

Ozark QRP Banner



The Official Newsletter of the Four State QRP Group - WQ5RP
May 2020 Edition

In this issue: CW Straight Keys, The Thrill of Morse Code, Learn Morse Code in Minutes a Day, CW Clubs,



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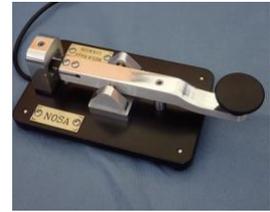
This issue of the Banner is dedicated to Morse Code. Many of you are already good CW operators but many are not. Most of our kits operate CW only, so in order to help those who are just learning the code or may not be as proficient as they want to be this issue will surely have tips on how to improve your sending and receiving. Even the best operators may learn a tip or two. So enjoy.

[Meet the Champion: World's Champion Telegrapher](#)

In 1942 Harry Turner (W9YZE) became the *world champion* hand key operator. His record of 35 w.p.m. using *International Morse* has never been beaten and his feat has been noted in every issue of the Guinness Book of Records since 1981. Harry, now living in Alton, Illinois, was born in the small town of Lowder, in the same State. Note: Harry sadly became a SK at 88 yrs. old in 1994. You can read the entire article here: <http://telegraph-office.com/pages/turner.html>

[Theodore Roosevelt McElroy](#) Theodore Roosevelt McElroy (September 15, 1901 - November 12, 1963) was an American telegraph operator and a radio telegrapher FCC amateur with call sign W1JYN. He holds the all-time speed record for *receiving Morse code*. ... McElroy showed a speed of 75 w.p.m. in the Boston "World of Tomorrow" ... Read the history here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodore_Roosevelt_McElroy



PICK YOUR POISON

CW STRAIGHT KEYS

Larry Naumann n0sa

I was asked to write an article on telegraph keys so I chose to write about straight keys. I am a bit apprehensive writing this at all because of the fact that it is all so subjective. So, let me preface by stating that these are only my opinions and yours may be vastly different from mine.

My experience with straight keys is limited to what I call the American style key versus the European style key. American style keys have lower knobs and are basically designed to be operated with the arm planted on the table. European style keys are operated with the arm hanging off the table. Of course, either can be operated in either position. So, I am limiting this article to what I am familiar with and to keys that I have actually owned and operated.

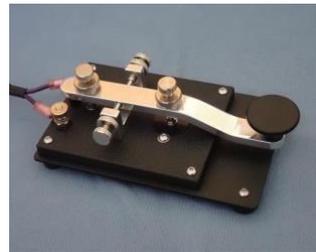
My personal preference is for a key that has a snappy feel but has a soft landing and is quiet. I do not like a lot of clacking. The noise comes from somewhere and that is from metal slamming into metal. To me quite means a soft landing and less fatigue on the hand and wrist. I worked construction for close to 40 years, ending up with damaged wrists and hands. They don't like a lot of metal slamming.



Almost any old key will do the job as long as it can make and break the electrical contact. So that is the first thing to consider. Are the contacts aligned, smooth and clean? Almost any metal will work, some better than others. Gold and silver are great, tarnished silver conducts as good as untarnished silver. Brass is okay but it will tarnish and loose conductivity so it will need to be kept clean. I use a combination of silver to polished stainless on the keys I make and have never had a complaint or a problem with this combination. Stainless to stainless works but it is a bit of a hard

contact. So, we need good materials and polished surfaces. I make all my contact surfaces slightly convex. This naturally happens when they are polished on a buffing wheel.

The next consideration is the pivot points and or trunions. This can be accomplished in many ways as you can see by looking at various designs. I have built and used ball bearing designs, pivots with trunions and sleeve bearings. Ball bearings would probably last longer than the other two but I doubt anyone today would wear any of the three out if built correctly. The main thing you want is free up and down movement with no side to side play. If you take a key and loosen up the spring and space contacts the lever should move freely up and down from its own weight while having no side to side play. If it doesn't swing up and down freely you will have a sluggish action. If there is side to side play you won't get consistent contact closures. This isn't rocket science, just simple mechanics. But it is important to the proper operation of the key.



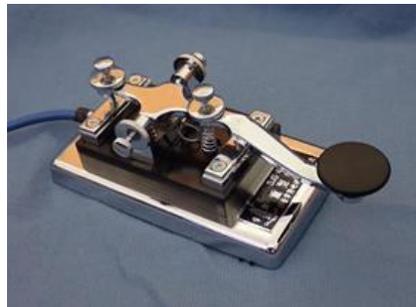
Now it is time to look at the return mechanism. This can be a leaf spring, coil spring or magnets. Magnets can be set up to work on repulsion or attraction. I don't seem to see a difference in performance between the two but I am sure there are those who would disagree with me on that. The only time I see a difference is if there is a lot of movement distance wise, but most keys are set up for small amounts of travel so I just don't see it. Personally, I go for magnets as I can tailor them to my needs. But coil springs have been around forever and work great too. I am not real fond of the leaf spring design like you find in a J-37 style key. It just feels a bit sluggish to me. I know some guys who love the key, it is a personal choice. Magnets feel snappy to me so it is what I prefer. You just want to find something that is adjustable to your desired amount of tension.

