

Volunteer Examiner Manual 9th Edition Supplemental Information 2025



Completing the NCVEC 605 Form, Basic Qualification Question, Online Exams, Remote Video Sessions, Upload Sessions Via Web Portal, Expired License Credit, Youth Examinees and Applicants Requiring Special Assistance.

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Prospective VE Applications

Email (quickest turn-around time), mail, or fax forms (PDF file or scanned JPEG image showing your real signature).
Address: ARRL VEC, 225 Main St., Newington, CT 06111 USA
Fax: 860-594-0339
Email: vec@arrl.org

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Chapter 4: Preparing for the Test Session

ARRL VE Exam Maker Software Phased Out

ExamTools Online Exams System Replaces ARRL VE Exam Maker Software

The ARRL VEC's Exam Maker test-generating software was discontinued in December 2020.

Volunteer Examiners (VEs) are now required to use the [ExamTools](#) web-based examination system. This platform supports both **online** and **printed** examinations and offers a comprehensive suite of features, including:

- Candidate registration and tracking throughout the session
- On-screen exams and automated grading
- Online signing of CSCE and Form 605 by both candidates and examiners
- Logging and compiling session statistics and VE participation (test session report summary)
- Generating output files for upload to the coordinating VEC

ExamTools efficiently manages nearly all aspects of conducting a test session. To get started, refer to ***ExamTools Account Registration and Training*** found in the ***Remote Video Sessions and In-Person Sessions Using ExamTools*** section (page 2). These instructions are also available on the [VE Resources](#) page.

Remote Video Sessions and In-Person Sessions Using ExamTools

The [ExamTools](#) system supports **online testing** for **remote video-supervised** sessions and **in-person** sessions.

Remote video exam sessions are conducted using a video conferencing platform in combination with [ExamTools'](#) on-screen tests. The system also works effectively for **in-person sessions** using on-screen tests.

For teams using printed exams, see the ***In-Person Sessions using Printed Exams*** section (pages 3-4) **after** creating an ExamTools account.

To participate in the video sessions program, ARRL VE teams must meet specific criteria and follow all policies. High exam integrity and accurate document submission are essential. Prior in-person experience is helpful, and training with an established video session team is required.

ExamTools Account Registration and Training

Use [ExamTools](#) to conduct in-person or remote sessions. At least one team member must be designated as a team leader (admin) to access full system functionality, including registering sessions and printing exams. Full access is limited to team leaders (item #6); non-leader VEs do not have these permissions.

1. Watch the [ExamTools training video playlist](#). Helpful information and instructions are in the [ExamTools documentation](#) site.
2. **Read all the information in the [ExamTools Overview](#).** In the [Volunteer Examiners](#) section learn how to **register for an account**. To **activate the ExamTools account**, you must upload an official copy of your FCC license under your account settings. It's a quick process and takes only about 30 seconds as long as you upload the official license. Reference copies are **not** accepted. Detailed instructions on obtaining an official license authorization are located on the FCC website: [How to obtain official FCC license copy](#). ARRL VEC can help if you have any issues obtaining the official license.
3. Register in the **sandbox/development** site at [ExamTools Dev](#) and then login at [ExamTools Dev Portal](#) with your team members. For best results, it's recommended to use your call sign as your username. The sandbox/development site is used for any **training** and practice purposes and runs on its own database to avoid any issues with the [ExamTools](#) production environment.
4. Join the VE Discord discussion group at <https://discord.gg/CsKrBmA> where you'll find a lot of useful information including how to register for ExamTools.org as a VE and how to upgrade your VE Discord membership access.
5. **Join an existing ARRL VE team as a VE for a live training session.** Volunteer in the [#arrrl](#) Discord channel so you can see the real system in action or contact the ARRL VEC to be directly set up with a team.
6. **ARRL VE Team Leaders:** Review the [ARRL VEC ExamTools FAQ](#) and [ExamTools Team Lead Instructions](#).
Step 1. Authorization. ARRL team leaders (liaisons) must receive an authorization from the VEC granting permission to run exam sessions in ExamTools. **After** setting up an account in both systems (production and sandbox), email VEC@arrrl.org or W2MAU@arrrl.org or call 1-800-927-7583 for team leader approval.
Step 2. After Authorization. It may take up to 4 hours for your permission to register in ExamTools. After your ExamTools Team Lead permissions have been granted and you've created your team, you **must** email the following information to VEC@arrrl.org: (1) The **team leader's call sign** (or call signs, if more than one); (2) Your team's **ExamTools TEAM ID**. This ensures smooth import of your session files via our secure upload page.

