

Editorial – Teaching ham radio

Do you enjoy teaching? If you do, you might also consider ham radio education to be an **activity** of sorts. From early on, you've probably discovered that you find a satisfaction in sharing your expertise or wealth of knowledge with others. You want them to experience the same thrill of learning about your craft that you've felt.

Formal teaching

If you've ever taught a ham radio class, you likely understand the need for preparation, not just knowing what to teach that day, but **how to deliver** those concepts. While the idea of formal teaching might seem like you're simply giving people information, the way you present that information can be anything but simple. To the teacher who's aware of the audience, voice inflection, appearance, body language, even bad breath all contribute to the lesson, either positively or negatively.

Teaching's a big, intimidating responsibility, causing most well-meaning hams to shy away from the task. You're always on the spot, and without hesitation must be ready to answer any seemingly random question that participants might ask. You need to stand up straight, look them in the eye, sound confident, and offer accurate, verifiable facts. Your class members will be judging ham radio by your every word and facial distraction, but especially by your attitude and enthusiasm.

Mentoring and elmering

In a [previous issue](#), we discussed elmering and its importance, even how best to mentor somebody who's curious and has a lot of questions. It's not always easy for a new ham to ask questions, especially the right ones. To offer the best and most helpful answers might sometimes require a bit of patience and understanding on your part. Contrary to popular cliché, there are indeed dumb questions, but probably the more damaging assaults to a discussion are dumb answers.

Avoid giving snarky or smart-alecky answers to questions. If you find a question slightly abrasive, try answering using a little deflection. For example, if somebody asks you why certain kinds of people seem so ill-informed, instead of answering directly, maybe try asking them why they believe others are so well-informed.



Setting an example

Probably the best way you can teach a principle or concept is by example. Being a long-time licensee, you're probably aware of the fact that new hams, especially youth, will imitate everything you do and say, good or bad. This applies to on-air conversations, in-person meetings, and gatherings, like Field Day and other activities.

When you're out and about, announce that you're mobile and monitoring. That helps people feel like there's a friendly voice who might be able to answer a question. Or when you're listening, and a newer ham announces he or she is on the air, go ahead and respond. Strike up a short conversation, which will let them know you care. And when you do, many potential listeners will also pick up on your friendliness, and imitate your behavior.

Teach through writing

Teaching an invisible audience through writing articles, posting on blogs, and commenting on social media is no less valid, viable, and valuable methods of teaching amateur radio than standing in front of a classroom. When you create a post or make a comment on social media, you represent all of amateur radio, believe it or not, like it or not.

People seeking for accurate and helpful information look to you as an experienced leader, and often trust everything you say. Therefore, not only must your information be accurate, but your approach, demeanor, and treatment of others must be kind, humble, and even a little vulnerable. Your hope is that **your readers will trust you**, and you might find that the more willing you are to admit your mistakes and make concessions, the more people will trust you.

Anything to add? Email editor@utaharc.org