Now to some of the refinements and personal design choices. There is knob size and shape along with the height from the table top. If it is too low you can always mount it the key on a thicker base. If it is too high there isn't much you can do. You want to find something that is comfortable for you. I prefer lower as it seems to be easier on my wrist. Too high and my arm locks up real fast. I like a standard flat knob. There are skirts too but I prefer not to have one. I do not like the big fat round knobs but of course your preferences will vary. The only 'correct' knob is the one that feels right for you. I have a tiny Ukrainian military key with a weird looking tiny knob that I really like to use. When I first saw it, I didn't think I would like it but I do. You need to

try them out and not just for a minute, give yourself some time to really get the feel for a key before you decide.



Another word or two on contacts and my opinions on them. As I stated earlier, material is important but so is how they are mounted. I have built keys with contacts mounted in front of and to the rear of the pivot. I don't have a preference to either, what I do have a preference for is how the contact is mounted. The German Junker key is a highly regarded key. It has precision adjustments and a great feel. It is snappy but not harsh on contact. If you look closely at the stationary contact you will see it is mounted in a fiber bar that is mounted at both ends to the frame. The center portion where the contact is mounted is thinner than the rest of the bar and floats, separated from the base. This gives just a slight bit of cushion to the strike. This does two things; it quiets the key and makes it feel softer when the contact strikes. It is a very nice feel. I also have a Chinese PLA key.



It is the original version not the cheap Chinese knock off of their own design. Go figure!!! It is actually a very nice key, the knock off not so much. But if you look closely, they have the contact mounted on a metal bar that is thinner in the middle to give it a bit of flex. Not as nice as the Junker but better than keys without this design feature. Another way to achieve this is when the contact is placed to the rear of the pivot it is mounted on a short section of spring steel off the end of the lever. Depending on the length and thickness of the spring steel you can tailor the amount of cushion there is in the strike. It makes for a very nice feel. I have a straight key that I built with the contact in front of the pivot. The stationary contact is mounted in the center of a 1" diameter plastic disc mounted in the base. It has a great feel and takes the banging out of the contact closure.

If you are looking for a key that you will really enjoy using, I would suggest trying to find and use as many as you can in search of the right one. First and foremost, it needs to be fine mechanically. If it isn't mechanically sound or can't be made to be so, it will never function properly. Sometimes all that is needed is a good cleaning and contact burnishing or buffing, and proper alignment and adjustment. If it can't be adjusted properly it will never work properly.

Some people couldn't care less about softer contact closure or noisy clacky keys. That is just fine, there are a ton of keys out there that work just fine. I see a lot of really nice keys on Ebay all the time for very good prices. Many of them just need to be disassembled, cleaned, oiled, reassembled and adjusted and they will work just fine. Many look like brand new except for the dust.

So, go pick out a key or dig out the one you have collecting dust, clean it, oil it, adjust it and use it. There is just something very satisfying about using a manual key, especially one you saved from the trash bin.

Practice and enjoy CW with these fine kits from 4State QRP



Cric-Key



Code Practice Oscillator



EZ Keyer

Odds and Ends:

Looking for an old call sign? NL7XM, Pete Varounis, has all the old printed call books and for a fee will look up an old call sign. Go to <https://www.eham.net/reviews/view-product?id=9782>

For the homebrewers, designers, engineers, experimenters here is a link to some valuable information.

https://www.qsl.net/va3iul/Homebrew_RF_Circuit_Design_Ideas/Homebrew_RF_Circuit_Design_Ideas.htm

CW Tips



The Thrill of Morse Code

By Dale Holloway, K4EQ

When I finished a PowerPoint presentation for a local radio club meeting about the fun of operating Morse code on the ham bands, I thought it might make a good article, so I wrote it up. If you are an experienced CW operator, you probably won't read anything new, nor will you necessarily agree with all the tips give. I'd love to hear from you if you think I missed the mark somewhere. With your permission, I may even incorporate your suggestions into the article. Enjoy!

What do you think of when you hear the word code? I don't necessarily mean Morse code, just the word code. Three words come to my mind: symbols, system, and secrecy. In a code, there is a system of symbols that is designed to keep the meaning of those symbols a secret from others. If you don't know the code, you can't decode the message.



I discovered the Morse Code when I was about 8-years-

old and my parents gave me a Western Union Telegraph Set for Christmas. I was fascinated with it (there were two units in the set). You could send and receive Morse Code using clicks, a light, or a buzzer. And you could connect the two units together so you could send secret messages back and

forth. You didn't have to know the code because it was printed on the left side of the unit. It was magical.



