



CW Academy
Advisor's Manual

CW Academy Advisor's Manual

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Preface

Preface

We sincerely thank you for becoming an advisor for the CW Academy (CWA). Every year, the CWA helps over 1,000 students learn Morse code or to improve their CW abilities. Many students express their appreciation that so many advisors give of their time to assist them. This is a great service that you will be providing.

This manual is intended to cover many aspects of advising. It may take some time to go through all of the material in this manual but one can start with the table of contents and find sections that are of most interest, read them then move on to other sections.

The CWA managers are available to answer your questions and to provide assistance. Please contact them if you need help. There is also a dedicated email list for advisors. This list has decades worth of experience that you can take advantage of and is a convenient place to ask questions or have discussions about CWA classes. See the Resources section for information on how to contact the CWA managers and about the email group.

CW Academy History

CW Academy History, by Rob Brownstein, K6RB

CW Academy is conceptually 10 years-old (as of 2021) but its original manifestation was quite different than how it has evolved. After CWops was launched on January 1, 2010, the dozen or so founders had more-or-less agreed that there would be some on-air activities, and that the club would ultimately offer some mentoring to help hams attain CW skills that could allow them to meet the club's membership qualifications.

One of the earliest club activities was CWT. This started as a monthly (first Wednesday of each month) activity at 1100, 1900 and 0300 Z, each session lasting an hour and confined to 40-, 80- and 160- meter bands. In essence, it was initially intended to be a regional activity whereby at 1100Z, Asia and JA would work one another on the low bands, followed by European stations at 1900, and North Americans at 0300. Like all well laid plans, this one never really solidified. North American stations would do all three sessions and asked that the 20-, 15- and 10-meter bands be open to operation as well. In addition, the 1100Z session was asked to be delayed until 1300Z to allow JAs to get home from work, first. CWT took off and people asked for more than once-per-month sessions, so we did first and third Wednesdays, then every Wednesday. Today it is an immensely popular on-air event.

In the Spring of 2011, as I recall, Pete, W1RM, had taken part in a Rookie Roundup CW contest and was appalled at the lack of skills of the rookies he encountered. He suggested we hasten our mentoring program, and Jack Ritter, W0UCE (SK), and I (K6RB) began tossing around ideas for such. Our first attempt was one of marriage-brokering those who wanted to mentor and those who wanted mentoring by preparing spreadsheets with days/times/bands of mentors and those being mentored, trying to match them up. It was an abysmal failure.

So, Jack and I decided to create a self-taught CW curriculum whereby two levels of hams would self-study and meet with advisors on the air twice weekly. Then Jack came up with a brilliant idea. He suggested we meet using OOVVOO, an online audio/video service, that would allow us to create a virtual training room. So, we announced the program and invited signups. Jack and I had cobbled together some training exercises for folks in the 10 to 15 wpm spectrum, and those in the 15 to 20 wpm spectrum. The goal was to get them ultimately to 25 wpm or faster. When the announcement went out, and signups were invited, we were shocked to see that nearly 75 percent of those who signed up either had no CW skills or were limited to operating at less than 10 wpm. So, we needed to conjure up a beginners' curriculum, and I was tasked with that. The current Beginners book, Practice Instructions and Homework Assignments, is little changed from that first curriculum effort. We

CW Academy History

agreed that characters would be sent at 20 wpm, from the outset, and any slowing down of word speed would be done using Farnsworth delay.

The two higher-level programs were far less structured at the time, but when we saw how much demand we were getting for all three programs, Jack asked me to come up with a structured syllabus for the intermediate and advanced courses. The current Intermediate and Advanced Practice Instructions and Homework Assignments books have been revised but still essentially follow the original structure. The goal with the beginners' curriculum was to feed them small doses of characters over the course of eight weeks whereby there would be two sessions per week or 16 sessions per course. During the first five weeks, they would learn all 26 letters, 10 digits, some punctuation and Q codes. The remaining three weeks would be spent learning how to use those Morse skills to make QSOs, work DX and do contesting. The intermediate and advanced programs blended two skill sets – head-copy skills aimed at QSOing and contesting-keyboarding skills aimed at radio-sport. We used two freeware programs – RufzXP and Morse Runner – to help develop contesting skills, and streamed content for working on head-copy. Most of the changes to the course involve changes to the streaming content.

