

Amateur Radio Hamfest Youth Lounge Kit

This kit contains the basic resources to start a youth lounge at a hamfest. Included you will find:

Handouts & Supporting Documentation

- Morse Code
- Are You Smarter Than A Technician?
- STAT (Smarter Than A Technician) Answer Sheet
- Phonetic Alphabet
- Hamfest Scavenger Hunt
- The Ultimate Scavenger Hunt
- Point Scale
- Evaluation Form

Posters

- Morse Code Bracelets
- Morse Code
- Phonetic Alphabet
- QSL Card Decorating

Schematic for a successful youth lounge:

- The goal is to provide a place for young people to call home during a ham fest and to make the hamfest fun for them.
- You should have snacks, drinks, activities and prizes.
- Make it colorful so that youth are drawn to it: put up lots of posters, use brightly colored paper for all the handouts, get tablecloths with the latest cool characters at the department store in the party aisle.
- If there is no fun, color, or activities, the kids will not get excited. We are creating an Amateur Radio party right in the middle of the hamfest. Be creative—if it attracts youth, get it: balloons, hula hoops, giant beach balls, music...
- If you have someone that can get involved to help (because it takes more than a couple people), some excellent bonus activities are: fox hunts, a youth special event station, and finding a [Geocache](#) that you have hidden onsite. These activities get them excited and teach them practical skills in radio direction-finding, operating, and using a GPS.
- Morse code key oscillators are a big hit with the kids. Ask your club members to donate an oscillator for the weekend. Have them talk to

each other in the “secret language” that even their teachers will not understand.

- The younger generations love computers. If folks can lend old laptops or computers to the lounge, they work great. Fill them up with all the ham radio videos from the internet, Morse code programs, web sites and ham practice tests. They especially love working together on the practice tests, which also get them familiar with the question pool.
- Get your local clubs to donate to the cause. A \$100 shopping spree at a department store toy aisle will get you all the little trinkets that the kids love to earn points to turn in for prizes. Little trinkets work great, but be sure to have **SOME** sort of prizes as an incentive for doing the activities. Otherwise, they fly through the activities, starting each one and not finishing any, and get bored very quickly, asking “what’s next?” This can cause the youth lounge to turn into a babysitting service, which is certainly not the goal.
- Be sure to save some of your budget for buying supplies for the activities (discussed below). Some essentials are stickers, construction paper, 4X6 index cards, crayons, washable markers, yarn or something to make bracelets out of, beads, and scissors for cutting bracelets.
- If at all possible, have licensed teens serve as volunteers in the youth lounge. Studies show that peer leadership is effective, and young people are much more likely to participate in activities if their peers say it is “cool.” Plus, if teens show up to the youth lounge and appear bored or as if the provided activities are below them, engage them in helping the younger ones—they are usually happy to help and thankful that they are needed.
- While it’s great to have ham-related activities for the youth (and you will), the most important thing is that they have fun and that ham radio leaves a good taste in their mouth so that they will come back for more. Sometimes, youth will be more interested in getting to know each other than in doing the activities, and that’s OK. Certainly encourage them to do the activities, but don’t push them because they will get more out of the experience if they participate by choice.

Explanation/ Instructions for Handouts

Morse Code—Make extra copies of this one. Believe it or not, this is a hot commodity at hamfest youth lounges; we always run out of it. Young people LOVE learning the “secret language.” Let them talk to their friends, and refer to the prize sheet for ways to use Morse Code to earn prizes.

Are You Smarter Than A Technician—This activity serves a couple of purposes. Basically, you give the youth a page of questions and correct answers only from the Technician question pool. Their task is to go around asking hams the question, without giving them answer choices, and record who gets it correct. Since no answer choices are given, it is likely that at least some hams will not get the answer exactly correct. This boosts the young person's confidence, when they see that adults don't know all the answers either; it might even boost their confidence enough to get them to take the test. Also, it familiarizes them with the question pool, putting the right answer in their head without clouding their minds with the wrong answers. (The attached handout is for the latest question pool, but be sure to update your handout as the question pool changes).

Phonetic Alphabet—There are a number of games that you can play with this handout, most of which are listed on the prize sheet. Basically, the purpose is to familiarize them with the phonetic alphabet to where they don't have to think about a letter before they say it phonetically. See how fast they can say it correctly, see if they can say the whole alphabet while hula hooping before the hula hoop falls, play the telephone game with and without using phonetics and compare the results. The possibilities are endless! It may seem trivial, but you are essentially teaching them basic traffic handling skills.

Amateur Radio Scavenger Hunt—The purpose of this activity is also twofold. First, kids love scavenger hunts. Also, this gets them up and walking around the hamfest AND gives them a reason to talk to adult hams. A lot of youngsters are shy and would not be comfortable starting a conversation with an adult, and a stranger no less. However, walking up to an adult to ask if they are an Amateur Extra because they need one for their scavenger hunt is a little less intimidating. Plus, most hams will not merely sign their sheet and move on, but they will engage the young person in conversation for a few minutes, probably teaching him or her a few things. This is a great group activity, too especially for the shy ones; send three or four of them out to work on the scavenger hunt together, and it's amazing what they'll come back with! Also a great opportunity to engage the older ones who are "above" all this by sending them out to help the little ones.

The Ultimate Scavenger Hunt—This is just a different variation of the first scavenger hunt, but it involves collecting tangible items. It exposes youth to the hamfest, but also gives them some trinkets to take home with them.

Point Scale—This is just a guideline, and of course it's all relative depending on what prizes you can get for what number of points. We'll leave the logistics up to you as far as how you keep track of how many points each youngster has earned (the honor system usually works, or you can give out tickets like the arcades do). Again, the bottom line here is

that you have some system in place so that they have some incentive to complete the activities instead of haphazardly jumping from one to the next. Having a prize as the end goal helps them focus (and keeps them occupied).

Evaluation Form—This is great to have so that you'll know how you can improve the Youth Lounge for the next year—what worked, what didn't work, what could be improved, etc. Be sure to get both youth and parents to fill this out, so that you'll have multiple perspectives. As an incentive for filling out the evaluation (because otherwise people will forget), give out some sort of special prize when they turn it in to you, such as a free t-shirt or other prize that you have a large supply of.

Explanation/ Instructions for some Posters

Make Your Own QSL Card—This is a great activity for the younger ones, but can be fun for older youth, too. It gives the younger ones a chance to color and have fun with stickers, but for the ones who are old enough to understand, it teaches them about QSL cards! It's also fun to put up a display of QSL cards on the wall (making the room colorful) so that they can look at all the places they come from.

Morse Code Bracelet—This is another great activity for younger ones and even girls who aren't quite sure about the whole radio thing. After all, what girl doesn't like making jewelry? The concept is simple: one color or type of bead represents a dot, another represents a dash, and a third represents a space. If the participant is old enough to understand, you can explain the concept and help him or her with the first few letters of his or her name. If not, you can ask him or her to pick three colors and tell them which bead to put where, so that it spells his or her name in Morse Code.