The next year I started listening to Captain Midnight, a children's radio program about a fictional

war hero who led a mysterious group known as the Secret Squadron. Captain Midnight and his Secret Squadron flew around the world as heroes defeating evil wherever they went. And the best part? We could sign up and become a member of the Secret Squadron. Better still, we got a Secret Squadron manual and code book along with a secret decoder. How cool is that? Oh, for you oldtimers like me, do you remember what they advertised? Ovaltine!

About a year later, my parents let me put our old, upright AM/Shortwave radio in my bedroom. I would spend hours listening to shortwave broadcast stations all over the world despite not having an outside antenna. Soon I heard people talking to each other. I learned they were ham radio operators. I also heard strange sounds coming through the radio. It was sort of a whisper-like, thumpity thump sound, which I soon learned was Morse Code being sent on CW, also by ham radio operators. The whisper-like, thumpity thump sound was because I was listening to the CW on an AM radio.

It didn't matter! The sound I heard was a code—a secret—and I wanted to learn how to decode it. I'd have to wait a few years for that.

That's when our family moved from the Lansing, Michigan, area to Grand Rapids. Not long after we moved, I heard the sounds of Morse Code coming out the side door of a neighbor across the street from us. That was exciting to hear. Soon I met the person responsible for those sounds: Jim, K8QDM, a high school sophomore who had been licensed a year or two earlier.

Jim and I became friends and I began spending lots of time with him in his radio shack. It was an exciting time for me as I watched him make contact with other hams around the country. Soon he taught me some elementary theory and the Morse Code. I learned the code quickly and even made some CW contacts from his station before I was licensed. In July, I took the Novice class exam, which had a fairly simple theory test, plus a 5 wpm code test. I aced both tests. Then my

examiner (wish I could remember his call sign) wanted to know how fast I could copy and sent me some faster code. At 16 wpm I was still copying him perfectly.

September 29, 1960. That was the date my Novice license was issued by the FCC. And it was the beginning of an exciting, fun-filled adventure with Morse Code that continues to this day.

History of the Morse Code Requirement in the United States

Before I get into some tips for becoming a good CW operator, I'd like to give a brief history of the Morse Code requirement for an Amateur Radio license in the United States.



1951 - In 1951 the FCC restructured the Class A, B, and C licenses into six classes: Novice, Technician, General, Conditional, Advanced, and Amateur Extra. Code requirements were 5 wpm for Novice and Technician, 13 wpm for General, Conditional and Advanced, and 20 wpm for Amateur Extra. To pass the code exam, the applicant was required to copy perfectly for at least one continuous minute out of approximately five minutes of code sent. Those who were successful were then tested in their sending ability.

March 18, 1977 - The sending requirement for all license class examinations was eliminated.

February 14, 1991 - The Morse Code requirement for the Technician license was eliminated.

April 15, 2000 - The number of license classes was reduced to three: Technician, General, and Amateur Extra. The code speed for the General (13 wpm), Advanced (13), and Amateur Extra (20 wpm) class licenses was reduced to 5 wpm.

February 23, 2007 - The Morse Code requirement was eliminated for all license classes. There was great controversy in the Amateur Radio ranks over the elimination of the code

requirement for a license. Many hams are still upset today. Personally, however, I favored the change. For various reasons, the U.S. Amateur Radio population was decreasing. In my opinion, the main reason for that was because of the advancement in technology. Nearly all radio services had ceased using the code for their communications. Most people had come to believe it was an old, useless technology. Consequently, the code had become a huge barrier to many getting their Amateur Radio license.

My reasoning was that the code would continue to be used by thousands of hams even if there were no code exam for a license. Those who wanted to use it would and those who didn't wouldn't. It has always been that way. Besides, if the ham population were to continue to decrease in numbers, arguing over whether there should be a Morse Code requirement for a license would be a moot point. There may be no license available at all.

History has already proven my point about the code continuing to be used. There is still a high interest in using the code and perhaps thousands of new hams are discovering the thrill of communicating with CW.



Tips for Learning the Morse Code

The code we use in Amateur Radio today isn't the old clickity click railroad telegraph code. That was the American Morse Code. Today we use the International Morse Code, also known as the Continental Code, although I don't hear that name used anymore. My early '60s code proficiency certificate from the American Radio Relay League (ARRL) was called *Certificate of Proficiency in Reception of the Continental Code*.

A question I'm occasionally asked is, "What is the best way to learn the code?" My answer is

always the same: "I don't know." Nevertheless, I have a few suggestions that may help.