From the beginning we wanted the course to be essentially self-taught and self-contained. We saw that many potential volunteers were reluctant to try teaching Morse, so we came up with tools that enabled self-teaching and called the volunteers “advisors” rather than “instructors.” They were given the task of assessment and helping overcome obstacles but the teaching, particularly in the beginners' course, was encapsulated in the Morse Trainer tool.

In closing, I am truly still amazed at how the CW Academy program took off and how well respected it is in ham circles. I know Jack would be proud of what's been accomplished and I am in awe of the dedication of our advisors. Without you, CWA would have been a great concept. But, because of you, it has become a fait accompli. Thank you and Kudos.

Rob K6RB

Introduction

Introduction

The CW Academy (CWA) consists of four levels that cover students who have no experience with Morse code or CW to students who have experience and want to gain advanced skills. The CWA has two primary principles regardless of level: the first is that each character has a single unique sound and is not composed of small sound units; the second principle is head copy – the idea that characters and words should be heard in one’s head as much as possible.

Semesters are held three times a year for eight weeks; the current schedule is January-February, May-June and September-October. An advisor may advise one or more classes each semester; they are not expected to commit to every semester. Most classes are composed of five to seven students. All classes are conducted online using a video conferencing program such as Zoom, Skype, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, etc. On-air exercises may be suggested by the advisor to supplement the in-class materials but classes are not held on the air except to practice QSOs or other things discussed in a class. Students and advisors are normally grouped by class level and time zone although students and advisors may be separated by more than one time zone or even different countries. A class is usually held twice a week for about one hour for each class.

The Beginner class is designed for students who have no Morse code experience or who might have learned Morse code in their past but have forgotten much of it. The primary goal of this class is to recognize the sounds of approximately 39-41 characters (letters, numerals, the slash character, question mark and BT prosign).

The Basic class is designed to be an intense class in instant character recognition (ICR). This class is designed to move the students from actively thinking about what they hear to automatically hearing and immediately recognizing characters. The beginner class also emphasizes this but many students need extra work to gain the ICR skills they need.

The Intermediate class is focused on head copy of words and short phrases. This class is similar to the beginner class in that, in the beginner class, students learn that individual characters have distinct sounds and in the intermediate class students learn that abbreviations and words have distinct sounds.

The Advanced class helps students increase their speed, learn to handle typical contesting skills, learn copy-from-behind skills and copy longer exchanges in their head.

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A question frequently comes up about CW speed: what rate, in words-per-minute, should a student be at the beginning of a class and at the end?

This is a tricky question to answer. For example, some excellent contesters can handle contest exchanges at over 35 WPM but struggle with a casual CW QSO at 20 WPM. The CW Academy starts beginning students out at 20 WPM character speed, usually with extra (Farnsworth) spacing between characters. A beginning student might end a class at around five WPM effective speed but they might do much better.

Obviously, the student is going to be expected to increase their speed as they go through CW Academy classes, but it is also important they should find it easier to understand what they are hearing.

There is no magic speed “finish line”: when the student gets to some point, then they have reached the end of their journey. Students should be encouraged to always push themselves a little bit further than wherever they are. Perhaps on a Tuesday, they think that they are at some speed then Wednesday comes and they panic because the speed dropped for some reason. That happens to many people. They should not worry about it - wherever they are, try to do a little more.

There is some overlap between these classes. For example, in the first session of the beginner class, students hear the phrase “eat at ten.”

A student does not necessarily start at the beginner level and take each of the other classes in succession. It all depends on how well they learn.

The most important requirement for a CW Academy student is a sincere desire to learn and a positive attitude. A willingness to practice every day for between 45 minutes and 60 minutes is needed. It is important to emphasize that regular, consistent practices are the key to success; trying to practice for three hours every third day, for example, is not a good approach.

Each student should have a set of paddles, either single- or dual-lever. These can be purchased new or used or borrowed. The student should have a keyer and audio oscillator that can produce tones that can be picked up by their computer’s microphone. They should have an Internet connection that is fast enough for audio-visual meeting programs. Using headphones or earbuds can significantly reduce echoes and noise pickup. It also helps a lot to have students mute their mics when they are not participating in an exercise. The advisor may do a group activity where everybody needs to be unmuted, but students should get in the habit of having their mics muted and get used to quickly unmuting when necessary. Having a quiet room to practice in and for the classes is helpful.

