

An Amateur Radio Chapter Morse Code Beginners Course

Skip Kazmarek, K4EAK (CWops #3734)

As everyone knows, the FCC totally eliminated the Morse Code requirement in 2007, and many commentators predicted that Morse Code would die out within a few years. In fact, Morse Code remains exceptionally popular even today. Why?



There are lots of reasons. The main attraction is that CW is fun. There's something relaxing and romantic about the rhythmic pulse of an operator beating out a CW exchange. But there are practical reasons as well. Because of its narrow bandwidth, it's possible to cram a lot more signals into our limited allocations, CW excels in noisy, weak signal conditions, and CW exchanges are normally compact and efficient, meaning that, if one is looking to accumulate contacts, such things are faster and easier with CW.

Because of this, our FRVA Amateur Radio Chapter is exploring the possibility of offering a "CW Beginner's Course." The course would be essentially the same as the CW Academy Beginner's Course, and would be taught by Skip Kazmarek, K4EAK, a CW Academy advisor. The course is intended to take students who know nothing about CW, or maybe who once knew something but all of that is lost in the deep recesses of long-ago memories, and bring them from zero up to a speed of 10+ words per minute, which is adequate for most on-air relaxed exchanges, such as those that occur in Parks on the Air, state QSO Parties, Field Day, and other similar kinds of activities.

Subject to being tweaked by member preferences, the course would be an 8-week program with two, one-hour zoom sessions per week. Students are expected to practice three to four times per day in 15-20 minute segments each. The course would follow the CW Academy curriculum. More detail can be found on the CWA website: <https://cwops.org/cw-academy/cw-academy-options/>.

Member Input Requested

We are now surveying members to determine how best to conduct such a program. If you think you'd be interested, please send an email to Skip at k4eak@arrl.net and indicate: (1) that you are interested; (2) what experience you have, if any, with CW; and (3) what days and times would work best for you (e.g., weekday early evenings, one weekday with one Saturday, weekday mornings, whatever). Based on preliminary conversations, it looks like there will be enough interest for such a course, so the challenge now is finding days and times that work for the most people.