

Learning CW is, in reality, learning to listen, understand, and speak, another language. Just like learning French, German, Spanish, or any other language there are several ways to do it. To learn CW there are also many ways ranging from the very good to others that are so abysmally bad that using them will stunt your CW progress forever. Some delivery methods are web based, some phone apps, some group classes in person or online using video conferencing, some private with one on one coaching.

The method that was used in the design of this course has been shown to be effective. It is totally sound focused. In the early stages there isn't even any writing. That comes later and even then is minimal. If you wish to try other methods do so at your own risk.

The process used in this program is based on a method devised by [Ludwig Koch](#), a psychologist, in association with enhanced character and word spacing; a method attributed to Donald R. Farnsworth (W6TTB) usually just called Farnsworth.

Here are some of the methods to avoid.

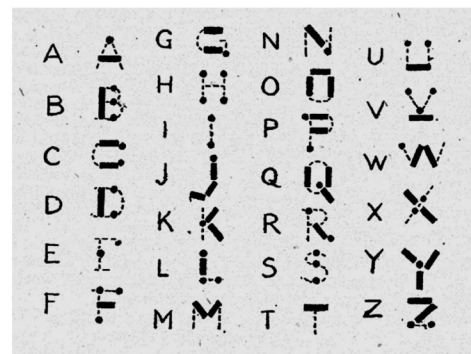
1. Associating a letter with a word or phrase. The presenter in [this video](#) is an enthusiastic memory coach. He describes two methods of learning CW;
 - Method #1 - The Quick & Dirty Way,
 - Method #2 - The Masterful Way

If all you want to do is recite the characters these methods might work. For communicating by CW they are not only useless but will prevent you from achieving a speed suitable for use on the air. Imagine trying to have a conversation with your spouse where `e v e r y w o r d h a s t o b e s p e l t o u t l e t t e r b y l e t t e r` and between each letter you have to use a memorised phrase or associative word to be able to identify the letter and subsequently assemble the letters into a word.

I have a client who had used this method to initially learn CW. He can recognise individual letters but cannot copy any words. He has explained his difficulties as follows: "By the time I have gone through the phrase associated with the CW sound that I heard and have identified which letter it was I have missed what follows. I can get the first letter of the word and that's about it."

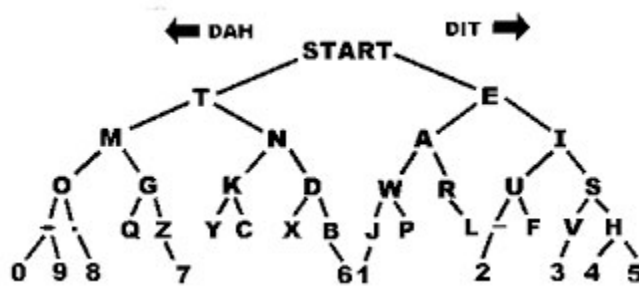
It is much harder to unlearn, or get rid of, a bad habit than to learn a good habit from the get go.

2. Counting dots and dashes (dits and dahs) from a chart showing letters and dots and dashes. This is a little like having to think of a letter B as 1 vertical stroke plus 2 semicircles one above the other on the right hand side of, and the open side of the semi-circle attached to, the vertical stroke. Perhaps you did learn to write this way; look how long it took you to learn. Also you learned the sound of B and how to say it long before you learned to write it (more about this later).



3. Dot - Dash mapping. This method, illustrated on the right, associates the dots and dashes with the physical positioning and layout of the associated letter. I believe this method was used by the US army at one point. There is also a video which equates CW rhythms to soldier's steps. Go figure!

4. CW Tree.



I think this is a brilliant way to illustrate the structure of the CW characters and an absolutely useless way to learn to copy live CW.

5. Listening to the CW character sounds and looking at letters on flashcards or on a screen. Of the baddies this is the least offensive but will slow your progress. When you are involved in a conversation with a friend you do not rely on mental pictures to be able to understand what he is saying.

Providing you have not used any of the bad methods listed above and you follow ALL the rules in this program (especially the daily practice) you will be not only able to pass the ISED code test, but also get on the air and communicate using Morse code (CW). If you are an absolute beginner the whole process takes approximately 2 months, sometimes less. If you have already tried any of the "bad" methods it will probably take a little longer due to having to unlearn the bad habits while replacing them with good ones.

During this course it is important that you never use any form of look up table or chart. Nothing visual just the recorded sounds, your ears, and the grey matter between them.

At the beginning nothing should be written down. Writing letter by letter will impede your ability to progress to reading fast CW.

Please let me explain why this method was chosen and why we do not write it out letter by letter.

When you were a child you reacted to all the sounds around you. Eventually you realised that the larger bipeds were using something which you later came to know were words. You then found that by mimicking those "sounds" ie words, you got lots of smiles and hugs. Suitably encouraged you learned to listen attentively and then utter the sounds you heard most frequently.

Only after several years did you learn that words were made up of letters and, even later, to write.

Learning CW is just learning another language. If the course followed that approach it would take years to become proficient. So instead we learn to translate. We already know our native language, its alphabet, and how to spell commonly used words and their sounds.

So we start with learning the CW sounds of the letters of the alphabet (and numerals) we know and eventually transition to translating the sounds of whole words not individual letters.

This program is based on learning a few characters each week with evaluations at regular intervals. There will be some words, and some common syllables and word endings.

To learn CW requires dedication, discipline, and adherence to a strict practice regime. A daily practice routine of 1 hour (6x10, 5x12, or 4x15 minutes) 7 days a week is essential. A break of at least 45 minutes to an hour between sessions is also important.

IN SIGNING UP YOU COMMITTED TO 1 HOUR PRACTICE EACH DAY, 7 DAYS A WEEK. THIS IS ESSENTIAL IF YOU WANT TO SUCCEED. IF YOU DO NOT ADHERE TO THIS COMMITMENT YOU WILL BE WASTING YOUR TIME AND YOUR ACCOUNT WILL BE SUSPENDED.

In working through the exercises it is important to listen carefully to the sound and rhythm of the CW characters. Do not try using any kind of morse key to send until advised to do so. I highly recommend the use of a straight key rather than an electronic keyer and paddles. The act of forming the characters by hand will help to sear the rhythm of the individual characters into your brain by muscle memory. I can provide

guidance on how to set up your key and the best methods to use to avoid problems. I am available to help if you run into difficulties.

SKCC membership is not mandatory but highly recommended. There are no fees of any kind and it has members who would be delighted to help you no matter how slow you are. Here is the link to the [application form](#).

As you make your way through the topics please make sure that you read all the instructions for each audio file. Do not skip directly to the recording.