Remote Video-Supervised Session

To ensure smoother video-supervised sessions, we **strongly** recommend giving candidates **detailed instructions** in advance. It helps everything run more efficiently for both your team and the participants.

Columbia University ARC offers a great example: [W2AEE Remote License Exams](#)

For ideas on setting up your team's website, check out:

[WM7X Exam Prep](#)

[PARC Online Instructions](#)

Feel free to use or adapt their wording for your own video testing setup.

Zoom is currently the most common video conferencing platform being used, but others can be utilized (such as Microsoft Teams, GoToMeeting, BigBlueButton, Discord, etc.) if the team is more familiar with those systems.

The team will need to set up a way to electronically accept test fee payments directly (such as Paypal, Venmo, Zelle, Apple Pay, Google Pay, etc.) and then the team will have to send the VEC a check or pay for the candidates with a credit card.

We suggest beta testing your entire process with team members, family members, or known candidates (such as students from your club's ham radio classes) in the ExamTools Development "Sandbox" training site before offering video exams in your community or to a wider audience in the live ExamTools site.

E-File Sessions to the VEC

VE teams must submit in-person or remote exam session documents via ARRL VEC's private and secure upload page. Contact the VEC department at VEC@arrrl.org for the upload web page link and instructions.

Do not mail exam sessions to the VEC. Effective **November 1, 2025**, our Business Reply Mail account with the U.S. Postal Service is **closed**. As a result, we will **no longer accept VEC postage-paid return labels or envelopes** associated with this account. Detailed upload instructions are in the section titled ***Upload Sessions Via Web Portal*** (pages 7-8).

In-Person Sessions Using Online Exams

ExamTools **online** examinations can also be used at in-person sessions. Follow the instructions in the ***ExamTools Account Registration and Training*** section (page 2) for creating an account and becoming an ExamTools Team Lead (item #6). View the ExamTools [in-person sessions exam process](#) instructions. Teams must download and submit the **VEC Archive** file to the ARRL VEC. See the ***Upload Sessions Via Web Portal*** information (pages 7-8).

In-Person Sessions Using Printed Exams

Follow the instructions in the ***ExamTools Account Registration and Training*** section (page 2) for creating an account and becoming an ExamTools Team Lead (item #6).

Teams have two grading options when using printed paper exams.

1. Grading Printed Exams Using ExamTools

GradeCam uses a phone or computer camera to automatically grade exams in seconds, eliminating the need for manual scoring. View the ExamTools [in-person sessions exam process](#) and [printed exam creation instructions](#) (scroll down the page to the GradeCam section). GradeCam streamlines the grading process and ensures accurate results. Teams must download and submit the **VEC Archive** file to the ARRL VEC. See the ***Upload Sessions Via Web Portal*** information (pages 7-8).

2. Manual Grading of Printed Exams

Manual grading of printed exams is still available, but we highly recommend switching to **GradeCam**. It's fast, easy to use, and delivers instant results—grading takes just seconds. Give it a try and streamline your exam sessions!

VE teams using printed exams have two options for manual grading:

- **Standard Printed Exams and Answer Keys:** Print randomly generated exams along with their corresponding answer keys for traditional manual grading.
- **Template Compatible Printed Exams:** Print randomly generated exams designed to align with our **blue overlay grading templates**. Our templates are preloaded in ExamTools and allow fast and accurate manual grading. Use our [Candidate Examination Answer Sheets](#) for proper alignment with the templates.

Read the [printed exam creation](#) instructions for more information. For teams that plan only to print the exams and will not be utilizing ExamTools during sessions, only the VE team leader will have to create an account. Teams must e-file session documents using our secure upload page. See the ***Upload Sessions Via Web Portal*** information (pages 7-8). Both methods support flexible manual grading depending on your team's preferences and available resources.

Additional Training

View a slide show or video by Marcel Stieber AI6MS explaining remote video-supervised sessions using online exams. Fully-Remote Amateur Radio Exam Administration: [Slides](#) or [Video](#)

ExamTools System Documents: <https://docs.exam.tools/docs/>

How ExamTools Works Overview: <https://docs.exam.tools/docs/ve/examtoolsoverview/>

VE Overview and Training Videos: <https://docs.exam.tools/docs/ve/vetrainingvideos/>

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Chapter 5: FORM 605

Supplemental Information for VEs and Applicants Completing the NCVET 605 Form

Basic Qualification Question Instructions (Felony Question), FRN, and Email

All exam applicants must provide an FRN and email address and must answer the Basic Qualification Question on the NCVET 605 Form at the exam session.