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It cannot be emphasized enough how important a positive attitude is. Many hams say that they tried to learn Morse code at some point but it was too hard or they could not hold their interest and now they think that CW is pointless and nobody should try to learn it. Negative attitudes like this are not helpful. Almost anybody who maintains a positive attitude and commits to practicing, meeting with their class and participating in class exercises will enjoy success.

There is supplementary material available in the [Student Resources areas](#), one area for each level, that contains some things that might be helpful for the students, such as how to send with their paddle. The basic through advanced folders contain audio files of CW at many speeds that students can listen to; some of these are used for the classes. A paper by Nancy Kott, WZ8C (SK), called "Instant Recognition - A Better Method Of Building Morse Code Speed" is in the *Additional Information and Practice Material* folder and should be read and understood by students.

Advisor Requirements

Advisor requirements

The information for students discusses things that they need; many of those requirements apply to advisors.

Advisors will need a decent Internet connection to support the video-conferencing system of their choice (the CW Academy does not use a standard program for this). They will need paddles and a keyer-audio oscillator that can produce tones that can be picked up by the microphone connected to the advisor's computer. A desktop or laptop computer should be used and not a tablet or phone. Headphones or earbuds make a huge difference in minimizing echoes and noise pickup.

Some advisors use audio mixers to combine the audio from their microphone, computer and keyer-audio oscillator together. This combination can help control audio levels and minimize other audio problems.

A room dedicated to classes that is separate from other people in the household can help minimize distractions and extraneous sounds.

It might be noted that the persons leading a class are called advisors and not teachers. With classes that meet for about an hour twice a week and with four to seven (usually) students per class, it is not possible to teach students everything they need to know in eight weeks. The students must take on the role of learning and the advisor is there to check progress, encourage the students to keep trying, notice patterns that might indicate bad habits, help the students with issues in their journey and try to keep them engaged and willing to keep trying.

Advisors should be passionate about CW operating and willing to help others enjoy that same passion. Advisors are not expected to have formal teaching experience. They primarily act as mentors and help the students to succeed.

All four class levels have written syllabi that the students will use. Some advisors supplement that with their own material. The advisor should go over the assignments that the student will be doing over the next few days then review the assignments and assess how the students are doing.

Online meeting platforms with video are a great way to read body language. Sometimes a student will betray themselves by appearing tense and unsure despite what they might say. Also, a tense student will have trouble learning and doing in-class exercises so trying to get the students to relax is important. Maybe some light banter during the class might help them to relax. Asking about other hobbies and things they like to do might help them to let their guard down.

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Although the CW Academy does not recommend one video conferencing program over another, the most popular ones used as of this writing are Zoom and Skype. Google Meet and some others are also used. We usually do not need advanced features from these programs and getting up and running should be possible after an hour or so of practice. Having a spouse, child, friend or somebody else assist by playing the part of a student, can help you get familiar with the program. Try to use the same setup that you will use in your class and make sure that the other person can clearly hear your voice and your CW sidetones.

It is important to remember that almost all of the CW Academy's students are adults and they should be treated as such. Even kids should be treated with dignity. Students should never be belittled or made to feel like they are foolish. A student that is struggling badly usually does well with something, no matter how small that might be, and that can be used to emphasize that they are having success with something.

Most people enjoy knowing that they are having success with something. Students should be encouraged to think positive; let success breed success. Thinking negative thoughts is demotivating and usually starts a negative slide that leads to the student dropping out of the class.

Advisors should try to encourage students to keep positive. Having several students in a class also helps them to form a bond, even if they are not aware of it, and they can encourage each other and offer suggestions to each other on how they have succeeded at something. Advisors should encourage that.

Even though the classes are challenging, advisors who act excited and encourage students to ask questions, who encourage them to meet challenges head-on and keep trying, who talk about fun CW operating activities they did will find that their students usually pick up on that excitement.

It is also worth remembering that many advisors experienced all the usual challenges that their students are experiencing. Sharing those times and how they were overcome will help the students. Most advisors are not top-of-the-line CW masters and it helps students to know that their advisor is a regular person too.

