CW Academy Advisor Guideline

Information for first time Advisors

(Second Edition)

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Document Revision History and Copyright Notice

Revision History:

Date	Revision	Author	Description
2019-12-18	1.4.0	Joe Fisher, AA8TA	CW Academy Advisor Guidelines
2021-07	1.0.0	Joe Fisher, AA8TA	CW Academy Advisor's Manual
		Joe Fisher, AA8TA	Introduction to Being a CW Academy Advisor PowerPoint
2023-08	2.0.1	Greg Smith, W0GAS	CW Academy Advisor Guidelines
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This document is an accumulation of several documents.

- CW Academy Advisor Guidelines Version 1.4, December 18, 2019, written by Joe Fisher, AA8TA.
- CW Academy Advisor's Manual written by Joe Fisher, AA9TA with contributors Rob Brownstein, K6RB, Roland Smith, K7OJL and Ted Bauer, WA3AER.
- Introduction to Being a CW Academy Advisor PowerPoint presentation written by Joe Fisher, AA8TA.

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Introduction

Thank you for signing up to be an advisor for CW Academy (CWA). As you probably already know, CWA is the instructional arm of The CW Operators' Club (aka CWops), a club of amateur radio operators who enjoy using Morse code for a variety of on-air operations. CWA helps all levels of CW enthusiasts, from those who are just starting out to those who want to increase their skills, operating speeds, and CW activities. An advisor helps his or her students learn and improve their skills. Students truly appreciate your efforts, understanding that you are a volunteer trying to help them learn and improve their CW skills. You are providing a great service to the amateur radio community by participating as an advisor in CWA.

CWA offers many tools to help you with your students. While each class level has an official syllabus, web-based tools and other software, advisors are free to use other techniques that they find helpful to assist the class, even if not described in the syllabus. Newer advisors will find following the syllabus is easy and doing so will help the students achieve the goals of each class. Each of the web-based or downloadable programs that are used for the classes is described in the syllabus and there are many other tools available to you as an advisor. Many of these tools are referenced on the CWA Advisor Resources page.

There are CWA managers available to help you with any issues you run into. There is also an active Groups.io CWA Advisors group you may join. This resource permits you to ask questions and receive input from other participating advisors. It also has numerous files you may use to help you advise your classes, including word lists, call sign lists, and dozens of other files you may find helpful.

Once again, please accept our thanks for joining us as an advisor. You will enjoy helping others learn and improve their CW skills.

Advisor Requirements

Being a CWA advisor only requires:

- A few hours a week,
- A passion for CW,
- A desire to help people learn or improve their CW proficiency,
- A desire to be a mentor,

- Sharing your interest in whatever CW operating you do, and
- Enjoying seeing people have success and helping people succeed.

CWA Course Structure

CW Academy (CWA) offers four class levels covering students who have no experience with Morse code to students who have experience and want to improve their skills. CWA has two primary objectives, regardless of level: the first is to hear each character as a single unique sound and is not composed of small sound units (i.e., a dit or a dah) and to hear whole words as sounds; the second is use head copy to understand what is heard rather than transcribing what is heard by hand or typing – the idea is that characters and words should be heard and understood in one's head as much as possible.

CWA offers classes three semesters a year, currently scheduled for January-February, May-June and September-October. An advisor may advise one or more classes each semester; an advisor is not expected to commit to advise every semester. Most classes are composed of five to seven students. All classes are conducted online using video conferencing programs such as Zoom, Skype, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, Jit.si, etc. The advisor may suggest on-air exercises 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. Classes are usually held twice a week for about one hour each.

Requirements to Participate in CWA

Students and advisors will each need the following minimum essentials to participate in CWA:

- High speed broadband internet access,
- Computing device (desktop, laptop),
- Webcam (camera, microphone) either built-in or USB add-on,
- Key paddle (single lever or dual lever) [please note that straight keys, cooties and bugs are not used in class or for class practice], and
- Keyer with sidetone or radio with built-in keyer and sidetone

CWA Class Levels

A student does not have to start at the beginner level and take each class in succession. A student's placement in a level depends on his or her ability to copy and send Morse code. Before signing up for a CW Academy class, each student is asked to take a self-assessment. The results of this assessment should help the student determine his or her actual Morse code skill level and whether the student should sign-up for a specific class level. Self-assessment may lead to some students signing up for a class that the student really isn't qualified to be in. In those cases, the advisor should discuss the issue with the student and contact CWA management to have the student placed in a class more suited to that student's actual skill level.

