



In the world of NO code, why KNOW code?

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By the end of 2006, the FCC ended the era of Morse code testing in amateur radio. Without going into the pros and cons of this decision, I'd like to discuss the future. Will Morse code (CW) gradually disappear from the amateur bands? Will anyone still use CW? Will anyone entering the "hobby" actually learn CW? And WHY would you want to learn CW today?

I think it is obvious that CW will be around for a long, long time. It will become something like another digital mode. Some enjoy RTTY and PSK and some will continue to enjoy and use CW. Simply because something is not a license requirement does not mean it is not worthwhile both from a practical standpoint and from an enjoyment standpoint. Why else would people go to blacksmith schools, quilt classes, and increase their woodworking skills. Certainly, "products" in all these categories are available at very reasonable prices, yet many wish to learn and carry on the skills required to make things. It's satisfying! You could carry this to such areas as why do people fish, hunt, ride bicycles, and climb rocks – because it's FUN. Yes, many people really do enjoy CW. Add in the competitive nature of man, and you can add running, paint ball, motocross, and CW contests are a regular occurrence – just listen to the bands the first weekend of November or the last weekend of June (Field Day) and this is true for many other weekends throughout the year.

In addition to FUN, learning at least the CW letters to say 5 wpm might make sense to you for some of the following reasons:

1. It's THE universal language known all over the world.
2. CW is a great national asset during times of emergency.
3. CW can get through when other modes fail.
4. Low power stations (including the ones you might build yourself) use CW to work DX easier than with voice.
5. CW rigs are easier to build.
6. Kids who learn CW do better in school.
7. CW lets you enter a unique fraternity in amateur radio.
8. History becomes more meaningful for those who know Morse code.
9. Those who master Morse code appreciate new technology.
10. It can save your life such as flashing your headlights or copying aircraft beacons.

Even though you might not be "good" at code, why not give it a try? There are many web sites devoted to learning Morse code. There are also many programs to help you. Check out: <http://www.g4fon.net/> and his CW Trainer program. Also, there are many organizations that are there to help including FISTS.org and skccgroup.com Also, check out: learnmorsecode.com

To assist and have some fun, consider one of the software CW copying programs such as multiPSK 4.1.2 or CWget 1.5 Copy what you can by ear but keep one of these programs running to "help". Remember it is usually easier to send CW than receive so once you can send at 5 wpm, get on the air and use the software to help you fill in the blanks. Set yourself a goal and pretty soon, you MAY find you do **KNOW CW**, it's great!

PS if you are looking for a club in the North Fulton area, come join us on the 3rd Tuesday.

NORTH FULTON AMATEUR RADIO LEAGUE – nfarl.org – 145.47 MHz