A suggestion for advisors is to remember that this is also community and supporting and helping each other is important. There is a dedicated email list for CW Academy-related discussions and this is a good place to ask questions and relate challenges or successes that you have experienced. A good example is an advisor who had a student who did not have a paddle-set and was on the verge of not being able to take a class. In less than a day, the student built his own paddle and became a very accomplished student even with his "ugly"

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paddle. These sometimes amusing stories can help all advisors appreciate the service that they are doing and find ideas to help motivate their own students.

In addition, groups.io, which is used for the CWA email list, has a files area where several advisors have uploaded documents that contain material that they use for their classes. Other advisors maintain blogs that contain course outlines and other notes for themselves or students. If you are able to do these things, please share your notes with the advisor community.

Beginner class

Beginner class

The beginner class is designed for people who have no background with Morse code. Frequently, a person will sign up for a beginner class who has had some previous experience with Morse code, and might have even passed a Morse code test to obtain a license, but feels like they have forgotten much of what they might have known. Students are also taught to send using paddles.

Character speeds should be 20 WPM minimum with higher speeds as needed to hear characters as unique sounds.

The goals of this class include:

- Hearing characters as sounds and not as if they are composed of smaller sound units (dits and dahs).
- Becoming comfortable with hearing characters and recalling them quickly.
- Sending clearly. This includes individual characters, short words, names, call signs, etc.
- Getting the ability to hear multiple characters together and recognize all of them.
- Learn the basics of CW QSO including the typical exchanges at the beginning and end of the QSO.

Students should practice listening to characters to become familiar with them and should send them as well. Sending reinforces understanding characters as heard.

Possible exercises for the class:

- Hear, send and say; hear, say and send. Student hears a character and quickly sends the character then says what the character was. Alternatively, say the character then send it. Many students can echo the character back based on its sound even if they do not know what it is.
- Send a series of characters that students frequently “flip”: K/R, F/L, D/U, etc. These characters are similar to each other except that the dits and dahs are reversed for each pair. Determine if the student is forming a habit thinking one character is actually the other.
- Send the words from the previous exercise to see if the students recognize them. Helps to tell if they have been listening to these words.
- Say a word that was in previous practice exercises and have the student send the word. How is the timing?

Beginner class

- Send characters at faster speeds than students are used to to show them the sounds of the characters. Critical for those who want to count dits and dahs.
- Have students send sections of previous practice sessions and see if other students can copy it.
- Spend time every week or every other week to go around the room and ask the students how they are doing, what challenges they are facing, what is working well, what not so well.

Basic class

Basic class

The basic class is the newest addition to the CW Academy class list. In this class students receive an intense course in instant character recognition. Related to that is instant character sending. This means that the student can immediately recognize a character upon hearing it using their subconscious mind and not thinking about what they heard. Similarly, the student will learn to send effortlessly without thinking about how to send characters.

Incoming students to this class should know the sounds of approximately 40 (or close to) characters (letters, numerals and a few common punctuation and prosigns). If the student needs time to figure out what a character is after hearing it - as long as they eventually come up with the correct answer - then they are suitable to enter this class.

Some students who at one time knew Morse code will enter this class directly.

Character speeds should be close to 25 WPM in order to ensure that they are hearing character sounds and not thinking about what the character is composed of. Many students will need to send slower than this in order to send clearly. It is common to use Farnsworth spacing – which is extra space between characters – to help get used to the character. As much as possible, the Farnsworth spacing should be decreased so that the effective and character speeds are as close to each other as possible. The goals of this class include:

- The student will hear a character and say what it is quickly. Students should get used to hearing a character – with their eyes closed – and quickly saying something even if it is incorrect. The more a student argues with himself/herself about what a character is, the more likely the final answer will be incorrect. A student might be surprised how often they are correct if they simply say the first thing that comes to mind before they have had a chance to think about it.
- Students will develop the ability to send clearly with few breaks while sending words. Spacing in general should be such that it is easy to tell where word breaks are.
- Students will be able to listen to multi-character combinations (state, province, country code and other abbreviations) and short words and recognize the letters or words.
- Students will be able to listen to callsigns and not get hung up on numbers.
- Students should be able to send all of the above without pausing to think about what to send.
- Students should be able to handle a short QSO and know what in the QSO is necessary to write down and what can be listened to in their heads.