My wife and I spent a year in Spanish language training at the Spanish Language Institute in San José, Costa Rica. It was a near total immersion program where our instructors were all Costa Ricans who spoke only Spanish in class from day one. If we went to the grocery store, everything was in Spanish. Everywhere we went people spoke Spanish. I soon discovered that to learn a new language well you have to see it, hear it, feel it, say it, think it, and do it. Learning Morse Code is similar to learning a language. You need to totally immerse yourself in it. You need to see it, hear it, feel it, say it, think it, and do it. Following are some helps.



CWops - CWops is an organization that is dedicated to the support of Morse Code activity on the air. According to their website, "Our goal is to bring together Amateur Radio operators who enjoy communicating by Morse Code (CW). CWops encourages the use of CW in Amateur communications, and it supports CW activity through planned events. CWops promotes goodwill among Amateurs throughout the world, and it fosters the education of young people and others in matters related to Amateur Radio."

Farnsworth Method - CWops has an excellent Morse code learning and improvement program called CW Academy that may be helpful to you in learning the code. Check out their website (cwops.org) for more information. They encourage the Farnsworth method of learning the code, which is basically sending characters at 20 wpm and leaving a long space between them. As you increase your speed, you decrease the space between characters.

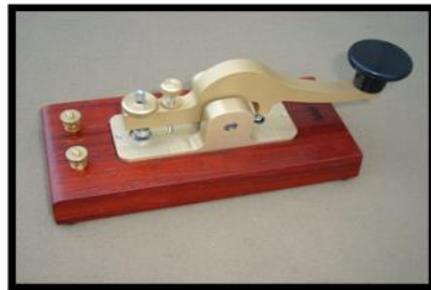
Random Text - CWops didn't exist when I got my license in 1960. At thirteen years of age and being musical, the code came fairly easily to me. K8QDM, my mentor, would first teach me a letter, let's say a C (dah di dah dit). Then he would send random text and have me pick out every C sound I heard. I didn't learn the letter as dash dot dash dot. Rather, I learned it more as a musical tone: dah di dah dit. Then he would teach me another letter and we'd do the same thing. Then there would be more text sent and I'd listen for both letters. It was an effective method and I learned the code in a very short time.

Read Signs - One of the things I started doing as I was learning the code was to read every sign

I saw in Morse code. When my dad stopped at a stop sign, in my head I was going "di di dit dah dah dah di dah dah dit (STOP)." Believe it or not, I've never stopped doing that. I'm constantly doing Morse code in my head when I'm driving. It's a language I love to speak and hear.

FISTS Code Buddy - The FISTS CW Club (The International Morse Preservation Society) has an excellent Code Buddy program, where you can contact someone on their Code Buddy list, sent up a schedule, and practice code with the person. Go to their website for further information (fistsna.org).

Practice, Practice, Practice - When the bands are in lousy shape, I often open up a magazine, turn on my code oscillator, and just start sending code to myself. I enjoy doing it and it helps keep me sharp. Practice may not always make us perfect, as the saying goes, but it certainly helps to improve our skills.



How to Have a Successful CW Contact

Learning the Morse Code is the starting point, but actually making a contact is another thing. Don't worry, we were all intimidated by our very first CW contact and we all made mistakes. But take heart! It gets easier with every contact as we continue to learn proper procedures. Following are some suggestions that will help you have a successful CW contact and have lots of fun doing it.

1. Learn Common Abbreviations.

As you might imagine, we use many abbreviations on CW. I've included some of the most common ones below. A more complete list can be found online at <http://www.kent-engineers.com/abbreviations.htm>.



ABT - About
AGN - Again
BURO - QSL Bureau
CUD - Could
CUL - See you later
CUZ - Because
ES - And
FB - Fine business (great)
FER - For
HW - How
LIL - Little
NW - Now
PSE - Please
RPT - Repeat or Report
SRI - Sorry
TNX or TKS (please not THX) - Thanks
TT - That
U - You
UR - Your
WID - With
WUD - Would

A typical use of these abbreviations in a QSO might be like this: TNK FER UR FB WX RPT
(Thanks for your fine business [great] weather report).

2. Learn Common Prosigns.

Prosigns are procedural signs—sort of a CW shorthand. Following are some of the more common prosigns and how to use them properly. Notice that some have a bar over the top of them. That

indicates that the two letters are to be sent as one character. Hence, AR would be sent as di dah di dah dit.

AR (End of Transmission)

K (Go Ahead, Over)

KN (Over only to this station)

Use AR at the end of a transmission immediately before the call signs. Use K or KN following your call sign. Example: HW CPY BOB? AR NØAF de K4EQ K -or- KN

Some operators will end their CQ like this: CQ de K4EQ AR K. This is not technically incorrect but neither is it necessary. If K is given (over to someone), it's obvious that you're done with your transmission. The preferred method is to use AR in a QSO after you're finished with your transmission and immediately before you give the other station's call sign.