Each applicant along with three ARRL VEC accredited Volunteer Examiners must complete [NCVET QUICK-FORM 605 APPLICATION 2022](#) at ARRL VEC coordinated exam sessions for a new license or license upgrade. All NCVET 605 Form versions issued prior to September 2017 are obsolete and cannot be used. Here are step by step instructions for completing the [NCVET 605 Form](#).

FCC Registration Numbers (FRN): Exam candidates are REQUIRED to register in the FCC CORES registration system and receive an FCC Registration Number (FRN) before exam day. Candidates can go directly to the FCC CORES User Account and Registration page: <https://apps.fcc.gov/core/userLogin.do>. Click [Here](#) for FCC CORES Tutorial Videos.

Email Address: A valid email address is mandatory on the application form. On December 30, 2020, FCC Wireless Services ceased the printing of paper licenses. The FCC will now only provide all correspondence electronically through email.

Basic Qualification Question: Applicants are required to answer the FCC basic qualification question. Applicants that answer "YES" to the basic qualification question **must submit the required documentation (exhibit) directly to the FCC**. Instruct candidates to follow the [FCC instructions and procedures](#) and reference the application file number. The candidate must act within 14 days of the application filing date with the FCC, or the application will be dismissed by the FCC. Submit the documentation (exhibit) before any payments (if applicable). The candidate should **not** communicate any information or documents to the VE team or the VEC. Candidates should be aware that some information about them will be made publicly available on the FCC's website: [FCC Licensee Privacy](#)

All ARRL exam session forms can be viewed, downloaded, or printed from the [VE Resources](#) page, except the CSCE (Certificate of Successful Completion of Examination) form. Email VEC@arrl.org for access to an interactive, printable CSCE form.

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Chapter 6: Conducting the Session

Determine if any Applicant Requires Special Assistance / Procedures for Testing the Disabled: **Additional Information**

Accommodations should be made for individuals with special needs such as ADD, ADHD, NLD (non-verbal learning disorder), and ASD (autism spectrum disorder). The individual should be allowed to have an accompanying support person present or therapeutic support animal that is trained to recognize the needs of the individual in the case of stress or anxiety. Additional accommodations may need to be considered including sound blocking devices for individuals with sound sensitivity, private rooms or rooms of smaller groups, awareness of any tactile sensitivity, etc.

The exam session environment should be calm, respectful, and accommodating to youth and individuals with special needs or other medical conditions and be welcoming to all.

The ExamTools online exam system supports screen readers and can exclude diagram-based questions for visually impaired candidates.

Youth Candidates: Additional Information Youth Licensing Grant Program

Youth examinees **under age 18**, can earn an initial license or upgrade their current license through the [ARRL VEC](#) program for just **\$5**.

The **ARRL Youth Licensing Grant Program**, in effect since April 19, 2022, covers the one-time \$35 application fee for new license candidates younger than 18-years old for [tests administered](#) under the ARRL VEC program.

The \$35 FCC application fee will be reimbursed after the [ARRL VEC](#) receives the completed reimbursement form and the new license has been issued by the FCC. The reimbursement check will be mailed to the fee payer listed on the form. Additionally, the program allows candidates younger than 18-years old pay a reduced exam fee of \$5 to the [ARRL VEC](#) VE team at the time of the exam. The \$5 fee is for all candidates under the age of 18 regardless of the exam level taken. Proof of under 18 status is required at the session ([what to bring to an exam session](#)). Visit the [Youth Licensing Grant Program](#) web page for full details and instructions.

Youth Candidates: Additional Information Online Privacy

The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (**COPPA**) is a federal law designed to protect the online privacy of children under the age of 13. It requires parental consent before collecting personal information from children in this age group. As a result, **ExamTools/HamStudy** requires a parent or legal guardian of any applicant **under the age of 13** to complete and submit a COPPA form. Minor children (under the age of 18) may be accompanied in the room by an adult during the online or in-person test.

Privacy Policy & COPPA Form Access

The privacy policy and COPPA form are available on both the HamStudy and ExamTools websites.

Children under **13 years old** must have a parent or guardian complete and submit the [COPPA](#) form and may be required to remain in the room during the session to chaperone.

Children under **18 years old** must have a parent or guardian provide permission. The child and parent can decide what they are comfortable with to determine if the parent will be in the room.

Privacy Policy Link

You can view the privacy policy for ExamTools and HamStudy here: <https://docs.exam.tools/privacy/>

The section on **Children's Privacy** is located near the bottom of the page.