Basic class

- Students should feel much more comfortable with CW and not require a lot of mental effort to copy or send CW.
- Spend some time during the class to have students report how they are progressing. Some people are harder on themselves than they should be. This time can also help the advisor determine what should be emphasized in future classes.

As much as possible, students should practice with their eyes closed and try to hear with their subconscious. This is a difficult process for some people to learn and requires a lot of practice and repetition.

Possible class exercises:

- Build a word. Student sends a letter. Next student sends that letter then adds a second letter. Third student sends the first two letters and adds a third letter. Continue going around the students until a word is built. Are they able to continue building onto the word even though it is complete? “Rain, raining”, for example.
- Send words. Make sure students are not getting hung up on letters they are not sure of.
- Can they tell the difference between “HIS”, “SIS”, “DAD”, “BAD”, etc? Many students have trouble with S/H, D/B/6, U/V/4, etc.
- Send call signs; can they spot the numeral and what it is? Many students have trouble with numbers particularly 3, 4, 7 and 8.
- Send characters much faster than the student is comfortable with normally; how many can they recognize?
- Send characters at slow speeds; are they able to hear character sounds or are they counting dits and dahs?
- Send long words – many students will hear the first two or three letters and the last two or three letters; can they guess what the word is? Go around the room and have everybody take a guess at what the word was.
- Send a long word and ask the students what the middle letters are.
- Try sending short words at faster speeds (28 WPM or faster) with no Farnsworth spacing and see if they can hear the word as a sound even if they do not know what it is. If they hear the word sent at fast speeds several times in a row, can they instantly recognize the word?
- Going back to HIS/SIS, DAD/BAD, etc., can the students tell the difference at higher speeds? Is it harder to tell the difference at slower speeds? The difference between H and S, for example, is a matter of timing which might be easier to get the hang of at higher speeds.
- If a student’s cat walks in range of their camera, everything has to stop, the student sends the cat’s name and everybody tries to name the cat.
- Pick something that is in the student’s background, a picture on a wall, for example. Without warning, have the student send that and see if the other students can figure out what it is.

Basic class

- Encourage students to try on-air activities, such as the weekly K1USN SST (Slow Speed conTest) or state QSO parties.
- Encourage students to tune around the CW bands and “read the mail”; in other words, just listen to a CW QSO in progress. For this, if a student does not have a station, or much of a station, they can use websdr.org. Whatever the speed used by the operators, students should just listen, do not write anything down, and try to pick up what they can. They may be able to hear just one side of the QSO. Have discussions about what they heard and why the operators did some of the things they did.

Intermediate class

Intermediate class

The intermediate class is designed to put much emphasis on head-copying of individual words, multiple words and short phrases. Common on-air activities will be emphasized and students should be expected to engage in on-air activities to put what they are learning to practice.

Incoming students must be comfortable with quickly recognizing characters. This typically is what a Basic class student should be but some Beginner students may also be good with instant character recognition. An incoming student with previous CW experience is not a good candidate for this class if they are “counters” – needing to hear the dits and dahs to figure out a character. Counters should take the basic class.

In order to hear words as sounds, students should get used to hearing words at 25 WPM or faster with no Farnsworth spacing. This is recognized as a difficult transition for many students and they will need a serious commitment to practice their head-copy skills. Sending is equally important and the student should be able to clearly send multi-word combinations with good spacing. On-air activities (casual QSO, contests, etc) can be used to emphasize the concepts they are learning.

The goals of this class include:

- Hear words as sounds with no Farnsworth spacing between letters.
- Hear multi-word combinations as sounds, perhaps with extra space between words.
- Send words clearly.
- Handle call signs sent with no Farnsworth spacing. Get used to entering call signs into a logging-like program (RufzXP is frequently used for this).
- Pick up the context of a short exchange even if some words, or parts of words, are missed. Get used to moving on if some parts of an exchange are not recognized, wiped out by QRM or QRN or sloppy sending.
- Be able to fill in the blanks when what they hear is not clear, as above.
- Use tools, such as RufzXP, Morse Runner, CW Player or LCWO (Learn CW Online) to practice hearing call signs and entering them via a keyboard. These tools can be used to learn these skills for contesting. They can also help in learning to copy things in their head.

Similar to other classes, students should be able to copy words and send words with their eyes closed. As in the Basic class, the use of the subconscious to understand what is being heard should be used.

