

*The content which follows is a transcript of the Practical Amateur Radio Podcast hosted by Jerry Taylor, KD0BIK. This monthly version of PARP is typically released the last week of each month.*

The Practical Amateur Radio Podcast – Episode number 43.

From the ham shack of KD0BIK, located in Colorful Colorado, this is the Practical Amateur Radio Podcast.

This is show number 43, volume number 4 with a release date of March 30, 2011.

Hello everyone. My name is Jerry Taylor; my amateur radio call sign is KD0BIK and welcome to the Practical Amateur Radio Podcast...Creating Elmers One Podcast at a time. Amateur radio or ham radio is what this podcast is all about. If you are currently studying for your exam or have been in ham radio for years....I'm hopeful this podcast will help you. If it has helped you, I hope you will continue to listen and I also hope you'll tell others. Also, in keeping with our Creating Elmers one podcast at a time philosophy, if you learn something from our podcasts....please share that knowledge with others.

Welcome back to another episode of The Practical Amateur Radio Podcast. The Practical Amateur Radio Podcast is still very much a member of The Tech Podcast Network. If it's about Tech, you'll find it over on the Tech Podcast Network. The URL is TechPodcasts.com, again TechPodcasts (with an S) .com.

I'm so glad you've returned and I'm also so glad to be back in the saddle of producing this podcast for all to enjoy and hopefully learn something from. I wanted to thank everyone who sent their feedback after episode 42. Again I apologize as there wasn't a lot of educational content to share, but I did feel I wanted to come clean (if you will) on some of the struggles I experienced and how I felt about a few things related to the hobby. I'm glad that I did. The feedback started pouring in almost immediately and many of you have over your amateur radio experience felt many of the same feelings and experienced many of the same issues I described.

I'm not going to read any of this feedback....but I'm thankful in a way that what I experienced over the past 8 months or so, I haven't experienced it alone.....and of course, disappointed in another aspect because others HAVE experienced those things. In much of the feedback comments I received, the general theme of the overall lessons learned goes back to element 5 of the amateurs code. You know the part that reads - Balanced - Radio is a hobby, never interfering with duties owed to family, job, school or community.

Now....speaking of feedback. I did receive an email un-related to episode 42 from an individual who is interested in getting his technician class ham radio license. His email is most timely and I believe contains many questions which I've never really discussed before or at least haven't discussed with a lot of detail. Plus the gentlemen even suggests reading his email on the podcast so others can also hear and learn from the answers. I like that suggestion and essentially lets get started with episode 43 and this email.

I'm going to first read the email in its entirety and then double back to discuss the very good questions and of course my answers in detail.

Dear Jerry,

My name is Spencer and I found your podcast and have been listening to your past episodes over the past several weeks. I'm so glad you have returned to podcasting as I find your episodes and the content you share to be easy to understand. I listen to your show during my commute to work, then throughout the day as I have time. Thank you for what you do.

I've been interested in getting my ham radio license now for a year or two. This year I decided to make it my 2011 New Years Resolution to have my amateur radio license. I'm really not sure what all it involves and would like to ask you a few questions if you don't mind.

By the way, I've taken the time to research where to take my test and those particulars...but I'm unclear as to the best method for going about studying. I found some online practice exam websites. Should I just take those exams until I'm passing and then go take the exam?

Second...in some of the research I've done and some of the ham radio related forums I've read....I see where the HAM in ham radio is often typed out in all caps and in some instances in all caps but with periods between the letters. Can you tell me what is the correct method of writing the word HAM as in ham radio?

Please forgive me for asking my next question. But I've read on some of the forums and such that ham radio is dead or dying out. Is this true?

Finally, what exactly do hams talk about on the air? Is it only about ham radio and electronics? While I'm interested in both, I have a variety of hobbies and interests and just want to make sure if I bring a topic up on the air which is not specifically related to ham radio and electronics that I won't have my licenses taken away from me or get a knock on the door from the Men in Black.

I realize my questions may sound fairly simplistic, but I haven't really found the answers in my research and wanted to get a better understanding before I pursued the hobby any further. Thank you again for your podcast. I do plan to download your Become A Ham episodes as that appears to be geared towards the technician exam.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Spencer

P.S. If you feel others could benefit from hearing my questions and your answers, please read my email on your podcast.

