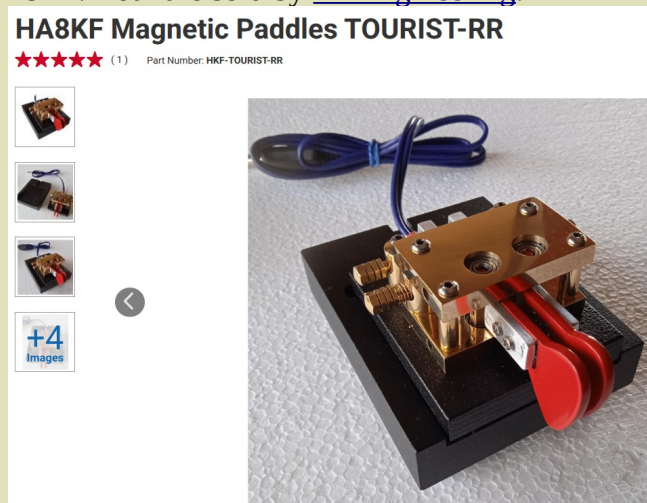# Learning Morse Code
Bob Nolte KD7YOX

It appears to be possible, that an 80+yo ham can learn morse code well enough to get on the air. This is what I have discovered thus far.

Picking a Good Key

In order to start practicing, you are going to want to learn on a good key because there is no sense in developing your motor skills on crummy one. You will talk to other hams that will tell you that they learned on a straight key. The truth is, if you are just starting, you want an Iambic Paddle key with magnetic return and you will want to use Iambic Mode B. This explains Mode B

I wasted a lot of money trying cheap keys. Once you start shopping for magnetic keys, the list gets very short. Begali makes keys like jewelry. They are wonderful, but expensive. I settled on a key made in Hungary by Imre Papp, HA8KF. Both are sold by DXEngineering.

This key has 4 adjustment knobs right on top. It's heavy, and won't slide around when you use it. There can't be 1wpm difference between this and a Begali key at more than twice the price.

Code Practice Trainer.

I use the Putikeeg CW Trainer. It makes a sound when you tap a paddle and, if it's a valid Morse Code character, it will display the character on the little screen. What the instructions won't tell you, is that you need to pinch the paddle keys together when you turn it on to use Iambic B mode. Otherwise, it performs well at what it's designed for. It's available on Amazon.

Listening to Morse Code

Once you have used the Trainer to learn the code, you need to start practicing recognizing the characters when you hear them. This is by far the most challenging, but you can do it anytime with the KD7YOX Continuous Morse Stream Trainer. Click the link to try it.

This will work in any browser. It will work on your phone, but better visually on a computer or tablet. If you are in you car, let it run and say the character out loud. You won't get a score, but you are trying to train your brain to associate a sound with a character. When you've had enough, press the Stop button and it will show you how you did, if you've keyed in the letters as you listened.

If you are having trouble with a few characters, put them into the Custom (use box) and it will randomly test on just those characters.

If you want to hear the code at it's natural speed, here are some gap settings.

◎ Common WPM Examples

Speed (WPM)	Dot Length (ms)	Character Gap (3×dot)
5 WPM	240 ms	720 ms
10 WPM	120 ms	360 ms
12 WPM	100 ms	300 ms
15 WPM	80 ms	240 ms
18 WPM	66.7 ms	200 ms
20 WPM	60 ms	180 ms
25 WPM	48 ms	144 ms

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