

About Amateur (“Ham”) Radio Examinations, and a few Study Tips

In a one day class, we use a “ham cram” class approach of reviewing each question and strive to help you make sense out of all the data in the questions. Our goal is to help you pass the exam so you can get your license and get out there, using radios and gaining experience, knowledge and skill.

There are three exams (and license grades) in Amateur Radio. The first (entry level) is Technician. You can then go on to increase your on-air privileges by upgrading from Tech to General and General to Extra Class. Here’s a little info about how the Tech and General exams work:

- Each Technician (and General) Exam has 35 questions taken from a fixed question pool of about 400 possible questions.
- The questions are grouped into Elements and Sub-Elements, and an exam is created by randomly choosing one question from each of the 35 Sub-Elements.
- You must answer 26 of the 35 correctly for a passing score (74%).
- All questions are multiple-choice (A, B, C, or D).
- The questions on the test must be taken from the official Question Pool that can be found at <http://ncvec.org/>
- The question wording may not be altered in preparing an exam, except for rearranging the answers between A), B), C), and D) presented in the Question Pool.

In class, we review each question in turn, explaining the topics as they come up. We also provide “test taking tips” (e.g. memory aids and jokes) that have helped many pass the exam.

We **strongly** recommend that you become familiar with the material. We include a file with each question and all answers in the pool, and indicating the correct answer (the letter in ()’s after the question number). When reading the pool puts you to sleep, there are alternatives.

To help you study, you can use one or more of the many excellent resources on the web for drilling the question pool (think flash cards) and for taking practice tests. First study/drill the questions until you have some familiarity with them and then start taking practice tests (to help build your confidence in the testing process). A resource that has a drill mode will allow you to select a Sub-Element of questions and present each one until you answer it correctly (with help and explanations along the way). In practice test mode, you’ll be presented with 35 randomly selected questions and scored on your ability to answer them correctly.

While there are many resource online and/or as apps, we suggest hamstudy.org (which also produces our exam tools). Also worth consideration are hamtestonline.com, aa9pw.com, HRCC, Ham Academy from <http://www.ah0a.org>, qrz.com, and many other fine resources. Each has it’s advantages (and disadvantages) and some have a nominal subscription fee.

Please note: the Question Pool changes every four years - to be clear, in 2026 (01-Jul-2026) Make sure the tools and sites you use say that they’re using the “2026-2030 Tech Pool”!

Two more points:

1. In class we discuss the questions and strive to make information from all the details. You’re welcome to attend a class even if you’ve already passed the exam and have your callsign. We’ve also had people licensed for years “sit in” to reacquaint themselves with the material.
2. Attending a class is not required to take an exam. If your independent study has given you the confidence that you can pass the test, there are many online and in-person sessions. See hamstudy.org to “find a session” matching your needs and for information on how to sign up for a regular examination session.

If you have any questions, contact the instructor and/or the person managing the roster for your class. Good Luck!