

What is Amateur Radio?

Amateur Radio is a hobby with a history... and you can be part of its future!

Amateur (or HAM) Radio has been at the forefront of technical advances in radio communications over the last century. Its achievements have been ground-breaking in helping the spread of global communication. It is now possible to see pictures from outer space, hear news from distant lands or get press releases from any major capital in the world. However, not many people realise the important contribution that Radio Amateurs have made to this communication explosion.

Radio Amateurs played their part in the development of RADAR; they were the first to realise the potential of world-circling shortwave radio and more recently, Radio Amateurs have taken a keen interest in digital technology such as computers, the Internet, and digital and satellite communications. So although this is an old, some might say 'traditional' hobby, (it has been going for over a century) the qualification of being a Radio Amateur is considered a good stepping stone into a modern career in science or engineering.

Things you might notice about Radio Amateurs...

They have an inherent interest in 'how things work'. Most Amateurs have made many friends around the world.

If you think that sending a few text messages to a few mates is communicating, think what it would be like sending those messages to thousands of friends, in hundreds of countries!

Radio Amateurs are always happy to share knowledge and their enthusiasm with other people.

For example you can ask a Radio Amateur...

- How can I speak to a Russian, a South American or an Australian within the hour?
- How can I speak to an astronaut?
- How can I access the 100 Amateur satellites circling the planet?
- How do I hear the Voice of America, Radio Tehran?



As with any hobby there are rules to be learnt and followed and it is expected that you will undergo tuition to qualify as a Radio Amateur. It is true that an understanding or an interest in science will help. To encourage newcomers to try the hobby, a entry-level 'Foundation Licence' has been introduced. This only involves a few hours study, and answering a few basic questions. This will normally result in a pass certificate, which will get you 'on the air'. (See our Foundation Licence guide sheet for an explanation).

There is a nation-wide network of local radio clubs that give talks on the latest developments, and will help and encourage new Amateurs, and train them to pass the higher intermediate and full licence exams. There are often social and operating 'on-air' evenings, where new ideas are exchanged and newcomers are provided with the opportunity to learn new skills.

A more serious side of the hobby is the invaluable work Amateur operators provide in an emergency. This has been evidently shown in the tragic events of Hurricane Katrina in the USA and the Australian wildfires. Amateurs rallied together, and provided a vital service to the community when other forms of communication were unable to cope.

Who would find Amateur Radio an interesting and social hobby?

- Anybody, irrespective of age, perhaps with an interest in science, who has time on their hands and is keen to have a hobby that demands time and skill and care.
- Existing radio users - Those who already have some other form of radio licence who wish to expand their knowledge into what might be a new hobby eg. CB radio enthusiasts, marine VHF and HF licensees.
- If you are at school or in the air cadets you might already have the opportunity to study from your tutors or captains. Many schools have radio equipment or even clubs.
- Anybody bedridden, housebound or disabled.
- Anybody who wants an absorbing hobby that will last a lifetime!

Here are a few informative websites worth visiting:

Icom UK Ltd: www.icomuk.co.uk

Hamlife: www.hamlife.co.uk

Radio Society of Great Britain: www.rsgb.org.uk



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Count on us!