COPPA Form Link

Download the COPPA form: https://blog.hamstudy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/ExamTools_COPPA_form.pdf

A parent or legal guardian must:

- Print the form
- Complete and sign it
- Scan and email it to coppa@examtools.org as part of the registration process at HamStudy.org

Youth candidates under **18 years old** taking **paper-based exams** are **not required** to complete a COPPA form.

The child and parent can decide what they are comfortable with to determine if the parent will be in the room.

Candidates with Expired Licenses: Additional Information

Expired License Credit is Available

Partial credit for expired licenses is available provided the ex-licensee successfully passes a new Technician exam.

The FCC does not reinstate or renew expired licenses that have gone beyond the two-year grace period, but they do offer partial credit for expired General, Advanced, and Extra licenses and Technician licenses issued before March 21, 1987.

Former License Holders Returning to Amateur Radio

Expired license holders do not automatically qualify for a new license. To return, they must:

- Pass the current 35-question Technician exam at a VE session.
- Provide proof of their expired license (copy only, not the original) to the VE team.
- The VE team will submit the credit to the VEC.

Based on the previous license class, the FCC may grant partial credit toward higher-level exams. A new license and sequential call sign will be issued. Afterward, the licensee may apply for their old call sign (if available) through the FCC's vanity call sign program.

The ex-licensee will not automatically qualify for any new license. At a minimum, previous license holders must pass the current 35-question Technician exam at a VE exam session to return to amateur radio. Additionally, the ex-licensee **must turn in the expired license proof** to the exam team to receive credit at the session. A copy of the license or proof is sufficient, do not turn in the original. The VE team must submit the credit to the VEC. Then depending on the previous license class, the FCC will give partial examination element credit for the higher-level exam(s). The FCC will issue a new license and new sequentially issued call sign to the ex-licensee. After the new license and call sign are issued by the FCC, the licensee can apply for their old call sign (if it's still available) directly with the FCC via their [vanity call sign](#) program.

Expired Novice and Tech Plus licenses and Technician licenses issued after March 21, 1987, do not receive any credit. FCC rules, candidate information, and VE instructions related to Expired License Credit and Exam Element Credit: <http://www.arrl.org/exam-element-credit>

Chapter 7: Session Report and Returning Documents

VE teams are required to upload the completed session documents for quicker service. Successful new and upgraded license applications are transmitted to the FCC within 1 to 2 business days (for weekend sessions) and are usually transmitted on the same day for weekday sessions.

Upload Sessions Via Web Portal

VE teams must submit in-person or remote exam session documents via the ARRL VEC's secure non-public upload page. **Do not mail exam sessions to the VEC.** Effective **November 1, 2025**, our Business Reply Mail account with the U.S. Postal Service is **closed**. As a result, we will **no longer accept VEC postage-paid return labels or envelopes** associated with this account.

To Get Started:

Please contact the VEC department at VEC@arrl.org for upload instructions. Authorized VEs will receive a **private URL** to submit their exam sessions. Uploading your completed session documents via this page ensures **faster processing** of license applications. Since 2018, this method has allowed us to transmit applications to the FCC as follows:

- **Weekday sessions:** Typically transmitted **same day**
- **Weekend sessions:** Transmitted within **1–2 business days**

E-Filing Program Requirements

To participate in this program, VE teams must:

- Consistently meet ARRL VEC standards for **integrity and accuracy**.
- Ensure all candidates have a valid **FRN** from the FCC CORES system (applies to both U.S. and international applicants).
- Maintain **secure access** to your computer and delete digital exam files (and discard paper records) **after the FCC processes all applications from the session**.

Upload Page Form Requirements

When submitting your files, provide the following information:

- Your **name** and **call sign**
- **Phone number** and **email address**
- **Method of payment**
- **Exam session date** and **location** (City/State or City/Country)
- Names of **youth candidates** (if applicable)
- Any **session anomalies**

Supported file types: PDF, DOC, DOCX, JSON, ZIP.

You may upload **multiple files** (up to 40MB each) in one submission.

Uploading Online and GradeCam Exam Sessions:

- Upload the **VEC Archive ZIP file**, which contains the PDF and full JSON export.
- Other downloadable files from ExamTools will not work with our FCC data entry system.
- **Do not rename or alter** the ZIP file. Do not unzip the file and send the PDF and JSON separately.
- Submit any **additional documentation** (e.g., [youth licensing grant reimbursement forms](#) or [element credit](#)) as **separate files**, along with the original, unaltered ZIP file. Do **not** include them inside the ZIP file.
- Press shift (or Ctrl button) when selecting multiple files.
- **After uploading**, you'll see a **confirmation or error message on-screen**. Successfully uploaded files will be listed with "has been uploaded successfully." Be sure to include all required files.