SK (End of Last Transmission)

The prosign SK is used in place of AR at the end of your last transmission of a contact. So it goes immediately before you give the call signs. Example: 73 DOLORES CUL SK KDØCIV DE K4EQ T U dit dit

Notice in the above example how it ends with T U DIT DIT. T U is CW shorthand for thank you and dit dit (i, i) is something that has evolved through the years on CW. It's a take on the early twentieth century shave-and-a-haircut-two-bits. It would be appropriate to end with the prosign K but if you are the last to transmit, many hams, myself included, like to say thank you dit dit.

R (Received as Transmitted)

The prosign R is equivalent to the voice response ROGER. On CW it's used at the beginning of your transmission if—and only if—you correctly copied all the previous transmission. Example: AAØZ DE K4EQ R R FB ON UR NEW KX3

Do not send R if you did *not* copy everything. Example: AAØZ DE K4EQ R R PSE RPT MODEL OF UR ELECFRAFT

AS (Wait)

This is a helpful prosign and is used when you want the other operator to wait for a few moments. Do not follow it with any other characters. Usually it is sent at least twice to make certain the

other operator understands. Example: SRI PAM I SPILLED MY COFFEE AGAIN

BT (Double Dash)

The typical use of BT is as a separator between sentences. It's generally used in place of all punctuation except the question mark. Example: TNX FER WX RPT BILL BT WX HR IS ALSO HOT BT

BK (Break)

The prosign BK is primarily used with short transmissions when you want the other station to transmit. It is to be sent as one character but I think 99% of the operators today send it as two characters. I've given up fighting the trend and do it myself now. Example: KCØSDV de K4EQ R FB CLIFF BK HW LONG DOES IT TAKE U TO MAKE THE PLAQUES? BK

3. Learn Common Q-Signals.

Q-Signals are a set of three-letter abbreviations beginning with Q that save time and allow communication between operators who don't speak a common language. Each Q-signal makes a statement or request. When followed with a question mark, the Q signal is a question. For example, QRP means "Decrease power." QRP? means, "Shall I decrease power?"

Below are a few of the more common Q signals. Knowing their meaning will enable you to have much more enjoyable contacts on the air. You can find more complete lists of Q-signals online. Please note that my definitions are not exactly accurate, but they are how most hams use them today.

QRL - This is typically used to see if a frequency is in use before transmitting there. For example, before calling CQ, call QRL?

QRM - This refers to interference from other stations. If you're in contact with another station and another stations begins transmitting near your frequency, we call that QRM. QRM is practically unavoidable when the band is really open and lots of stations are on the air. Good operators learn to work through it.



QRN - This refers to static noise on the band.

QRP - This refers to low power—typically 5 watts or less.

QRS - Typical use of QRS would be to ask the other station in a QSO to slow down his or her code speed (e.g., PSE QRS).

QRT - Stop sending. Typical use on the air would be, "I'm going to QRT now."

QRZ - Typical usage is as a question. Let's say you call CQ and a very weak station calls you back but you didn't quite get the call sign. You would send QRZ? de K4EQ K.

QSB - This refers to fading signals.

QSL - This acknowledges receipt of information.

QSO - This refers to a contact. (e.g. "I had three QSOs on 17 meters yesterday.")

QSY - This refers to changing frequency (e.g. "PSE QSY UP 6").

QTH - This refers to location (e.g., My QTH is Ballwin, MO").

Again, this is not a complete list of all Q-signals, nor are the definitions I gave exactly accurate, They merely reflect how we commonly use Q-signals today.

4. Configure a Comfortable Operating Position.

You may wonder what a comfortable operating position has to do with having a successful CW contact. Maybe successful isn't the right word. Perhaps "How to Have a More Enjoyable CW Contact" would be better. Regardless, I have three suggestions that may help you.

Have a comfortable chair. If you are operating voice, it really doesn't matter much whether you sit, stand, lie down, or stand on your head (well, maybe that head thing wouldn't be such a good idea). But you want to be comfortable as you position yourself to send CW, especially if you are operating for long periods of time, such as during a contest.

Have room for your arm on your operating desk. For proper sending with a key—straight key, bug, paddle, or whatever—you want your forearm to rest on a flat surface with your hand naturally dropping to the key. It will be far less tiring and make sending much easier.

Arrange your equipment for easy access to the equipment controls. This would be true for any mode of operation, but is especially helpful on CW. I like my transmitter tuning knob to be as close to my key as possible. That way's it's easier to change frequencies while chasing DX or in a contest. I find this especially helpful when attempting to contact a DX station that is working split. I like to switch VFOs briefly to determine on what frequency the DX station worked his last contact.

Don't Worry about Your Speed. Almost all of us want to improve our code speed, and to do so we need to challenge ourselves by pushing the limits. But . . . speed is not the ultimate test of a good operator. In fact, I would argue that speed has very little to do with being a good operator. The most important consideration should be accuracy. The FISTS CW Club emphasizes that accuracy transcends speed. I couldn't agree more.

