



## What is Ham Radio?

Amateur Radio (ham radio) is a popular hobby and service that brings people and radio communications together. Hams use their radios to talk across town, around the world, and even into space, all without the Internet or cell phones. It's fun, social, educational, and can be a critical lifeline during times of need.

Although Amateur Radio operators get involved for many reasons, they all have in common a basic knowledge of radio technology and effective communications principles, and are required to pass an examination to obtain their license to operate on what is known as the "Amateur Bands." These bands are radio frequencies allocated by the Federal Communications Commission for use by ham radio operators in the United States.

Hams come from all walks of life – they're doctors, students, kids, politicians, truck drivers, movie stars, missionaries and even your neighbor next door. They are of all ages, sexes, income levels and nationalities. Whether using their voice, sending Morse Code with a telegraph key, or transmitting computerized messages through amateur radio satellites, all hams use radio to reach out to the world.

## What's the Appeal of Ham Radio?

You can communicate from the top of a mountain, your home or from your car without relying on the Internet or a cell phone network – you can take your radio and use it at no cost wherever you go! In times of disaster, when regular communications channels fail, hams can swing into action assisting emergency communications efforts and working to support public service agencies. For instance, the Amateur Radio Service kept New York City agencies in touch with each other after their command center was destroyed during the 9/11 tragedy. Ham radio more recently came to the rescue in the aftermath of Hurricanes Maria in Puerto Rico in 2017 and Florence in the Carolinas in 2018.

You can communicate with other hams using voice, Morse code and even television signals. Although Morse code is no longer required to get a ham license it remains an incredibly popular mode. Hams also use computer data modes by connecting a radio with their computer or tablet to send text, data and images. You can talk with other amateurs through ham designed and built satellites in space, ham

astronauts on the International Space Station, or even bounce your radio signals off the moon and back to Earth!

Many hams like to learn about, build and experiment with electronics to construct their own radios, antennas and accessories. Others enjoy working "DX" (long distance) talking to hams around the world or simply around their community, state and country. But mostly we use ham radio to form friendships over the air locally and around the world, and through participation in one of more than 2000 Amateur Radio clubs throughout the country. Today there are over 750,000 radio amateurs in the United States and more than 2.6 million hams worldwide.

## **The Williamsburg Area Amateur Radio Club (WAARC)**

Our club is a vibrant group with a membership across the City of Williamsburg, James City County and their surrounding communities.

Club activities span the spectrum of amateur radio interests, including annual portable radio station operations that commemorate Jamestown Island, Colonial Williamsburg, and the Yorktown Battlefield. We also participate in the American Radio Relay League (ARRL) "Field Day" emergency preparedness exercise annually in June. The club hosts the Colonial Capital Chapter of the Potomac Valley Radio Club, a group dedicated to periodic contest activities where hams attempt to contact as many other hams as they can. The club's Builders Group sees technically minded hams gathering for project development and building, radio restoration and other equipment repair. Additionally, many club members gather together on Saturday mornings at local restaurants for breakfast and fellowship. Weekends often find club members helping each other, for example with home and vehicle radio and antenna installations or assisting fellow hams in configuring their computer and radio to use the latest digital communications software. Our club also hosts an annual summer picnic and winter dinner event.

With an inexpensive handheld or scanner radio you're welcome to listen to club members and hams visiting the area talk to one another on the local radio repeaters. You can see a list of those repeater frequencies at [www.k4rc.net/repeaters](http://www.k4rc.net/repeaters).

The club conducts basic licensing and license upgrade classes during the year but getting a license is something that you can do by self-study. You can begin today on the road to obtaining your own ham license by visiting the ARRL's starting point for those wanting to become hams at [www.arrl.org/what-is-ham-radio](http://www.arrl.org/what-is-ham-radio).

For more info about the club and to see the latest news about our activities please visit our club's web page at [www.k4rc.net](http://www.k4rc.net).

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