Possible class exercises:

Intermediate class

- Context exercises. Words are all related to each other, such as colors, foods, common first names, types of plants, pet types, common world city names, etc.
- Math exercises. Student sends one- or two-digit numbers and another student sends the sum of them.
- Send a short phrase and leave a word out, ask the student to send the missing word.
- Send common sayings or proverbs. See if the students can get the general idea or recognize the proverb.
- Regularly send pangrams; ensure that spacing is sufficient. Students should memorize a pangram and be able to send it without looking at a written text.
- Have a student send something that is known to them, such as what they had for lunch. The idea is to send something from memory and not from reading it from someplace.
- Build a menu: have students imagine that they are in a restaurant. One student sends something, such as a type of pasta. Other students add on to that with sauces, spices, meats, side dishes, drinks, desserts, etc. After building the meal, discuss and have each student say what the final meal was.
- Encourage students to try various on-air activities, such as contests or casual contacts. Have discussions about how those went. Depending on what they report, try to simulate those activities and help overcome any issues they had.
- Simulate contest activities where students log what they hear. Emphasize that they must copy what they hear, not what they think something should be.
- True/False: send short phrase that is either True or False. Have the student reply True/False and repeat the phrase, then send it.
- Word Association (similar to Context exercise): send a word to student; then have student send the first word that comes to mind associated with the word sent; then have student voice the words.

Advanced class

Advanced class

The advanced class is the highest level currently offered. The goals of the advanced class are similar to the intermediate class with longer exchanges at higher speeds. Contesting skills are usually introduced or expanded on. The ability to copy from behind is introduced. Other advanced topics depending on the advisor are covered.

Goals include:

- Hear a CW conversation in one's head and make notes about the most important things – the other operator's call sign and name, the location of the other operator and other details that come up that are worth noting.
- Being able to copy call signs and exchanges of contests at 30 WPM or higher.
- Increasingly clear sending of exchanges at higher speeds than the intermediate class.
- Learn to hear CW and enter notes or characters after the words or characters were sent (copy from behind).
- Use tools, such as RufzXP, Morse Runner, CW Player or LCWO (Learn CW Online) to practice hearing call signs and entering them via a keyboard. These tools can be used to learn these skills for contesting. They can also help in learning to copy things in their head. This is similar to the intermediate class but should be faster or involve longer words.
- Students should be on the air trying contests and casual contacts. They should be able to handle the usual on-air issues, such as QRM, QRN, QSB, tuner-uppers, people with sloppy sending, etc. and not fall apart because things are not perfect.

Class exercises:

- Store game. One student starts and sends something that could be seen in a store (hardware, clothing, electronics, etc.). Second student sends the first item then adds another item. Third student sends the first two items and adds a third item. No writing; students (and advisor) are to retain everything in their heads. Continue until people cannot retain all the items.
- Similar exercises from intermediate class except at faster speeds and with longer segments.
- Students send QSOs, focusing mostly on the middle part of the QSO. Students can discuss the area they live in, jobs they have had, family, pets, food enjoyed, etc.

Advanced class

- Contest simulations. Start with more simple contests such as CQ WPX. Move up to Sweepstakes.
- Continued use of pangrams. Send clearly at higher speeds.
- Contest-like games where one student runs and other students call and send exchanges. Practice entering the calls and exchanges into a logging program.

Email communications

Email communications

This section discusses the series of communications from the CW Academy administration system to students and advisors.

When a student registers for a class, or an advisor signs up to lead a class, they get an email shortly after that confirms their signup. For both students and advisors, they can return to the signup form and enter their call sign and click Next, and their previous signup record is displayed and some things can be changed if needed.

Approximately six weeks before the start of a semester, registered students receive an email asking them to confirm that they wish to be considered for the next semester. They can click a link to verify that they are still interested, or click a link to be placed in a future class or click a link to be removed from the system. Students who confirm their desire to possibly be in the next class are considered to be confirmed.

In the advisor sign-up process, the advisor selects the time zone where the advisor lives and signs up to teach one or more classes. The advisor specifies the class level, the days that the class will be conducted, and the time block during which the class will be conducted. This information is stored in a “class catalog”. When a student signs up the student is shown the class catalog converted to the time zone where the student lives. The student can then select a first, second, and third choice for the times and days to take the class. For example, if an advisor in the Eastern time zone (time zone -5) signs up to teach a Basic level class on Mondays and Thursdays between 8-9pm, a student in Australia (time zone +10) will see that a Basic level class is available in the 9-11am time block on Tuesday and Friday.

