New Ham Kit
A Way for Clubs to Help Get New Hams on the Air

A New York radio association created a valuable tool for new operators.

Bryan Jackson, W2RBJ

It's a common occurrence in amateur radio for test applicants to pass their licensing exams and never get on the air. Our club, the East Greenbush Amateur Radio Association (EGARA) located in New York's Capital District, found that the biggest challenge facing many new hams was simply where to start. To help with this, EGARA provides Technician-class licensees with a copy of our New Ham Kit. We’ve found it to be a valuable tool in getting newcomers on the air by offering easy-to-understand information on equipment basics, operating guidelines, and helpful tips.

Kit Details
First, our kit urges newly licensed hams to join an amateur radio club. In addition to including applications to join EGARA and ARRL, we offer a free membership to EGARA for the first year. We point out that joining a club full of experienced hams (especially mentors) can provide the encouragement and guidance new operators need. As a result, our club has grown its membership and recruited younger operators vital to keeping our hobby alive.

Additionally, we provide new hams with an overview of the equipment they’ll need to get on the air, including a brief review of entry-level handheld transceiver radios. We also encourage them to search the internet and YouTube to find resources and guidance available for new hams. We request their email address during their Volunteer Examiner (VE) session to add them to the mailing list for our monthly newsletter. This helps maintain our contact with these new hams and keeps our club in the forefront.

In describing repeater basics, the kit includes an explanation of frequency offsets and CTCSS tones, how they work (with an illustration), as well as a detailed chart that lists offsets for each band. There’s also a complete list of the frequencies and CTCSS tones for our local club repeaters.

Additionally, the kit includes information on how to make a call, upgrade your license, and other topics. While the kit doesn’t address specific equipment controls, it does refer new hams to our club’s website (www.egra.club), where they can find a wealth of resources and relevant information.
Bryan Jackson, W2RBJ, holds an Amateur Extra-class license, is an ARRL sanctioned Volunteer Examiner, and serves as President of the East Greenbush Amateur Radio Association. He is a former Press Officer to two New York governors and previously served as State Capitol Correspondent for NBC, WNYT-TV, and WOR Radio. From 1991 to 1996, he built, owned, and managed WCDA-FM in Albany, New York. Today, he is semi-retired, but enjoys working as a substitute teacher and encouraging his students to explore amateur radio. Bryan can be reached at w2rbj@outlook.com.

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