

Process to get license

Getting a ham (amateur) radio license is very doable—even for teens—and it's mostly about learning some basics and passing a test. Here's the process step by step, explained simply.

1. Decide which license level to get

In the U.S. there are three license levels. Most people start with the first one.

● Technician (recommended first)

- Entry-level
- Lets you talk locally and sometimes worldwide
- No Morse code required
- This is what most beginners (including students) get

● General

- More worldwide communication (shortwave / HF)
- Requires passing an additional test

● Amateur Extra

- Highest level
- More technical, not needed for most people

👉 Start with the Technician license.

2. Study for the exam

The Technician test covers:

- Basic radio rules (FCC regulations)
- Safety
- How radios work
- Operating practices

Good study resources (free):

- HamStudy.org – very popular, easy practice tests
- ARRL Technician License Manual (book)
- YouTube (search: "Technician ham radio license course")

■ The test uses a public question pool, so you'll see the same questions while studying.

Most people study 1–3 weeks.

3. Create an FCC account (FRN)

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Before testing, you need an FCC Registration Number.

- Go to the FCC's CORES system
- Create an account and get your FRN
- This is free and required

(You'll use this instead of your Social Security number.)

4. Take the exam

The test:

- 35 multiple-choice questions
- You need 26 correct to pass
- Takes about 15–30 minutes

Where to take it:

- In person (local ham radio clubs)
- Online (remote testing with a webcam)

Cost:

- Exam fee: usually \$15 or less
- FCC license fee: \$35 (valid for 10 years)

Many clubs offer discounts or free exams for students.

5. Get your callsign

After you pass:

- Your test results are sent to the FCC
- In a few days (sometimes faster), you're issued a callsign
- Once it appears in the FCC database, you can transmit legally

 Congrats—you're officially a ham radio operator!

6. Get on the air

You'll need:

- A ham radio (many beginner handhelds are affordable)
- To follow the band rules for your license level
- To identify yourself with your callsign when transmitting

Extra notes (important)

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- There is no age limit — kids as young as 8–9 have licenses
- You don't need to know electronics beforehand
- Ham radio can help with:
 - Emergency communications
 - Space (ISS contacts!)
 - Engineering and STEM skills
 - Talking to people worldwide