Beginner Class. The Beginner class is designed for students who have no Morse code experience or who might have tried to learn Morse code on their own in their past but either did not succeed or have forgotten most of it. The primary goals of this class are:

- To recognize the sounds of approximately 40 characters (letters, numerals, slash character, question mark),
- Learn to send and to head copy those characters,
- Learn on-air protocols of a basic QSO, and
- Use the learned skills for on-air basic QSOs.

The beginner curriculum starts out at a character speed of 25 WPM with a Farnsworth speed of 4 WPM. The Farnsworth speed gradually increases to 6 WPM by the end of the semester.

Fundamental Class. The Fundamental 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 to advance. The Fundamental Class objectives are to:

- Increase head copy skills using instant character recognition,
- Increase skills for on-air conversations,
- Introduction to contesting skills, and
- Improve copying skills to a Farnsworth speed of 10 wpm or higher.

Intermediate Class. The Intermediate class focuses on head copy of words and short phrases. The students learn that abbreviations and words have distinct sound patterns. The Intermediate Class objectives are to:

- Increase copy and send skills by use of contesting tools,
- Increase head copy skills,
- Recognize words as sounds,
- Increase on-air experience with various types of QSOs, and
- Learn Morse Code to a Farnsworth speed of 20 wpm or higher.

Advanced Class. The Advanced class is designed to help students increase their speed, learn typical contesting skills, learn copy-from-behind skills, and copy longer exchanges in their head. The Advanced Class objectives are to:

- Increase head copy and send skills for higher-speed on-air activity,
- Increase on-air experience with various types of higher-speed QSOs,
- Increase contesting skills to 30 wpm plus,
- Recognize phrases as sounds,
- Learn to copy from behind, and
- Increase overall skills to become considered for CWops membership.

Keys to Success

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. Practice should be broken into shorter sessions of not more than 15-20 minutes each. As an advisor, it is important that the advisor emphasizes that regular, short, and consistent practice sessions are the key to success; trying to practice for three hours every third day, for example, is not a good approach.

Advisors need to emphasize the importance of a positive attitude. Many hams say that they tried to learn Morse code at some point, but it was too hard, they got frustrated, or they could not stay focused. They look to CWA as structured way to learn CW while having some accountability to their fellow students and the advisor. Anybody who maintains a positive attitude and commits to practicing, meeting with their advisor, and participating in class exercises, will enjoy success. A positive attitude requires looking at what is going well rather than solely focusing on problems, errors, and self-perceived failures. One approach is to reinforce what the student is having success with and limit the critique to

saying that their practice needs to focus on the areas where the success has not yet been seen. In other words, the student will have a tendency to focus on not being able to copy or send the letter "L" but the advisor should remind the student that he has already learned how to copy and send 13 or 14 other characters, and the student will be able to copy/send the letter "L" with some additional practice.

Be sure to remind the students that there is a great deal of information on the CWA Student Resources page. These materials include the course syllabus (practice and homework assignments), practice files, and several tutorials on how to use the programs used in CWA (e.g., Morse Code Trainer, Zoom, Morse Runner, RufzXP, and LCWO ICR). Buried in the links on that page is a link to Additional Information and Practice Materials which includes links to articles about ICR and advice for nervous new CW operators, Q Codes, CW Abbreviations, Pangrams, Daily Morse Code sending "Scales," and several other items.

CWA Student and Advisor Sign-up

Advisor. The advisor sign-up process is automated. Navigate to the CWA Advisor Registration page and insert your call sign, email address, phone number, and the semester you are registering for. You will be directed to the next page where you will fill in information about your country, languages spoken, and other messaging services you use. You will also be asked to pick the dates you want for your class, the level for your class, the number of students you want, and your local starting time. It is all very intuitive and easy. About six weeks prior to the start of the class semester, you will be contacted to confirm that nothing has changed and that you still wish to be signed up as an advisor. The email will include the details listed by the advisor when he/she signed up. At the end of each semester, when the advisor tells CWA who is being promoted or not promoted, the advisor will be prompted to sign up for the next semester.

 Student Sign-up. The student sign-up process is automated. Navigate to the CWA Student Registration page. Complete the information requested, call sign, level, email address, and phone number as well as the semester requested. The student is prompted to take a Morse code proficiency assessment. Depending on the student's self-assessment results, a different level of class will be offered as an alternative. There are subsequent pages, but it is all intuitive and self-explanatory.

