

What's So Great About Ham Radio?

6 min read

Maybe you have heard about ham radio from a licensed friend or family member who has answered this question for you from their perspective. Or, perhaps you have only heard that ham radio is great for emergency communications, and the rest is a murky pit. Either way, let us share with you our view of the top 10 best things about ham radio and help you gain a better understanding of why over 3/4 million US citizens currently possess a ham radio license.

#10. Ham radio builds your self confidence. While this might not be the first advantage of ham radio that you would expect, it is absolutely true. You will gain confidence in yourself initially by simply studying and passing your exam to earn your license -- with our study approach and materials, anyone can do it. Next, you will gain confidence in pushing-to-talk with your station microphone and transmitting your voice to all who are listening on the frequencies -- it's a bit like public speaking initially, but you will quickly gain on-air competence and commensurate confidence to communicate regularly with ease among the friendly on-air community. As you learn more about radio and operations, you will accomplish much more, perhaps by configuring a digital communications station, using satellite communications, or installing a mobile station in your vehicle -- each accomplishment boosting your confidence in your abilities along with your knowledge and experience. Try it! Get a confidence boost today by earning your Technician license.

Anyone can earn their Technician ham radio license with HamRadioSchool.com. Get started today!

#9. Ham radio bridges generations. The intrigue of two-way radio communications appeals to people of all ages. There is something magic and universally enticing about reaching out incredible distances with invisible airwaves to make personal contact with another human. Add the variety of operational options of voice communications, digital modes, Internet gateway activation, satellite ops, atmospheric skip propagation, and more, and the overlap of interests naturally generates connections independent of age or identity. Expand your generational influence with ham radio!

#8. Ham radio makes you part of a world-wide community. Amateur radio operators around the globe communicate with one another every day across international boundaries, sharing personal stories, exchanging station information, and extending international goodwill. I have often heard stories of hams who travel internationally and are hosted by their on-air friends in their home nation. Even if you never find yourself face-to-face with your new international associates, you can maintain a friendship with regular contacts and cordial dialog. It is an experience and an opportunity unique to ham radio operators. Join our cozy planet-spanning community!

#7. Ham radio will not allow you to become bored. It provides an enormous variety of worthwhile, interesting, and engaging activities and challenges that you might otherwise never experience. Here are just a few typical examples:

- Find and use local VHF/UHF repeaters in your area to contact other hams
- Learn how to be the net control station for a local regular on-air net meeting
- Install a mobile station in your vehicle
- Coordinate your overlanding adventure using ham radio
- Use your radio to send and receive email or share digital files
- Use your radio to make contacts through a satellite repeater or with the ISS
- Help provide communications support to local public events
- Volunteer to provide emergency communications services to agencies
- Find or start a ham club in your area and get involved in activities
- Help others learn about ham radio
- Establish an HF station for long-distance communications
- Build a digital circuit to perform a cool radio communications function
- Experiment with a new antenna design
- Activate a mountain summit with radio (Summits on the Air)
- Activate a state park or national park with a portable station (Parks on the Air)
- Activate a remote geographic location with a group of hams (DXpedition)
- Learn and operate with Morse Code via continuous wave (CW) transmissions
- Enter a radio contest and hone your on-air skills
- Participate in a hidden transmitter "fox hunt" contest
- Participate in emergency communications exercises

And SO MUCH MORE! Get your ham radio adventure started. Why wait, when there is a lifetime of experiences to enjoy?

#6. Ham radio provides an opportunity for community service. Radio communications come in handy across a lot of the public service domain. You can help administer local parades, fun runs and races, fairs, and almost any other event requiring coordination of the host team. You can engage your community organizations to offer the services that you and your fellow hams can provide.

You can also become involved in Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES) to assist response services such as Red Cross, Salvation Army, and other in providing shelter and relief services and other emergency response actions. With a bit more specialized training, you can support your local civil defense agencies through Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services (RACES). Contact a local ham club about affiliation with ARES or RACES.

Give back to your community. Earn your license.

#5. Ham radio can improve your technical skills. If you try any of the myriad activities in ham radio, or simply rub elbows with fellow hams, you are apt to find yourself picking up additional technical information about radio, on-air procedures, electronics, digital communications, and more. It's just part of the nature of ham radio -- your technical knowledge and skills will broaden naturally as you advance your learning and experience base. Advance your geekiness today! (It's quite cool.)

#4. Ham radio introduces you to new friends. You will make new friends on the air, chatting with other hams, but you will also make new friends in a radio club or within any organizations you engage in public service, radio education, or emergency preparedness. You are likely to find many new friends with similar interests while pursuing your license and once you are operating regularly. You will find some of the friendliest, smartest, and most generous people you have ever met in the ham community. Make an interesting new friend today with ham radio!

#3. Ham radio promotes life-long learning. It is nearly impossible for any one individual to master all of the multifarious activities of ham radio. You can continue to expand your learning across a lifetime with all the interesting things to do and challenges to meet. See [#7](#) above for a surface scratch of some of the engaging endeavors and adventures you can have. You can steer your own learning and create your own adventures with ham radio across the wide spectrum of opportunities it provides, and you'll always find fellow hams with similar interests ready to help with your learning. Expand your mind over a lifetime with ham radio.

#2. Ham radio is the best backup / emergency communications system in the world. Cell phone networks are fragile and unreliable in emergency situations where hundreds or thousands of individuals jam the cell networks simultaneously. Further, cell communications are limited to just two parties at once. Internet and cell services are also heavily dependent upon commercial power that is often disrupted.

On the other hand, ham radio works when all else fails. It is easily powered with batteries, and a broad range of frequencies exist on which you can communicate across town, across the continent, or around the planet. And your communications are not limited to one-on-one calls. A network of numerous individual hams can share communications on a single frequency or repeater station, getting information disseminated with an efficiency superseded perhaps only by commercial broadcasts. However, those commercial broadcasts are one-way communications with multiple *single points of failure* and, unlike ham radio, do not provide for dialog or detailed exchanges between parties. It has been proven again and again through hurricanes, wildfires, tsunamis, earthquakes, terrorist attacks, power outages, and more -- there really is no better emergency communications capability in the world than ham radio. Add comms (or *bandwidth, if you prefer the 'B'*) to your beans, bullets, and bandages to round out your emergency prep.

#1. Ham radio is fun! As our pal and senior elmer Bob KØNR is fond of saying, the primary purpose of ham radio is to *"have fun messing around with radio."* It is natural for most people to have a little initial "mic fright" and be shy about transmitting over the air the first time or two. But once you get past that common human reaction you will get a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment in having the ability to communicate with other hams with the electromagnetic magic of radio. We think the on-air communications aspect is only one of the many fun things about ham radio. We've listed many of the other enjoyable facets above, but when you add them all up they combine to produce this overarching greatest thing about ham radio - fun!

Go have fun! You'll be glad you did.

-- Stu WØSTU