

Morse code Class

Sponsor: Northwest Amateur Radio Society (NARS)

Who Is This Class For? This is a continuous class where students can “jump in” at any time. It covers persons learning from scratch to those of us who learned the code many years ago, but need to refresh their code memory and get back on the air. The class is open to everyone.

Goal: The goal is to get on the air at a speed of 20 words per minute (WPM). Learning at a slower or faster speed will extend the time to learn. Also, starting at this speed will give you a good base to work almost any CW operator, and you will naturally gain speed while on the air. You can also work at a lower speed if you prefer to work a slower operator, and the time to learn a slower rate will be easy.

Parts to Learn: There are three important parts to learning to operate using code:

- Learn the code;

- Learn to send using your favorite key.

- Learn to recognize call signs and the typical QSO format;

Learn Code: Code will be learned at a speed of 20 words per minute (WPM). However, those new to code will average less than 5 WPM at first, and eventually be able to copy 20. This is possible because the character speed is at 20 WPM, but the text WPM is set by the student’s ability to recognize the character and press the corresponding character on the keyboard. This is known as the Farnsworth method, where the character and word speeds are different. You are controlling the WPM by taking the time to learn the character and enter it on the keyboard. You must work toward hearing the character and pressing the proper key immediately. That is the point where you have learned the code at a speed of 20 WPM.

Each class will include code practice, call sign practice and sending practice.

Code practice for all students starts at 20 WPM character speed, with a minimum of four characters to learn. We use a combination of Farnsworth and Koch methods in this class. You will make a run at 1 character at a time for a specific period of time (1 or 2 minutes). This gives a base to measure the next step. Next you will make a run at 2 characters at a time (Koch Method). This will be difficult at first, because it forces a speed of 20 WPM for the 2 characters, which invokes your brain’s ability to “buffer”. There will be two more runs at 3 and 4 characters at a time. Performance is expected to fall off as you learn to “buffer” more characters, forcing you to a higher WPM. Your performance will be tracked during the class so you can measure improvement. Once you achieve satisfactory performance at 4 character groups, it is time to add four more characters to learn.

Send Code: Each student will practice sending via their chosen key. You will send to the entire class from a script with common CW abbreviations. Bring a keyer if you have one. There are a

few that may be loaned during the class. If you find sending with a key too difficult, you can use a keyboard. Our program, CW Teacher (see below), includes this capability.

Learn Call Signs: The last part of each class will be sending call signs. CW Teacher includes this capability, or you can use your key. CW Teacher can also send a short QSO exchange, typical of messages heard during ARRL Field Day.

How Long Will It Take? The learning curve of each student will depend on private practice at home. If you practice only during class, it may take a year or so to achieve the 20 WPM goal. However, if you practice thirty minutes per day, it is likely you will “graduate” within 4 to 8 weeks.

Program

We will use CW Teacher, written by Scott Davis N3FJP. Use the link below to download the free program to your laptop. Bring your laptop, key and keyer to each class.

CW Teacher Download link:

<http://www.n3fjp.com/cwteacher.html>

When you run the program for the first time, read the help screen.

When you click OK, the Settings menu is automatically selected.

Change Sound Options to MIDI, and click the Test button.

Change Sound Options back to Wave, and click Test again.

Finally, change the text in the F9 text box to your call sign, and click Test again.

You should now hear your call sign at 18 WPM. Change the speed to 20 and click Test again.

Close the Settings screen and select your practice parameters.

Classes

There are two classes each week:

Saturday at 0830-1000

Tuesday at 1800-1900

Location of classes is Charles R Hooks Education Center, 7111 Five Forks, Spring, Texas 77379.

Thanks to Toivo Sari, Cypress Creek Information Technology Manager, for providing the education center for our use.

tnx es 73 de NM5G

keith1@dutson.net

281-516-1466

713-553-1847 (cell)