On the 10th of the month before a semester starts, registered students who have verified their attendance are assigned to advisors based on the student’s class days and times preferences. Returning students are given priority for assignment. An advisor’s class will be filled up to the number of students the advisor requested. Emails with the class lists are sent to the advisors.

If there are insufficient students for a class and the advisor lists an alternate level, that will be used to try to fill a class. Emails with the class lists are sent to the advisors.

When the advisor receives this email, he/she should contact each student, inform them of the advisor’s schedule, the things they are expected to have (paddles, keyer, audio oscillator, high-speed Internet connection, etc.) and things they are expected to do (practice 45 minutes to 60 minutes per day, make on-air contact if appropriate, pair up another student if appropriate, read

Email communications

the assigned syllabus, etc.). Students should be asked to confirm their participation if they agree to the conditions within 48 hours. Give them a deadline.

The class list for each advisor includes contact information for the student and a link to click if the student agrees to be in the class, a link to click if the student is not able to participate and a replacement student is desired and a link to click if the student is not able to participate and no replacement student is desired.

Replacement students are sent to the advisor using the same type of email as the initial batch of students. Replacements are usually sent in 24 to 48 hours.

The advisor may retain the email with the students and use the links to remove a student (and request a replacement) if a student declines after the class starts.

Once all students are confirmed, the final schedule can be set up if appropriate and the students can be started on the course material. Students should be told not to practice at too slow of a speed. The classes can even be started at this point if all are agreeable.

Approximately halfway through the semester, an email will go out to all advisors who have students asking them to confirm that the students on the email list are the students actually in the advisor's class. Links are present to remove a student. If a student is in a class and not listed in the email, a text box can be filled out to say who the student is.

Near the end of the semester, each advisor with students receives an email with a list of students and links that the advisor uses to indicate: the student is promotable (ready for next higher class or successfully completed the goals of the class); the student is not ready to be promoted and should repeat the class or the student was not in the class. The students do not have to be rated all at once.

Doing the final survey is important because the students need their advisor's rating in order to sign up for a future class. Tracking the status of students is important as they sometimes ask about their status. This also allows an advisor to sign up for another class as an advisor.

After completing the survey for all of an advisor's students, the advisor can fill out a quick entry form to advise the next semester.

At around the end of the semester, each student who completed the semester (whether they "passed" or not) receives a survey that has a few questions about their experience in the class. After all advisors have completed their student ratings, the advisors can access these surveys; sometimes the free-text entries

Email communications

can be quite interesting. The hope is that the advisor will take the comments as constructive and implement changes if appropriate.

Frequently asked questions

Frequently asked questions

- “What days and times should my classes meet?” A class schedule is determined by the advisor. Most advisors have their classes during the early evening from the student’s perspective and have their classes on Mondays and Thursdays. Other days, such as Sunday-Wednesday, Tuesday-Friday or Tuesday-Thursday are used. Some advisors try to work out a mutually agreeable schedule for everybody and that is an option if you are willing to try it although it can be time consuming to work that out.
- “On what day of the next semester should my class start?” Most advisors choose a day that is close to the first of the month for their first class. Many advisors have an orientation a few days before that. Some advisors might begin on the last week of the month before a semester starts or might start on the second week of the month.
- “I have a student who wants to use a straight key or a bug.” The CWA’s communications to students make it clear that they are expected to use paddles and a keyer. A bug can be a challenge to adjust and slow down sufficiently for the class to understand. A paddle-keyer combination helps the student get familiar with how a character should sound. Although using a straight key is not an automatic disqualification, students should be encouraged to purchase or borrow a paddle.
- “My students want to know if there is a recommended paddle?” Either single or dual lever paddles will work. Several advisors have recommended the Kent Twin paddles. Vibroplex makes a Code Warrior, Jr. The Bencher BY-1 is a very popular key and often is seen at hamfests. Capacitive, or touch, paddles have been used but some people have trouble getting used to them. Some types, such as inexpensive MFJ combinations, are mechanically suspect. Local hams sometimes have excess keys that they may be willing to lend or sell at a discount to an aspiring CW operator. Most radios have built-in keyers which usually work well.
- “Must advisors be members of CWops?” No, they do not. Most are members but any experienced CW operator who is passionate about sharing CW skills with others is welcome to be an advisor.
- “I have a student who dropped out after the class was underway.” If you still have the email with the list of students you started out with, find the student and click on the “No” link. Otherwise, contact the CWA managers.
- “I have a friend, or a student has a friend who would like to join my class.” This happens frequently. If you are agreeable to adding another student, that is fine. Ask the person to fill out a student signup form and submit it. Depending on when they do this, they may not be able to