OK...that was Spencer's email. Of course, I've already replied to his email and answered his questions and also informed him I planned to turn his email into the educational content for this episode.

Spencer's email is quite thought provoking and to be honest I do believe it will make great subject material for this episode. Please allow me to read you my response.

Spencer,

Thank you for your email and thank you for listening to the practical amateur radio podcast. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding to your email. My web host experienced some issues which caused them to shut down email services for about 48 hours. My kd0bik @ arrl.net email address does redirect to my email account provided by my web host. All has been cleared up and email service is once again working fine.

I'm glad to be back in the routine of podcasting. I enjoy sharing information and knowledge about the hobby and service of amateur radio with anyone who will listen. This is a wonderful hobby and to answer one question out of order from the rest, the hobby and service of amateur radio is VERY MUCH alive. You can't believe everything you read and hear regarding the state of the hobby and unfortunately there are individuals who may believe (or if they don't believe it, they are spreading the rumors) that the hobby is in decline. This can't be further from the truth and the stats don't lie.

Over the past five years the number of new licenses issued by the FCC has been on a healthy growth pattern. In 2006 the FCC issued 21,112 new licenses, in 2007 26,728, in 2008 28,066 in 2009 30,144 and at the half way point of last year (I'm talking about end of June 2010), the FCC had at that point already licensed 18,270 new licenses. I've been digging to try to find the results for the whole of 2010 and it may just be too early for that information to be posted.

Bottom line is the number of new ham radio licenses issued over the past 5 years has been on a solid growth pattern and the hobby is extremely strong and stable. Of course, we can always do more to expose the hobby to interested individuals and I'm proud to be doing my part.

Regarding how to prepare for the exam process. There are many methods of accomplishing this task. If you ask this question to multiple hams, you'll probably get different answers. However, since you asked me...I'll give you my suggestion and it may not be the most popular version....but it is what I believe in.

First...(if you haven't already) purchase the ARRL Ham Radio License Manual 2nd edition. It is very important that you get your hands on the correct edition as the 2nd edition will match up correctly with the technician exam which is active between July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2014. Yes, the 1st edition contains a lot of the same information which is on the current exam, but having the correct study guide is in my opinion very important.

Next....once you get your hands on the ARRL Ham Radio License Manual 2nd edition....READ IT. This book is actually very easy to read and covers some basic information you should know anyway...but it will teach you everything you need to know for your tech exam. But please read this book. Read it twice...read it three times...but do read it.

Now you specifically asked about the online test exams. There are many out there. Most are free and some you have to pay for. I've used both varieties and both varieties work great. My advice is again....read the book and then and only then use these to check your knowledge. Memorizing the answers will work....but you'll still lack a lot of basic information that will help you. Out of all the online testing sites, the one I like the best is HamTests. The site is free to join and the developers do accept donations to help offset their hosting fees. Don't let the URL fool you. HamTests is geared towards both the ham radio tests in the US and the UK.

Next...check out the Become A Ham section on MyAmateurRadio.com. You'll find the link on the top menu bar listed as BecomeAHam. Once in the BecomeAHam section, click on the 2010-2014 United States Technician Class Amateur Radio Exam Audio Review. This audio review contains 20 sections of what I like to call an audio flash card Q & A.

This is perfect for the commute to work. In these 20 sections, I read each question from the current exam pool, I pause...I read the four possible answers and then I read the question again. I pause long enough for you to shout out your answer and then I provide the correct answer. Again, the intention is that you read the book first and use this to polish your knowledge.

If you'll follow the 3 step process I outlined....Read the Book, use Hamtests and listen to the BecomeAHam Technician Audio Review....you'll be ready to not only take the tech exam....but also pass it with flying colors.

OK...now to your next question about how to correctly write out the ham in ham radio. You are absolutely correct....you will see it written as HAM (all uppercase), as H.A.M. (all uppercase with periods between the letters) as only the first character capitalized (capitol H, lowercase am). What is right? What is wrong???

