

Open Practice Sessions

(Tips and Guidelines)

Background: Numerous studies in teaching Morse code sending and receiving indicate students that practice regularly advance faster than those who don't. While this is not surprising, similar studies have shown that students who practice in groups or pairs progress even faster than those who practice by themselves. This does not mean solo practice is not beneficial. It means a combination of solo practice augmented with group practice is an optimal approach.

LICW has scheduled numerous Open Practice Sessions every weekday. All students are highly encouraged to attend these sessions to supplement their solo practice and instructor guided courses.

These can be used in as many ways as you can imagine; practice sending and receiving, practice QSO protocols, call sign copying and sending, pro-sign and special character usage, etc. Remember, they were put in place to be student owned, focused, and conducted.

Tips and Guidelines: These are not meant to be all inclusive, rather some of the more important information for how to make these sessions work. A special overarching note: *We highly encourage students to use the Guided Practice Sessions as well.*

Guidelines:

1. **Pre-coordinate** with a buddy before activating the Zoom period. You might want to do that at a regular class or you might want to open a request on Discourse, or even register for the Code Buddy [program](#). Be proactive and I'm sure you can find someone just as eager as you are to get some quality practice time in. When all else fails ask your instructor.
2. **Have a plan.** What are your objectives? Is it sending and copying numbers, working on character and word spacing, or special characters? Be sure to communicate your needs to your buddy or the group. We all progress at different rates and it's highly likely your partner(s) have similar experiences or perhaps needs that you can help with. Try to ensure it is a collaborative and mutually beneficial use of your time.
3. **Don't be intimidated** by the labels on the Open Practice Session schedule. Example, you are a BC2 student about halfway through the rotation of BC2 and are having issues with special characters and numbers. It is perfectly okay to drop in on an Intermediate or Advanced Open Practice and ask for some help. Again, it will be best to pre-coordinate. Don't be afraid to ask someone, look at the instructors on the schedule and shoot them an email.
4. **Instructors may be in attendance.** Many instructors drop in on open practice sessions to offer tips and support. In fact, all LICW instructors are encouraged to randomly drop-in

as they have availability to do so. But remember, these are your sessions and you, the student, control the practice agenda.

5. **Be alert to bad habits.** This is a tough one, say you have a code buddy that is using a school that has a different approach than LICW does in learning instant character recognition (ICR). E.g., lots of Farnsworth, or some other technique. Be sure to discuss this with your instructor staff. Remember, once a bad habit is learned, it is very difficult to unlearn.
6. **Don't overdo speed.** Most beginning students focus on speed in both their sending and receiving. It is better to practice sending at a speed where the character formation, spacing and tempo (which will eventually develop into rhythm) is established. Be conscious of your partner or group's abilities. It's okay to push the speed a bit to the point where mistakes and errors are made up to 30% of the time. This is a good learning and practice zone. However, don't overdo it. Don't be afraid to yell QRS when necessary to get your partner to slow down a bit.
7. **Talk over your practice results.** It's likely the first time you participate in an Open Practice Session not everything will be as smooth as butter. Save a few minutes at the end of the hour to discuss what worked, what didn't and how to make some changes for the next session.

Tips:

1. Emphasize sending. If a partner doesn't have code sending ability use code talking.
2. Share comments, observations and provide constructive feedback.
3. Use the weekly focus of BC1, BC2 and BC3 to help develop practice exercises. Here is a link to the weekly sessions for the year. It is also on the daily schedule under resources. [BC1, BC2, BC3 Weekly Focus.](#)
4. Include some fun or play in your practice exercises. Some games or exercises like: I spy; word association round table; standard QSO protocol or rehearsals for getting-on-the-air; POTA or SKCC exchanges, and jokes.
5. Praise other participants' efforts.

Any comments or recommendations to help improve the Open Practice Session may be sent to Gary, W5GW, white512@austin.rr.com