Frequently asked questions

select the current semester but the CWA managers can adjust that. By doing so, the student's progress throughout the CWA can be tracked.

- “Somebody contacted me about auditing the class.” The CWA encourages everybody who is in a class to be active participants who do all the homework and participate in class exercises. A passive observer can be a distraction to the students.
- “Which class level should I sign up to advise?” It is difficult to answer this in a definite manner more than a month or so from the start of a semester because of incoming student signups and uncertainty about how many of them actually intend to take a class. The best answer is to sign up for the highest level class you are willing to lead, for example an intermediate class, then list basic and beginner as alternate levels. This way, we can balance the students to the advisors available.
- “I am not sure that I can lead a class at a certain level.” Take a look at the class syllabi for each class level in the student resources area of the CW Academy website. You should be able to handle the exercises at the end of each level since you would be judging students doing those same exercises. You should be able to work with students who are doing better than any given point in a class so as to challenge them to improve. Another way of looking at it is that your abilities should be past wherever the abilities of your students are.
- “I have an experienced CW op friend or have a former student who would like to assist in my class.” Associate advisors can be very helpful and valuable in classes. The CWA does not formally track associate advisors. Work with your associate to decide between you how you and the associate or associates would like to handle the classes.
- “I have a student who wears hearing aids.” Some advice here: <https://cwops.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/solid-copy-2019.05.1.pdf> (pages 21 and 22) and <https://cwops.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/solid-copy-2020.01.2.pdf> (pages 22 to 24).
- “I need to take a week off for some reason during the class.” If you have an associate advisor, they should be able to cover for you. If you have a student who is doing very well, that student could lead some in-class exercises while you are out. Otherwise, try to prepare your class for your absence and give them things to work on while you are out. If you need to extend your semester, that is fine.
- “I have a student who would like me to be their advisor for the next semester.” Contact the CWA managers to make arrangements.
- “I have a student who I think is ready for CWops membership.” That is awesome! Review the requirements for CWops membership, discuss membership with your student including dues and nominate them (if you are a member). If you need assistance, contact the CWA managers.
- “Are all classes in English?” At one time, there were classes in Japanese and a Japanese version of the beginner syllabus still exists. The difficulty with having classes in other languages is getting a consistent

Frequently asked questions

stream of students to make it worthwhile to have such classes. We have heard reports that many students, where English is not their primary language, figure that most of their QSOs will be in English so they might as well get used to it. In some parts of the world, exercises involving U.S. state and Canadian province abbreviations will not make sense so the advisor can adapt to their and their student's local equivalents.

- “The CW Academy seems too focused on the U.S. and Europe.” North America (there are many Canadian students and advisors) and the European regions are where most of our students and advisors are. We are trying to increase our footprint in other areas, such as Asia. This has been a challenge, particularly in Asia where students can be spread out across many time zones. If you are interested in helping to mentor students and live in these under-served areas, please let the administrators know so we can discuss.

Resources

Resources

Whom to contact: [CWA Administration](#).

[Student resources page](#).

[Morse Code Trainer](#).

[Morse Code Ninja](#).

[Instant Recognition](#) (by Nancy Kott, WZ8C [SK]).

[Keys, Bugs, Paddles, and Keyers, a terminology introduction](#).

[Scrabble Word Finder](#) (helps to create words for practicing).

[Seiuchy](#) (a QSO generator).

[AA9PW Amateur Radio Practice Site](#) (see Level 5 for a QSO generator).

[Morse Code Resource](#) (includes Morse code Daily Quotes and Morse code podcasts at various speeds).

[Learn CW Online](#).

[W1AW CW code transmissions](#) in MP3 format.

Bruce Horn's [Contest Calendar](#).

[Zen and the Art of Radiotelegraphy](#).