Before I answer this question, please allow me to say a few words about the origin of the word ham. First and foremost, we really do not know how the term ham came to be to describe those of us in amateur radio. While there are many possible scenarios....the real meaning has been lost to time. The more

common idea (and the one I think is most possible) is the word ham may have originally been used to describe a poor operator.

Keeping in mind this was in the very early days of wireless when spark was king. The common theory goes on to assume the government, coastal or ship stations may have received interference from early amateur stations and referred to these early amateur stations as hams. It is then believed that not really knowing the word was meant as slang, early amateurs picked it up and began referring to themselves as hams. So with that said, here's my opinion on how the word ham should be written.

Unlike modern acronyms like VPN (Virtual Private Network), NBC (National Broadcasting Company) or even to bring the example more closer to amateur radio....SSB (single side band), PSK (phase shift keying) or ARRL (American Radio Relay League. Are all acronyms and when writing out ARRL we do capitalize each letter. However, the word ham is in most likelihood not an acronym....it just follows the same rules of basic sentence structure. If the word ham is to be included at the beginning of a sentence, then the letter H should be capitalized. If the word ham is in the middle of a sentence then it should not be.

Moving along to your next question about what hams talk about on the air. While we do tend to talk a lot about our ham shacks, our equipment including antennas and the type of operating we do. We also enjoy talking about other topics. I will just briefly suggest refraining from discussions centered around politics and religion. But pretty much the sky is the limit.

Just in my close circle of ham friends, our interests vary from the outdoors, hobbies including flight simulator and geocaching and when we get on the air no one really knows what topic we'll discuss and from where it will all lead. Bottom line is we talk about all sorts of topics and subjects on the air.

I do apologize for the long email. I hope my answers and the additional information I tried to provide helps to answer your questions. I do believe I will read some (perhaps all of your email and of course my answers to your questions) on an upcoming episode of the practical amateur radio podcast. Again, thank you for listening and please let me know how you progress with your journey to the hobby. Certainly let me know when you have your license.

Thank you again for the email and best of luck to you.

Jerry

## **Ham Adventures Segment**

I really didn't plan to cut it so close to getting the march episode out to you. I came down with a cold or flu a few weeks ago which ended up settling into and effecting my voice. I never lost my voice completely, but it sort of went from sounding like Barry White to Mickey Mouse and all points in between. I'm still not 100% and thus the reason why I'm shortening this episode by dropping the Featured Website Segment and the Featured Gadget segment. I'll get those both back on track for next time.

But before I close, I do want to make a very brief announcement on behalf of my friends over on the HamTwit Net. I talked about the hamtwit net on the last episode. The net is an echolink net which takes place on Wednesday evening at 9PM EST, 6 PM PST. You can find complete details on how to connect to the echolink node by visiting [www.hamtwit.net](http://www.hamtwit.net).

Now for the announcement. The hamtwit net group members are planning a meet up at the Dayton Hamvention. Yes the Dayton Hamvention is approaching fast....the dates are May 20 - 22. The group

plans for several meet ups over the three day event and also planning on establishing a frequency or two to monitor to also stay in touch.

If you are planning to attend the Dayton hamvention and would like to meet a great group of hams, please visit [www.hamtwit.net](http://www.hamtwit.net) and click on the link at the top of the page labeled hamtwit net meetup at hamvention. You'll find a link to a form which you can submit that will give the organizers an idea how many to expect.

As for the Dayton Hamvention and my attendance. Well....it's just not going to work out this year. My mother and father-in-law will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary this summer. My wife and I will travel to Belgium in mid June and won't be back until just before the US 4th of July holiday. Yes, this means I'll also miss Field Day...but it just couldn't be avoided and family comes first.

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Well this wraps another episode of The Practical Amateur Radio Podcast. We will return again with episode 45 in April.

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Until next time, 73 to all from KD0BIK.

This has been The Practical Amateur Radio Podcast. The Practical Amateur Radio Podcast is written and produced by Jerry Taylor. You may contact Jerry by email at [kd0bik@arrl.net](mailto:kd0bik@arrl.net) or by visiting his website at [www.myamateurradio.com](http://www.myamateurradio.com). The practical amateur radio podcast and myamateurradio.com are protected under the Creative Commons license. Please see myamateurradio.com for details.

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