

How do I?

An occasional series

This week: Study for the technician test? c

OK. So you finally decided you really want to join 800,000 or so other Americans and become a licensed amateur radio operator. You can do it !

But how do you start?

In the US License testing is performed by Volunteer Exam Coordinators (VEC's). Each VEC has local test teams. Many clubs provide testing and nearly all hamfests have VEC testing on site or nearby. The Laurel VEC exams are always free. The ARRL VEC charges \$15.00 per exam. The W5YI-VEC charges \$14.00 per exam. There are other VEC's but these are the three most commonly encountered. The local teams will advertise sessions in advance. The ARRL website, arrl.org, your local club's web site and/or Facebook page, and Google will all lead you to a session near you. Some teams allow walk ins the day of the exam. Some require registration, INCLUDING getting a FRN number from the FCC, in advance. Once you found a test site and registered if necessary, you are all set. Good luck!

But we put the cart way before the horse. Like a city mile away! How do you actually prepare to be a test ready candidate?

Buy a study guide. Sure there are lots of on line sources, but the classic (make sure you get the current version) guides from ARRL or Gordon West are a good foundation. Some clubs offer exam prep classes. Even if you take one, start by reading the book. Flash cards are available and may help. I like to go online to eham.net and take a free practice exam before I read the book. I might only score 10 or 15%, but that gives me an idea of how far I have to go. Once I have read the book, I take the test again. Once I am routinely passing it, I think I am ready to go to a test site and take the real thing. Once you have taken the test, keep the manual! When I went to study for my General class license, I reread the Technician manual. when I went for my Extra class license, I reread both the Technician and General class manuals. The licenses build on each other and information may not be repeated from one to the next, but the material will presume you remember it.

John Bee N1GNV, the proprietor of Quicksilver radio www.qsradio.com, has a great

approach to testing. He is a much better writer than I am, so please visit the PASS YOUR TEST tab on the Quicksilver radio website for his thoughts. To sum it up: just like the physician who graduates last in their class is still called “Doctor”, as long as you pass the test and receive a CSCE, you will be licensed. Most exam teams do not tell candidates how they did, other than pass or fail, although some will congratulate you for a perfect score. The FCC will not see your score. It will not be posted on line. It’s only a hobby, so I not going to stress over being perfect. And yes, I have been to three exam sessions and passed all three exams on the first try. How did I do? No clue, other than when I passed my Extra exam John Creel WB3GXW said “Congratulations! You will never need to take another radio exam!

Thousands of 11 and 12 year olds pass the Technician test every year. So you will have no trouble at all!

You don’t need to be an engineer. It may seem like it helps, but my friends in the hobby have anywhere from engineering degrees to history degrees to none at all.

Good luck!