. These services present an opportunity for self-training, intercommunication, and technical investigations. Twenty-seven small frequency bands throughout the spectrum are allocated to this service internationally. Some 1,300 digital, analog, pulse, and spread-spectrum emission types may be transmitted.

Millions of amateur operators in all areas of the world communicate with each other directly or through ad hoc relay systems and amateur-satellites. They exchange messages by voice, telephoning, telegraphy, facsimile, and television. In areas where the FCC regulates the services, an amateur operator must have an FCC or Canadian license. FCC-issued Reciprocal Permit for Alien Amateur Licensee are no longer needed. Reciprocal operation in the U.S. is now authorized by Section 47 C.F.R. 97.107.

All frequencies are shared. No frequency is assigned for the exclusive use of any amateur station. Station control operators cooperate in selecting transmitting channels to make the most effective use of the frequencies. They design,

construct, modify, and repair their stations. The FCC equipment authorization program does not generally apply to amateur station transmitters.

### **Classes of License?**

The FCC issues three license classes, each authorizing varying levels of privileges. The class for which each licensee is qualified is determined by the degree of skill and knowledge in operating a station that the licensee demonstrates during an examination to volunteer examiners (VE,s) in his or her community. Operator class license classes are:

The current classes are: Technician, General, and Extra (also known as "Amateur Extra").

- **Technician Class:** The privileges of a Technician Class operator license include operating an amateur station that may transmit on channels in any of 17 frequency bands above 50 MHz with up to 1,500 watts of power. To pass the Technician Class examination, at least 26 questions from a 35 question written examination must be answered correctly. Technician Class licensees also have privileges in four amateur service bands in the HF range (3-30 MHz) (Refer to Section 97.301(e)).

- **General Class:** The General Class operator license authorizes privileges in all 27 amateur service bands. Upon accreditation by a Volunteer-Examiner Coordinator (VEC), an individual can help administer certain examinations. In addition to the above written examination, the requirement for a General Class operator license includes a 35 question written examination for which 26 correctly answered questions is the

minimum passing score.

- **Amateur Extra:** The privileges of an Amateur Extra Class operator license include additional spectrum in the HF bands. In addition to the two above written examinations, the requirement for an Amateur Extra Class operator license includes answering correctly at least 37 questions on a 50 question written examination.

Additionally there are a few grandfathered (still valid, but not offered to new licensees) classes.

### **Obtaining a License**

Operation of an amateur station requires an amateur operator license grant from the FCC. Before receiving a license grant, you must pass an examination administered by a team of volunteer examiners (VEs). The VEs determine the license operator class for which you are qualified through the testing of your skills and abilities in operating an amateur station. You can contact a VE team in your community to make arrangements for being administered the examination elements you desire. If you need assistance in finding a VE team in your area, contact a Volunteer Examiner Coordinator (VEC).

After you successfully complete the exam, the VEC collects your [Form 605](#) document from your VE team and, after carefully screening it, forwards the information thereon to the FCC for processing, usually electronically. The VEC may also handle registering an examinee with the FCC. Your operating authority begins when your license grant information appears on the amateur service licensee database of the Universal Licensing System.

## **Amateur Morse Code Requirement?**

International treaty requirements for Morse Code exams for Amateur Radio licenses using frequencies below 30MHz were have been nullified. Countries including the US have been reviewing and revising their regulations and are now free to remove all Morse Code requirements. "No-code" licenses which did not require any Morse Code examinations were available only for the Technician Class license from 1991 to 2007, and limited those licensees only to operation above 30MHz. That was most of what modern Hams wanted... use of handheld and mobile radios, Amateur Radio satellites, packet radio and most modern/digital modes.

As of February 23, 2007, Morse Code examinations are no longer required by the FCC. All three license classes, Technician, General and Extra, can be attained by written exams alone and have their HF privileges. *The frequencies available to each class of license have not changed.* In short - **YOU DO NOT NEED TO KNOW MORSE CODE FOR ANY HAM RADIO LICENSE.**

## **Where Can I take the tests?**

VEC,s coordinate the efforts of Volunteer Examiners (VE s) in preparing and administering amateur service operator license examinations. The coordinating VEC screens collected information, resolves all discrepancies, and forwards all required data to the FCC electronically. All VEC s are authorized to coordinate examination sessions at any location an examination can be administered. A VEC, however, may choose to limit its area of operation to a particular geographical area.

An FCC-accredited Volunteer Examiner Coordinator (VEC) organization will hold the local exams, which you will take to get your license. These exams occur in most metropolitan areas and many rural locations across the US. They are only held at pre-announced times and locations. To find the nearest VEC, please visit [the FCC list of VEC organizations](#). The fees for the exams payable to the VEC,s are usually modest - as of 2012 they are \$15 per exam.

Helpful links:

<http://www.arrl.org/arrlvec/examsearch.phtml>

<http://fccexam.com/>

<http://www.qrz.com/testing.html>

<http://www.eham.net/exams/>

“ New Amateurs “

Call: 1-800-32-New-Ham (1-800-326-3942)

E-mail : [newham@arrl.org](mailto:newham@arrl.org)

On the web: [www.arrl.org](http://www.arrl.org)

ARRL HQ- 1-860-594-0200