For general contacts, send at a comfortable speed. I find that QSOs are more enjoyable when I'm not struggling to keep up with the speed of the other operator who may be sending slightly faster than I feel comfortable with. Contesting is another thing. During contests I can send and receive much faster than I feel comfortable with for everyday chats.

When you call CQ, don't send faster than you can copy. That's a sure way to get frustrated quickly—when the other station comes back at the same speed you sent but you struggle to copy. As a side note here, you should always answer CQs at the same speed the other station is sending.

5. Don't Be Ashamed to Write Down Your Copy.

Many seem to make a big deal about just copying CW in your head. Actually, I think it's a good thing to be able to do that and you can certainly converse at higher speeds that way. However, there is nothing wrong with writing down your copy. Just make sure you don't send faster than you can write what you receive. If you do, the other operator will likely send too fast for you.

Anytime I tend to write down a lot because, after a three- or four-minute transmission by the other station, I tend to forget the things he sent that I want to respond to.

6. Check the Frequency With QRL? Before Calling CQ.

There may be a QSO in progress and because of propagation you cannot hear the station transmitting. The station you can hear is listening and four blocks away from you.

The proper way to check the frequency is to make certain you don't hear anyone, then send QRL? one time. Wait about five seconds then, if no one responds, call QRL? again. You might include DE and your call sign, but it's not necessary. Wait five more seconds and, if no one responds, call CQ.

As a side note, for years many of us checked the frequency simply by sending di dit dit (ie). I haven't heard that for years now.



Calling CQ

After you have made certain the frequency is clear, you can feel free to call CQ. The question is, what's the best method to call CQ? This is where personal preference rules and it differs with just about every operator. I think the main thing to remember is to keep your CQs fairly short.

When I had my Novice license, I remember one operator calling CQ for at least two minutes before he gave his call sign. Not good! So, what's the best method for calling CQ?

Many operators use the 5 X 3 method of calling CQ, i.e., sending CQ five times, your call sign three times, then K (over). It would look like this: CQ CQ CQ CQ CQ de K4EQ K4EQ K4EQ K

Personally, I prefer to use a 4 X 2 CQ method: CQ CQ CQ CQ de K4EQ K4EQ K.

If there is no answer after about 15 seconds, I call again. There is no official or unofficial rule about CQing. Just use common sense and courtesy.

Your First Transmission in a QSO

After establishing contact, your first transmission should include three things: RST report, your QTH, and your name. Let's assume W1AW answers my CQ. Now what do I do? Here's a typical response:

W1AW DE K4EQ GM ES TNX FER CL BT UR RST 599 599 ES QTH BALLWIN MO

BALLWIN MO BT NAME DALE DALE HW CPY? AR W1AW DE K4EQ K

As you can see, I've acknowledged the other station's call sign, given a simple greeting, his signal report, my location, and my name. The other operator will then likely send me the same information, maybe add a bit, then turn it back to me. Our conversation will develop from there.

Note that many operators will use OP instead of NAME. Also, the number 9 is often shortened to simply the letter N; hence, RST 5NN.



Conclusion

Any way you look at it, making contacts using Morse Code is just plain FUN! I've never lost the thrill of it 60 years now after learning it. I hope some of the tips I've provided will help you enjoy it as much as I do. Now go turn on your radio and listen for K4EQ. Let's have some . . .

. . . - . . . - . . .

CW Sprints: Gateway to CW Fun at Faster Speeds

Jeff Logullo, NOMII

Ever wish your CW skills were better than they are today? That was the case for me, for years. Sure, I had a lot of fun with this hobby: building kits... homebrewing antennas... attending hamfests... reading about grounding and lightning, reading about lots of stuff!

But when it came time to look at my logbook, there was something missing. Namely: lots and lots of CW QSOs. Field Day was my annual "lots of contacts" time, and I *love* Field Day. But it was always a struggle. Learning CW via ARRL code tapes at 5 WPM, and then at 13, was not a great way to get started. My code speed, and my apprehension about calling or *answering* a CQ, was holding me back.

The turning point was deciding it would be a fun challenge to earn my first (!) WAS certificate, all CW, and all at QRP levels. There's no official power level for WAS but it was going to be my personal goal. My biggest obstacle: an inability to copy CW at higher speeds. No matter: at last I had a goal, and it would become my reason for getting better at CW.

Next step was realizing that contests were an easy way to add contacts to the log, hoping for a new state or two along the way. I decided to give the NAQCC Sprint a try. The duration was only 2 hours. And the recommended (free!) logging software had an interesting feature: prior to the sprint, you load current NAQCC member database into the logger. That way, when you start logging a contact, their member number (part of the exchange) pops up automatically. So the paranoia of missing part of the exchange suddenly evaporated! Accomplished hams are chuckling at this point... but for the rest of us: you know what I mean. Fear of failing to copy an exchange was keeping me from giving it a try. Here I would have a "safety net." Cool!

