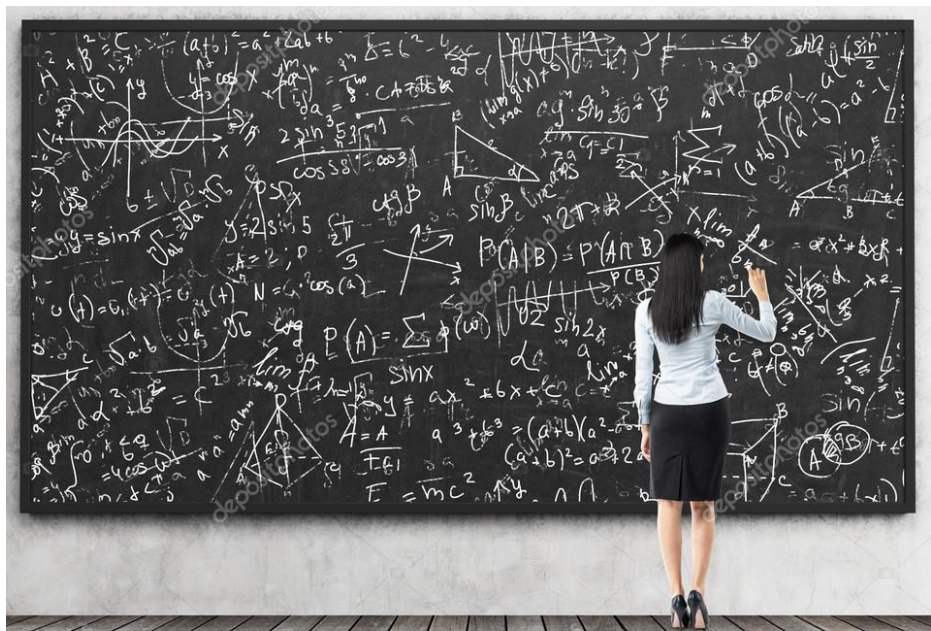


Microvolt

Monthly newsletter of the Utah Amateur Radio Club

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What exactly is an **education**, and is it important? Is it a level of formal schooling attained in a person's lifetime, or an indication of how smart a person is? Or is it an accumulation of knowledge? Do experience and wisdom factor in to a person's education? How much education is required to effectively participate in amateur radio? Is that question even meaningful, given the spectrum of knowledge and operating practices demonstrated by current licensees? Let's take a look at how education relates to amateur radio in today's world.

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Cover – Education

If we define education as the number of years of classroom study achieved, it appears that zero is what's required to obtain an amateur radio license. It's reported that the four youngest people to have passed the American Technician exam were [five years old](#). Two of them had apparently graduated from Kindergarten by their exam dates, and at least half of them needed to have the exam read to them.

The fact is, neither the FCC nor the ARRL or any of the VECs (volunteer examiner coordinators) record the ages of those who take amateur radio exams, so the information provided for the ones we're aware of comes from the word-of-mouth announcements by the VEs (volunteer examiners) at exam sessions or people acquainted with the licensees, such as their parents or a local club. Three of those four youngest Technician licensees are Veronica Harrington KC6TQR, Colton Ragsdale KEØCRD, and Neil Rapp WB9VPG. The youngest ever reported in Utah was Jessica Dowding KD7PIO, who held back until the ripe old age of six.

A technical education

A rapidly diminishing number of amateurs pine for the days in which a person was required to demonstrate a relatively deep technical understanding to pass any ham radio exam. Today's budding amateur is not required to know much about electronics beyond [Ohm's Law](#), and many experienced licensees feel that trend is moving in a direction that will likely damage the craft. They often state that a high level of education or knowledge has always defined the cornerstone of amateur radio.

But is that technical cornerstone as relevant in today's amateur world? Many say No, due to the large shift by new hams toward applications in emergency communication and disaster preparedness. While amateur radio once provided the technical community with a continually fresh legion of skilled [tinkerers](#), ham radio no longer appears to be on the forefront of technological innovation. On the other hand, the current craft does encourage the production of an army of volunteers skilled at emergency communication as a subset of preparedness.

Training rather than education

So, today's "educated" amateur appears more like an informed and willing volunteer than a professional



craftsman, and that's alright. The education that's obtained by many licensees of the 21st Century tend to focus more on operating a net, organizing disaster aftermath volunteers, and teaching preparedness skills. The training for these and many other skills that accommodate amateur radio often originates with ARES ([Amateur Radio Emergency Service](#)), a sub-organization of the ARRL (American Radio Relay League). Many hams enlist in other organizations, such as CERT ([Community Emergency Response Team](#)) and the Red Cross, who are not necessarily focused on amateur radio, but help fill their hunger for preparedness training.

Moonlighting

In spite of the education evolution in amateur radio, many still find the craft a haven for technical learning beyond what's required on the exam. The technology of radio has not disappeared, so the opportunity for many hams to learn about [its roots](#) and [true nature](#) still exists. Although Morse code proficiency is no longer required for amateur radio examinations, more people enjoy the "code" today than ever before. People are also finding hobby joy in digital operations, such as FT8, Winlink, and mesh networking.

It doesn't end with the license

Passing your Technician license exam is when the real learning begins. As many are fond of saying, ***The amateur radio license is a license to learn***, meaning that it's a beginning, not an ending to one's quest. As a licensed operator, you are certainly free to allow your education to stagnate, but one of the attractions of the craft is the endless ocean of knowledge that can be explored.

Microvolt editorial staff