



FEEDBACK

February 2026

Do you have a story, humorous or otherwise, about amateur radio? If so, please contact the newsletter editor (w8kdb@arrl.net) and get it published in **FEEDBACK!**

If you would like to place a classified ad to sell, purchase or swap amateur radio related items, please contact the editor.

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Club News

Membership Renewals

Just a friendly reminder that Membership Dues are due. These can be paid at a Club Meeting (on the 3rd Thursday of every month) or sent in to the Club's PO Box. The amount has increased a little this year. For 1 year it is \$20, for 5 years it is \$75, for 10 years it is \$145, for 20 years it is \$280, and for Lifetime it is \$500. For the 1 year, each additional Family Member is an additional \$5. Dues are due January 1st of each year. Newly licensed members get a year free. Donations to the club can also be sent into the PO Box or taken care of at the Club Meeting.

SMARS
P.O. Box 934
Battle Creek, MI 49016

Amateur Radio Test Session Changes

This is something we have been watching for a while, but the ARRL is changing how we will conduct and send Test Sessions, kind of. Testing is still required, the fee is still in place, and paperwork still has to be done, it is more the last part that is changing. They are no longer printing books and materials for the test sessions. Instead, we need to use the Test Generator to generate the test and will have to get the books printed ourselves. This also goes for the paper work. While we have been printing the Answer Sheet and 605 forms for the applicants, once we are out of the Session, Roster, and CSCE sheets we will need to print those ourselves. The good news is we do not need to source a place for the carbon papers as ARRL is forcing all teams to send it digitally. It was late last year they sent out a notice about the PO Box being discontinued for mailing in Test Sessions. This isn't an issue for us as we normally do Digital uploads.

One thing that we will be discussing is how we want to handle Test Sessions in the future. ARRL is recommending we use ExamTools for tests, although paper tests are still an option. This does present some issues for us as it requires us to have Internet connection and devices for the applicants to use for the test. From what it sounds like, the answer sheets could also be phased out and replaced with AR (Augmented Reality) where you use your phone's camera to do the grading.

Once we have more information, I will provide more updates. For now, if you are a VE, please make sure you setup an account with ExamTools (<https://examtools.org/>). You will need to download a copy of your License from the FCC and upload it to show proof that you are a licensed Amateur Radio Operator.

Upcoming Radio Contests

Looking for a little action on the airwaves? You might want to check out these upcoming contests!

International DX – CW

Bands: 160, 80, 40, 20, 15, and 10 Meters

Mode: CW

Date: 02/21 – 02/22

URL: www.arrl.org/arrl-dx

International DX – Phone

Bands: 160, 80, 40, 20, 15, and 10 Meters

Mode: Phone

Date: 03/07 – 03/08

URL: www.arrl.org/arrl-dx

Rookie Roundup

Bands: 80, 40, 20, 15, and 10 Meters

Mode: SSB

Date: 04/19

URL: www.arrl.org/rookie-roundup

**A more thorough listing of upcoming Contests can be found on the ARRL's web page [ContestCalendar](http://www.arrl.org/contest-calendar), <http://www.arrl.org/contest-calendar>*

Other News

How to help others help you

Even though I am now retired, I am still a member of the [Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers \(IEEE\)](#) and subscribe to their [Career Alert newsletter](#). The [latest issue](#) features a short article from Rahul Pandey, founder of Taro, a platform for helping software engineers manage their careers. The article is about asking better questions to get the help you need in order to do your job better.

While the article is geared towards software engineers, I think it also has some good advice for radio amateurs asking for help with their stations or their projects.

The #1 rule about asking questions

As engineers, continuous learning is a fundamental part of the job. A huge part of learning comes from trying something, getting stuck, and then asking a question to your teammates.

Here's what is often overlooked in that process: The quality of your question determines the quality of the answer. So it's worth thinking about how you can level up your question-asking skills.

The guiding principle when it comes to asking a question is simple: **Make it easy for others to help you.** Let's break down what that means.

Include the necessary information. In the software engineering world, for instance, asking something like "Can you explain why the app is crashing?" puts an enormous burden on the question recipient to collect more info before they can help you. They'll need to know:

- What action caused the app to crash?
- Does the issue reproduce?
- What do the logs reveal?

It's usually not hard to anticipate what follow-up questions you may receive after you ask a question. Include those details in your question!

Show your work. One of the most common replies to a question is "What have you tried?" This is critical information to include in order to (1) improve the chances that the recipient can help you and (2) prove that you did the necessary homework.