Another thing about contesting: when you're still trying to get comfortable with CW, the thought of having a ragchew-style QSO can be unsettling. "What if I miss something he says? What if I get totally lost? What will I say next?" When it's a contest setting, that's all irrelevant. RST 599, state, member number - done! And the other guy is highly motivated to make sure both you and he have the correct exchange. Asking for a repeat: "AGN?" is okay.

Long story short, deciding to operate the NAQCC Sprint was a real turning point for me. Operating in hunt-and-pounce mode, I'd listen first to get the runner's call sign down for certain. And I'd work to copy the rest of his exchange - sure, I could "peek" at the member number that

the log software provided. But I started using this to "check" rather than "cheat." This became great practice, as I was constantly trying to copy code at speeds faster than I was used to.

I also realized that state QSO parties are great for contacting a needed state. And if you hear someone call CQ more than once, he's listening for his next contact. He'll hear - and respond to - our QRP signals!

This worked for a while, but eventually I got frustrated that I couldn't copy those guys sending at 20, 22, 25 WPM and more. It was time to get serious.

About this time I stumbled upon a podcast: [DitDit.fm](#). The episodes are varied, but each is great inspiration for any ham who wants to learn CW, or improve their skills. As I listened to these episodes, I got a lot of super advice... which then led me to seek out [CW Academy](#).

CW Academy is a free Morse code training "classroom" that meets online (using Zoom) in small groups on a biweekly basis for eight weeks. Hosted by the [CW Ops](#) club, the classes are split up into four levels: Beginner, Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced. Between class meetings you have daily homework: I listened to recordings of sample QSOs, short stories, and practice words, all while learning to head-copy while relaxing, and not obsessing over missing a letter or a word.

We were also introduced to some computer-based simulations of contest conditions. This was great practice for copying call signs, especially with lifelike QRM, QSB, and multiple ops calling at the same time.

I completed the Intermediate and the Advanced classes (at the time there were only three levels), and while I can't say I did all my homework every day... I was practicing on a regular basis, and my code speeds were definitely improving.

This is truly a great time to learn the code and to improve your skills. Want to get started? Here's some ideas:

Visit the [DitDit.fm podcast page](#) and listen to an episode or two - or more! Listen at your computer, or use a smart phone or tablet podcast app to download and take episodes with you. Very inspiring stuff!

Check out [CW Academy](#). If you are at all interested, I suggest you sign up *now*, as there's a waiting list for classes. Between now and then, explore all the other online, computer, tablet and smart phone resources at your disposal. The [CW Academy: CWA Student Resources pages](#) lists

their class materials, and two Windows-based programs ([Morse Runner](#) and [RufzXP](#)) which are great contest-style practice tools.

Another nifty and simple tool for browsers/phones/tablets is [Morse Camp](#). This little tool is a "take it with you anywhere" practice aid, and it even works offline (no data) after you visit once.

If you *really* want to hear a great CW success story, check out the blog page of Kurt ADOWE, "[Morse Code Ninja](#)." Kurt was a guest on the [DitDit.fm podcast Episode 29](#). His accomplishments are awe-inspiring. And he's put together a *tremendous* set of free resources: computer-generated online YouTube recordings of a huge set of practice transmissions, at speeds starting at 15 WPM and up. Start at his "[Learn](#)" page if you are just getting started; the [Practice](#) section will help with lots of practice stuff to improve your speeds.

I hope this helps you if you've ever felt frustrated like I did. I'm still no speed demon... but I am getting better, and faster. And if you're a seasoned CW pro, please pass along these ideas - and lend your support - to new hams that are itching to learn and get better at CW.

How To Learn Morse Code And Make Radio Contacts

David, EA7HYD has published an English Language version of his excellent 'Dummies Guide', "How To Learn Morse Code And Make Radio Contacts".

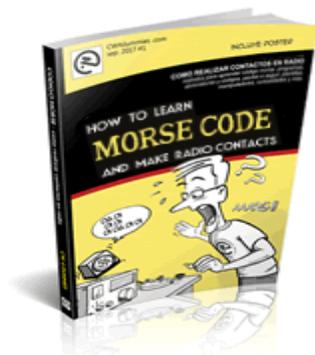
The book guides users through learning to receive and send CW but also spends a lot of time looking at typical QSO formats and content.

It's delivered in bite sized chunks in an easy to read and fun format to encourage you to go from zero to hero on your journey to learn the code and get on air.

You can see more details at the website www.cw4u.org.

The book is available from your local Amazon store, price £14.50 / \$19.50 / €16.70.

HOW TO LEARN MORSE CODE AND MAKE CONTACTS IN RADIO "Morse Code for Dummies"



- Summary of the index -

- INTRODUCTION - we need to learn - how to learn code, tools and methods - TIPS AND "tricks".
On lessons. - recognize the sounds, rhythm and time - wpm quality rather than speed.
- LABEL - standards, codes and guidelines.
- making a QSO - explained step by step.
- TRANSMIT - Writing with good lyrics.
- procedures.
- ANNEX.