Advisor Receives Students Assigned. On or about the 10th of the month preceding the start of the CWA semester, the advisor will receive a computer-generated email listing the

students assigned to your class. It includes first and last name, call sign (if any), email address, phone number, whether you may text him or her, and their city, state, and country. There is a link to that student's self-assessment if you wish to review it. Finally, there is a link to be used by the advisor to let CWA know whether the student is planning on attending or not. This is how you tell CWA that the student didn't respond, has a conflict, or won't attend for some other reason. If the student is not going to be attending the advisor may request a replacement student at the same time CWA is notified. **Keep in mind that at this point, the advisor has been notified, but the student has not been notified. Notifying the student is the job of the advisor**.

Notify Students. The advisor then begins the process of notifying the students and confirming whether or not they will be attending. Advisors choose the method of contact. Some call, some text, and some do it by email. There is no uniform approach. The goal should be to let the student know that they were assigned to a class, when the classes will be held, and to find out whether the student still intends to be part of the class. Remember that plans and schedules change, as do commitments to work or family. Do not take it personally if the student decides not to attend your class.

Keep in mind during this process that the student was assigned to your class by a computer. The dates and times may be the ones requested by the student or they may be the dates and times that the computer selected because an exact match was not possible. Don't assume that the student signed up for the time your class will occur. There may be scheduling conflicts based on what the student really wanted. The advisor can give information to CWA when using the link to update the student's assignment (the link will be in the CWA email to the advisor assigning that student to the class), describing what the student wants/needs and whether CWA should re-assign the student.

Some advisors spend some time in the early part of this notification process to:

- Congratulating the student on being selected for the class and welcoming him or her to the class,
- Introducing the advisor and any assistant advisor,
- Confirming the class objectives,
- Confirming what is required to participate in the class, including a paddle, explaining that no straight keys, cooties or paddles are used for the class,
- Confirming that the student has the time required to practice during the semester,
- Confirming the dates and times of the class sessions (consider using UTC or Zulu time),

- Explaining that if they don't plan on attending, they can sign up for a future semester and dropping out will not affect any future sign-up, and
- If you will be having an initial "meet and greet" prior to the initial class session, you may want to confirm the date, time, and method for conducting that meeting.

Request Confirmation of Plans to Attend. With this information, you should then clearly request that the student confirm that he or she is planning on attending. Most advisors **set a firm deadline for receiving the commitment** and tell the student that if he or she has not confirmed that commitment on or before the expiration of the deadline they will be dropped from the class and a replacement student will take their place. It works best to remind the student before the deadline expires by email, phone call and/or text. It makes sense to try a different method if the advisor hasn't heard back from the student (e.g., if sent an email initially, then text or call as the follow-up).

Confirm Students With CWA. When a student confirms he or she will attend, please notify CWA, using the link provided in the email used to notify you of the students assigned to your class. If students are not going to attend your class, please feel free to request replacements be assigned to your class. Consider sending an email to any student who is not attending, thanking them for signing-up in the first place and explaining to them that they may still sign up for future semesters and dropping out will not be held against them.

Introductory or Meet and Greet Session

Introductory or Meet and Greet. Most advisors hold a session prior to the first official class session. There are many reasons for this session:

- To confirm that each person can see and hear each other student and advisor, including hearing them send Morse code,
- Discuss etiquette to use during the class (be on time, use headphones, mute when not transmitting or speaking, limit background noise, avoid multitasking, and adjust camera lighting and background, etc.),
- To introduce each other and provide some background on the students and the advisor,
- To touch on each person's CW experience and goals,
- Explain how the advisor will run your class,
- Stress the expectations of one hour of studying per day, split into 3 or 4 shorter sessions,

- You may want to re-emphasize that we will not use computers, straight keys, cooties or bugs for sending and that the class will use head-copy for receiving. Further the students will not be transcribing in writing or using a keyboard. We do not use decoders to copy code in CWA, and
- For the Beginner class, this is a good time to check paddle placement on the work area as well as correct hand position for sending.

Prior to the First Class

Prior to the first class, be sure that your students have the most recent syllabus (yes, they are updated from time to time) and help them figure out how to use any web-based tools or software they will be expected to use for their homework.

Conclusion

Once again, thank you for signing up to be an advisor. You will help your students learn a valuable skill. Along the way, you and your students will form friendships and you will all improve your overall skills as amateur radio operators.

If you are completely new to advising. We strongly suggest that you follow the curriculum set forth in the syllabus. If you have serious questions or problems, please reach out to CWA management. Feel free to post questions to the groups.io site and to look at the files posted there. If you want help devising a lesson plan to improve how you run your classes, CWA is there to help you. So please take advantage of the numerous resources. There are many different approaches to teaching each level, so if you don't like one approach, pick another.