Common details to include are: prior team discussions, code snippets, and relevant data. But be careful not to overdo it. Including too much code in your question will overwhelm anyone who's trying to help you. You should spend time identifying the snippet that captures the essence of your issue. Remember, the golden rule is to make it easy for others to help you, which requires your judgment on the right level of backstory to include.

Explain your goal. The backstory is deceptively important in any question, especially for technical topics. For example, you may think it's obvious why you're trying to add a parameter to a function, but it's probably not clear to your teammates. An error I've seen frequently is that the question is asked at the wrong "altitude"—the asker made some incorrect assumptions that led them to ask the wrong question.

Upcoming Hamfests & Conventions

02/21/2025

Livonia Amateur Radio Club Annual Swap & Shop

Location: Northville, MI

Sponsor: Livonia Amateur Radio Club

Site: <http://livoniaarc.com/larc-annual-swap-and-shop/>

02/28/2025

LaPorte Cabin Fever Hamfest

Location: LaPorte, IN

Sponsor: LaPorte County Amateur Radio Club

Site: <http://www.lpcarc.org/>

03/15/2026

Toledo Mobile Radio Association Hamfest and Computer Fair

Location: Perrysburg, OH

Sponsor: Toledo Mobile Radio Association

Site: <http://www.w8hhf.org/>

03/21/2026

Lowell Amateur Radio Youth Club Hamfest

Location: Lowell, MI

Sponsor: Lowell Amateur Radio Club

Site: <http://larc.club/>

04/11/2026

AC8RC Mini-Swap

Location: Burnips, MI

Sponsor: AC8RC

Site: <http://ac8rc.org/>

04/18/2026

SJCARC Hamfest

Location: Centreville, MI

Sponsor: SJCMIARC

Silent Key

To get the best answers, include a brief explanation of your goals at the beginning of your question to set the context.

Address the right audience: A personal pet peeve of mine from when I worked at Facebook was when an engineer would ping me individually with a generic question that others could have benefited from. Instead of messaging me directly, I wish they had posted in a group forum. By posting to a broader audience, others could have learned from the answer, and there may have been fruitful follow-up discussions. Moreover, asking the group will lead to faster resolution; it removes a single person (me) as the bottleneck.

The question of the 1:1 vs. group forum is just one element to consider. Is your question best handled verbally or in writing? Could your question be answered by a junior colleague, or do you need feedback from your team lead or manager?

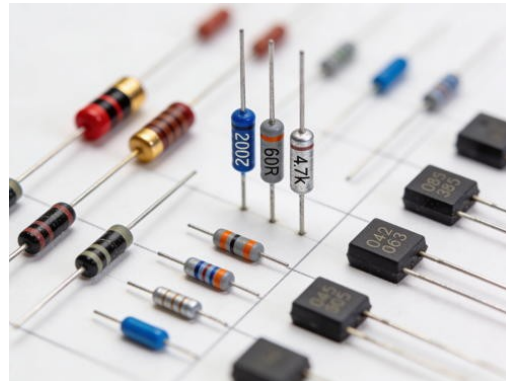
By considering the above criteria, the quality of your questions will improve significantly, leading to more effective interactions and learning.

Article courtesy of <https://www.kb6nu.com/how-to-help-others-help-you/>

AI still not ready for prime time...at least not ready for my study guides

Yesterday, someone on the ARRL_Education mailing list asked if anyone is using AI to generate images for educational presentations. That got me thinking that perhaps I could use an AI to generate more images for my study guides. So, I signed up for an account on OpenArt.AI.

I asked it to generate an image with a “variety of resistors.” This is what I got:



AI-generated image of resistors.

As you can see, it's almost right, but not right enough to put into the study guide. I guess that's the thing about AI in general. It's “almost right,” but really still not good enough. Not good enough for a study guide, for sure.

Satya Nadella, the CEO of Microsoft, might want us to quit using the term “AI slop,” but for that to happen, AI is going to have to actually quit producing slop like what we have above.

Article courtesy of <https://www.kb6nu.com/ai-still-not-ready-for-prime-time-at-least-not-ready-for-my-study-guides/>

Meeting Minutes 01/15/2026

Meeting Called to order at 1900

13 members in attendance.

Secretary's Report: Motion made to accept, Motion was passed.