Uploading Manually Graded Paper Exam Sessions:

- Combine scanned documents into a **single PDF** when possible.
- If uploading multiple files, keep them under 40MB and label clearly in the "Notes" field (e.g., "1 of 2", "2 of 2").
- Press shift (or Ctrl button) when selecting multiple files.
- Within the file, include the following documents in this order:
 - Test Session Report
 - Candidate Roster(s)
 - Each candidate's documents should be grouped together in the following order: 605 Form, Exam Answer Sheet(s) (both pass and fail), [Youth Licensing Grant Reimbursement Forms](#) and/or [Element Credit](#) or expired license credit (if applicable) and (Optional) CSCEs. Candidates arranged in the order listed on the roster.
- **After uploading**, you'll see a **confirmation or error message on-screen**. Successfully uploaded files will be listed with "has been uploaded successfully." Be sure to include all required files.

Security & File Handling

- Files are **encrypted during transfer** and securely stored. Only ARRL VEC staff can access them.
- Applications are normally submitted to the FCC within **two business days** after verification.
- VE teams should **delete local files** only after confirming all licenses have been issued by the FCC.
- ARRL VEC retains files for **15 months**, in accordance with FCC rules.
- **Do not mail hard copies**. Keep them only until FCC posting is confirmed, then discard them securely.

Fee Payment Instructions

- If **mailing fees** include:
 - Exam date and location
 - VE team leader's name, call sign, and contact info
 - Check or money order made out to ARRL VEC
 - (Preferred) Printout of the upload confirmation page
- If paying fees by **credit card**:
 - Call in payment after each session, or
 - Keep a **credit card on file** to avoid repeated calls
 - To set up, call **1-800-927-7583** (Do not email credit card info)

Important Reminder:

FRN Required: Only FRNs are accepted at sessions. SSNs must not appear on any uploaded documents.

New Applicants: Must create an FCC account and register their SSN in the FCC [CORES](#) system before attending a session. This may be completed at the session if FCC systems are working properly.

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\$35 FCC Application Fee

The FCC released a [Public Notice](#) on March 23, 2022, stating that the amateur radio application fees, including those associated with Form 605 application filings, are **effective April 19, 2022**. The Federal Communications Commission's authority to impose and collect fees is mandated by Congress.

The \$35 application fee applies to new, renewal, rule waiver, and modification applications that request a new vanity call sign. The fee is per application. Note that applying for a [vanity call sign](#) must be done **online** directly with the FCC.

Administrative updates, such as a change of name, mailing or email address, and modification applications to upgrade an amateur radio licensee's operator class or to request a sequentially issued call sign, are exempt from fees.

VECs and Volunteer Examiner (VE) teams should not collect the \$35 fee at exam sessions. The FCC fee must be paid online directly to the FCC not to the VE team or organization processing the application form. VEC and VE team licensing procedures are unchanged. New applicants will pay the \$15 exam session fee to the ARRL VE team as usual, and pay the \$35 application fee directly to the FCC by using the CORES FRN Registration system (<https://apps.fcc.gov/cores/userLogin.do>). CORES payment system information is located here: <https://www.fcc.gov/licensing-databases/fees/cores-payment-system>

Visit the ARRL website for more Application Fee information: <http://www.arrl.org/fcc-application-fee>

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Web Resources for ARRL VEs

The ARRL VEC [VE Resources](#) page offers information you will need to help conduct exam session business. Our support page offers easy access to exam forms and session information, online exams and remote video sessions, question pools, FCC Rules, basic qualification question information, and much more!

VE Resources page: <http://www.arrl.org/resources-for-ves>

Expired License Credit and Exam Element Credit information: <http://www.arrl.org/exam-element-credit>

FCC Basic Qualification Question information and instructions: <http://www.arrl.org/fcc-qualification-question>

Candidates - what to bring to a session: <http://www.arrl.org/what-to-bring-to-an-exam-session>

Obtain a license copy: <http://www.arrl.org/obtain-license-copy> (The FCC Wireless Services ceased printing paper licenses.)

Exam Session search: <http://www.arrl.org/exam>

Teams conducting Online Exams: <http://www.arrl.org/online-exam-session>

FCC Application Fees: <http://www.arrl.org/fcc-application-fee>

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