The Amateur Radio (Ham) License

Options for obtaining this license in NZ

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The simplest way is to study and get a NZ general license as only one exam is involved. This is only an option for NZ residents and citizens.

For non NZ residents and maritime visitors the other option is to obtain the USA license. Their system is a little different in that there are three different levels of license. Technician Class, General Class and Extra Class. They must be taken in the order. The Technician is more of an introductory license and does not allow use of any of the popular HF voice bands (7,14MHz), so it is necessary to at least do both the Technician and General license. The exams for these can be done on the same day.

**The NZ License**

Licensing in NZ is managed by NZART (NZ Association of Amateur Transmitters) for Spectrum Management. Everything you need is on their web site. <http://nzart.org.nz/>

Click on ‘exam’ along the banner near the top of the home page.

Click on ‘Exam Files”

This page has all the information you need including how to download all the questions in the pool, with or without answers. There is also a study book and a call sign application form.

If you have had a bit of physics – especially Ohms Law, you will be able to self study without any problem. You could also contact the local radio club – the details are in this web site. The study book is good. Keep testing yourself until you feel you are ready to be tested. Then find an examiner by going to <http://nzart.org.nz/exam/> and click on [Exam Supervisor and Venue List](http://nzart.org.nz/exam/supervisors/). This gives all the people who are able to test you. They are all over the country. They are all volunteers and there is no charge but I am sure they would appreciate a nice thank you.

Any questions, please contact [patricia@ghradio.co.nz](mailto:patricia@ghradio.co.nz)

**The USA License**

The Seven Seas Cruising Association (ssca.org) has joined with the Laurel Amateur Radio Club to offer those in various parts of the world, including NZ, the opportunity to take the required tests. In New Zealand, this is now done annually and coordinated by Gulf Harbour Radio. Three approved US Volunteer Examiners are required. Patricia (Gulf Harbour Radio) is one, and we can usually find two US Extra Class licensed cruisers from the fleet to complete the requirements. Through our contacts with SSCA/LARC, we can get any US Extra Class license-holder certified to be a Volunteer Examiner. In 2017 Richard from SV Red will again lead the examiner team.

Exams for each class are called “elements” and must be taken and passed in sequence.  There is no longer any Morse code required.    All testing is multiple choice with questions from a publicly-available question pool.   A pass rate of 70% is required for each element. The first two exams have 35 questions, and the Extra Class exam is a bit tougher with 50 questions.

US License Exams are held in Whangarei in about February and Opua in April. (But check with Patricia for exact dates each year).

Again the question pool is available on line for each class of license. The American Radio Relay League (ARRL), publishes books of theory and exam pool questions.

One book, the [Ham Radio License Manual](http://www.amazon.com/Radio-License-Manual-ARRL-Inc/dp/1625950136), is available on Amazon.com as both a paper book and a downloadable e-book. The ARRL’s exam practice page is here:

<http://www.arrl.org/exam-practice>

However, you may be able to get by with free versions of material offered on other sites, including these:

<http://hamstudy.org> is a highly-recommended site favoured by recent examinees, if you have good internet access. Every question presented has a follow-up explanation.

<http://www.kb6nu.com/study-guides/> is a site offering free downloadable PDF files (or very low cost Kindle format files)

Before showing up for an exam session, you must register online at the [US Federal Communications Commission website](http://wireless.fcc.gov/uls/index.htm?job=home), to receive an “FRN Number.” This number then uniquely identifies you to the FCC. You don’t need to be a USA citizen or resident, so don’t be put off by this. (People who own US vessels may already have an FRN, as it is the same number used for getting a US Marine Radio License.) Bring this FRN number with you to the exam. Each individual testing for a ham license must have their own FRN.

In addition to the FRN, you should bring a photo ID (eg. driver’s license or passport), a pencil, and a simple non-programmable calculator. If you are upgrading from a lower-level US license, also bring proof of that license (obtainable from the FCC website using your FRN).