

## LEARN CW WITH 3AFW

### **About Learning.**

Learning Morse or CW requires effort by the student. If you are 5 years old you could learn it in a week. As adults we take longer. There are many methods and the one I present here is a little different. It won't suit everyone. It's different and breaks a few "rules" but I'm convinced it is the most effective self-learning method that doesn't need a computer or smart phone or another operator.

No matter what method you use to learn Morse there is one common factor. Practice, practice and practice - often. Three 10 minute sessions spread through the day is better than one hour in a single slog. That said you must have a set of planned learning assignments and to stick with them. I recommend that sessions be from 10 to 20 minutes long at fixed times say after breakfast, lunch and dinner.

This program is designed to get you up to at least 5 wpm on air in 6 weeks, if you put in the practice. If you as a mature age student are having difficulty retaining your learning it is OK to take two weeks for the one week exercise, but make sure you do a minimum of 30 minutes per day in 3 sessions. OK you can have one day per week off if you need to.

No excuses, set up a routine and stick to it. Persist. Don't be lazy. Do the practice.

If you miss a session, add another to the following day's sessions. Do not make excuses as to why you can't do a session. That way is the road to failure. It isn't easy but the pleasure you will get if you stick to it is more than a just reward.

*If you commute by public transport you have a ready-made learning time. Setting up a routine is one of the keys to success. The second key is sticking to the routine.*

### **Basic Morse elements.**

Morse consists of dots and dashes. It is really a language using basic sounds, so you can learn it by memorizing the sounds for each letter and number. You don't need any equipment. Just "sing" or chant the sounds to yourself, in your head as "dit" for a dot and "dah" for a dash. The dash sound lasts for three times as long as the dot sound.

The letters of the alphabet consist of one or more elements with a space between dots and or dashes in a letter being equal to the duration of a dot.

Letters are spaced by a pause equal to a dash or three dots. The space between words is seven dots.

I recommend that you sound the dots and dashes as the same sounds even when they are the last element in a symbol. That is for example "ditdit" for the letter "I" rather than "didit" as suggested by others.

Often letters are sent at a higher speed but with wider spacing to help the brain react – the higher speed give a more rhythmic sound but when we are learning we do need more time for the brain to react. This is called the Farnsworth system.

### Week 1.

Learn the numbers. Their structure is easy, 5 symbols with the number of dots or dashes at the beginning determining which number is being sent. Try to avoid counting the dots and dashes and listen for the rhythm.

1	ditdahdahdah
2	ditditdahdah
3	ditditditdah
4	ditditditdit
5	ditditditdit
6	dahditditdit
7	dahdahditdit
8	dahdahdahdit
9	dahdahdahdah
0	dahdahdahdah

Practice singing/chanting these to yourself in different sequences and small groups. Write down numbers on a piece of paper and sing/chant them to yourself.

### Week 2

The most commonly used letters have the shortest coding so they are the next to learn.

E	dit
I	ditdit
S	ditditdit
T	dah
M	dahdah
O	dahdahdah
A	ditdah
N	dahdit
U	ditditdah
G	dahdahdit

Again once you have had a few days on the list you can write them down randomly on paper and sing them back to yourself.

### Week 3

Another set of ten letters. Don't forget to practice the previous week's ones as well.

H	ditditditdit
D	dahditdit
W	ditdahdah
V	ditditditdah
J	dahdahdahdit
B	dahditditdit
C	dahditdahdit
F	ditditdahdit
K	dahditdah
L	ditdahditdit

## Week 4

You are nearly there. Here are the last of the letters

P	ditdahdahdit
Q	dahdahditdah
R	ditdahdit
X	dahditditdah
Y	dahditdahdah
Z	dahdahditdit

Well done. Now you need to learn some other punctuation and operational symbols.

Error	ditditditditditditditdit	
/	dahditditdahdit	
Pause or - (dash)	dahditditditdah	
?	ditditdahdahditdit	
Start QSO	dahditdahditdah	
End QSO	ditditditdahditdah	This is sent after 73 etc and means you are done.
Final final	dit dit	A convention meaning yes I acknowledge the 73 and closing sign.

## Week 5

Practice all the preceding. Read number plates, newspaper headlines and street signs in Morse in your head. It's OK to say it aloud if alone in your car! Listen to the on air WIA slow Morse practice sessions. If you have an app then by all means use that. All practice is good. Congratulations on being persistent enough to get here.

Listen to the WIA or ARV Victoria or any other slow Morse on-air source. The background noise adds a degree of difficult, but persevere. If you miss a letter or two, and you will, just restart your brain and get on with decoding.

## Week 6

Practice sending. Use a key of your choice (straight key or paddle – avoid bugs) and some side-tone. Most rigs can be set to very low power and connected to a small dummy load and then keyed as normal. A key and buzzer or tone oscillator is of course the traditional way.

Start with the groups of 10 split into sets of 5 symbols. Sending slowly but correctly is the fastest way to complete a QSO. Send too fast and you make mistakes and your sending quality drops off meaning the other guy keeps asking for repeats. Practice sending text such as “CQ SOTA de your call”, “tu”, “ur rst 559”, “ ur rst 599”, “73”, “QRZ”. You should now be ready for a practice QSO with another amateur or the SOTA CW Practice Net.

Remember the key to success is a determination to succeed, sticking to a schedule of practice and not be thrown by brain freeze ups or sending errors. These are normal events.

Just restart your brain decoding and ignore the missed bit. Ask for a repeat if it's a report etc.

For sending errors, stop, send 8 dots then resend the word in which the error was made.

Congratulations, you are now a CW operator. See you on the bottom end of the band soon.

73

Ron

VK3AFW