<http://cw4u.org/index.html>

Learn Morse Code in Minutes A Day [APP]



- Learn Morse Code with different modes of learning, using the letter frequency and spaced repetition to help you learn.
- Customize your input, choose between tapping to simulate the real telegraph machine, or use buttons to input your code!
- Flash, vibrate or beep your morse code
- Customize the speed and the frequency of your sound generator
- Track your statistics for each letter
- Use multiple choice or short answer learning modes to boost your learning experience
- Learn mode introduces new letters one by one, starting with more common ones
- Words mode helps you learn from 10,000 most common words in English
- Recognize letter plays a sound, after which you need to guess the correct letter.
- Use the code translator to translate morse code to text, or text to morse code.
- If you need a hint, we've got you covered.
- Earn 10 hints a day when you open the app, watch a video to earn more

Search Google Play for APP



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VS9fmPZc3O4&feature=emb_logo

CW Clubs and Organizations

Long Island CW Club	https://longislandcwclub.org/
Straight Key Century Club	https://www.skccgroup.com/
The North American QRP CW Club	http://naqcc.info/
Fists CW Club	http://www.fists.org/
CWops	https://cwops.org/
First Class CW Operators' Club (FOC)	https://g4foc.org/

Here are a few CW organizations to help you out. Many of these organizations are free to join. They all promote CW operations. From the very basic on to high speed operating. Some provide practice sessions, nets, contests, CW training, on-line classes and more.

Odds and Ends:

So you picked up a bug? Well now how do you use it. It can be difficult to adjust and make them feel comfortable to the operator. Here is some good setup information.

http://www.vibroplex.com/techdocs/champion_adjustments.pdf

Have a Vibroplex Bug? How old is your bug? Here are links where you can find out.

<http://www.vibroplex.com/techdocs/WW7P-Serial-Number-List.pdf>

<http://www.vibroplexcollector.net/>



Four State QRP Comfortable nets

meet each Wednesday night beginning at 20:00 Central Time. Add anything to the exchange that you wish, temp, rig, ant, etc. Checking into all, sessions is encouraged. We call it the "Clean Sweep".

- 20:00 CT ... 40M CW Net on 7122 - WQ5RP/ACØBQ/KV6Z NCS
- 20:30 CT ... 80M CW Net on 3564 - WQ5RP/WAØITP NCS
- 21:00 CT ... 80M PSK Net on 3580.5 - WQ5RP/NØTGR NCS

All are welcome!

DMR Voice Net

Wednesday evening **DMR Voice Net** will be at (Thursday) 0300 UTC (9:00PM Central Time Wednesday/) Four States QRP has a Brandmeister DMR Talk Group (TG31654). Join us to discuss QRP, ask questions, or just ragchew. The Wednesday net is a directed net but any other time you may use the Talk Group to chat with other QRPers. Net Control operator is Bert NOYJ.

For information and help, check out the DMR subgroup on 4sqrp.groups.io <https://4sqrp.groups.io/g/DigitalFM>

Second Sunday Sprint

Occurs on the second Sunday of each month, 7 to 9 PM Central
Any mode, any band (except WARC & 60 mtrs) -

- Suggested frequencies: standard calling freq. plus 7122 and 3564 (CW), and 3985, 7285, and 14285 (SB).
as well as the usual QRP watering holes.

QSO's with the same station on different bands are allowed. CW and SB portions of a band count as two bands.

- Calling CQ is suggested to be "CQ 4S"
- Exchange is "RST, SPC, member number (power if non-member)"
- 5 Watts max CW, 10 Watts PEP max SB.

The station with the most contacts each month will be emailed a certificate. Furthermore, the top three stations with the most SSS contacts during the year will also receive certificates via email.

Scores are submitted via the qrpccontest.com/4sqrp website (compliments of W8DIZ).

For full details, please download the [complete rules \(PDF\) here](#).

For questions, please contact John (AAOVE): SecondSundaySprint@4sqrp.com

Thursday Morning

The Four State morning net has been convened for members who like to start the day on the air.

We meet each Thursday morning at 8:00 AM Central on 7122 kc.
7122 has become the Four State 40M hangout frequency, and often members can be found there on any morning.

Editors Note:

Articles are needed to make every Banner issue successful. If you have something of interest please send it to the editor at the email address below. You do not need to send a finished article. You can send some comments, notes, etc. and I can put it all together for you. Pictures are always of interest. Some of the items of interest would be outings and /or operating events by yourself or a group, construction whether equipment, antennas, accessories, QRP Field Day, SOTA, etc. Anything QRP is welcome.
de KCØPP

editorqrpbanner@gmail.com

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