Treasurer's Report: Motion made to accept, Motion was passed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- Hamfest – May 2nd Calhoun County Fairgrounds, goat and sheet building across from comfort center. Crossroads Hamfest introduced Airwaves and Artisan's. We are looking into possibly advertise in the shopper, fliers and word-of-mouth social media to get those people in.
- SkyWarn – Skywarn meets on the third Tuesday of the month at the American Legion on the corner of Beale Lake Road and B Dr. north at 6:30. They're also looking for net controllers, contact Bret if interested.
- Field Day – 27th through 28th in June, more information to come.
- Repeaters – No new updates at this time.
- VE – Next test session is February. Let it open to the board if we want, or can, do a VE session in December as it falls on Christmas Eve.
- POTA – 23,099 Contacts currently. We meet Saturdays at 8 AM at Café Tal on Michigan Avenue followed by set up in Contacts at Whitford Lake Fort Custer recreational area.

OLD BUSINESS:

- Thank you, Dan and Stephanie for hosting field day 2026 at your compound, we know it was a cold one.

NEW BUSINESS:

- None discussed.

PRESENTATION:

- To nights CW presentation with Dan Pesch thank you Dan Morse code the spirit of ham radio.

Meeting Adjourned around 2000 hours.

Respectfully Submitted,
Melanie Lake, KE8TPQ
SMARS Secretary

Board Meeting Minutes 02/05/2026

FINANCES:

- Checking \$2,735.85
- Savings \$1,505.05
- Cash on hand \$85.00
- Total \$4,325.90

Notes:

- Upcoming bills: Church Rental, expect same as last year, \$630

Board members meet the first Thursday of the month at 6:30 PM the American Legion on 20th St. anyone is welcome to come.

Meet and greet with section leader Ralph Katz AA8RK 19 of February at our club meeting

Ham fest 2026 May 2 sheep and goat barn cross from the comfort center. This is coincidentally on the same day as Cadillac. And we are about three months away from our ham fest possible use of trailers for the VE sessions.

The barn will cost \$865, \$250 for the comfort center, and \$9 per table tables are not included in the price of the room rental.

Again, we were talking about doing a raffle. I believe we have the permit already goal is to sell 500 tickets \$10 per ticket prizes to include \$500 cash \$250 cash and \$125 cash it was 60 for the license.

Respectfully Submitted,
Melanie Lake, KE8TPQ
SMARS Secretary

SOUTHERN MICHIGAN AMATEUR RADIO SOCIETY FEEDBACK

S.M.A.R.S. W8DF Club Repeaters

2m Repeater 146.66MHz, -600KHz offset, CTCSS 94.8Hz

2m DStar 146.79 MHz, -600 KHz offset

*1.25m Repeater 224.240 MHz, -1.6 MHz offset, CTCSS 94.8 Hz

APRS Digipeater/Igate, 144.39 MHz

*70cm Repeater 443.950 MHz, +5 MHz offset, CTCSS 94.8 Hz

70cm DStar Repeater 442.7625 MHz, +5 MHz offset

***Note:** 70cm & 1.25 meter repeaters are linked.

All repeaters are available via EchoLink (70cm and 1.25m are W8DF-R; 2m is W8DF-L)

Other Repeaters

2m Repeater 147.120 MHz, +600 KHz offset, CTCSS 186.2 Hz

70cm Repeater 442.350 MHz, +5 MHz offset, CTCSS 186.2 Hz

Club Meeting 3rd Thursday of every month Maple United Methodist Church 342 Capital Avenue NE Battle Creek, MI 49017	SKYWARN Coffee 1st Saturday of every month Immediately after Siren Test Coney Island, N.E. Capital Battle Creek, MI	BLB Luncheon 1st Thursday of every month Coney Island, 962 Capital Ave NE, Battle Creek, MI	SMARS Breakfast 2nd Saturday of every month Coney Island, 962 Capital Ave NE, Battle Creek, MI
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SMARS Nets: Monday—Friday 11:30 AM, 146.66 MHz Sunday Evening 8:00 PM, 146.66 MHz Monday 8:00 PM, 224.24 / 443.95 MHz Wednesday 7:00 PM, 224.24 /443.95 MHz Wednesday 8:00 PM, 28.365 MHz Saturday 8:00 PM, 224.24 / 443.95 MHz Other Nets: Skywarn Net: Tuesday 7:00 PM, 147.12 MHz <i>Please see previous page for offsets and CTCSS tones</i>	Upcoming Events: Club Meeting: February 19th @ 7:00pm BLB Luncheon: March 5th @ 11:30am Board Meeting: March 5th @ 6:30pm Club Breakfast: March 14th @ 8:30am VE Session: February 26th @ 7:00pm
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