

# Thinking About Becoming an Amateur Radio Operator

April 2024 – The only thing constant is change. Don't trust this document if it's old.

## Step #1: Get a FCC Registration Number (FRN).

**It's free.** Visit the website below for videos on using CORES and getting your FRN.

[Commission Registration System Video Tutorials](https://www.fcc.gov/licensing-databases/fcc-registration-system-cores/commission-registration-system-video-tutorials)

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Write it down. Put it in your phone. You'll need it when you take any license exam. Anything you read that says an FRN is optional is outdated. FRN's before the test became mandatory in 2021. It doesn't matter what the form says... FRN's are mandatory per the FCC.

You will also need to provide the FCC an email address. That's how they do business these days.

## Step #2: Start studying.

This can be free or you can purchase any of the fine manuals or training programs available. The critical part is that you actually **study**. Because the test is a combination of technical and regulatory questions, you are unlikely to guess your way to a passing score.

The exam question pool is available free of charge at <http://www.arrl.org/question-pools>. While the question pools are free, they are just the questions with answers and distractors. There are no explanations. If you want an understanding of the answers, you'll need to purchase a study guide or enroll in a training program. Some clubs offer cram courses. The FCARC does not have a recurring training program, but keep an eye on our website. When we offer one, the sessions will be posted there..

There are many free practice exam apps available. Use them to check your progress.

Once you are proficient at the Technician level, start reviewing the General questions. It is not unusual for a new ham to take both the Technician and General exam in the same session.

## Step #3: Determine when and where you can take the exam.

Why wouldn't this be first? You should have an idea of what you're up against before deciding on a test date. If you are consistently failing your practice exams, you need more study. While the exam fee is minimal, set yourself up for the win.

If you've been studying for months... just take the exam. If you don't pass, now you'll know what it's like so you can crush it next time.

If the FCARC exam dates don't work for you, check with any of the area radio clubs. Do what fits your life. You can also check the ARRL website although not every club lists their exam sessions there.

<http://www.arrl.org/find-an-amateur-radio-license-exam-session>

If you are younger than 18 years old, the license exam fee is reduced. You can also get reimbursed for your FCC license fee through the ARRL.

## **Then what?**

After you pass your FCC license exam, your application is sent to ARRL where it is reviewed and entered into the FCC license system. Once it is entered, you can track it on the FCC's Application Search webpage. <https://wireless2.fcc.gov/ulsApp/ApplicationSearch/searchAppl.jsp>

Once entered, the FCC will send the applicant an email link to pay the \$35 application fee. You have 10 calendar days to pay the fee or the application is deleted. Once the fee is paid, the FCC will process your license application. <https://apps.fcc.gov/cores/userLogin.do>

For more information, visit <http://www.arrl.org/fcc-application-fee>

**Join a local club.** First time hams who test with the FCARC and join our club get their first years' dues waived. Talk to any of the Volunteer Examiners after you pass your exam for more information.

If you have any questions, use the Contact Us tab on the [fcarc.club](http://fcarc.club) website. Welcome to ham radio!