

I will start by saying these are my thoughts and recommendations on learning Morse code. There are many ways, and others will have ways they think, and will be better for them. The objective is to find a way that works for you. I have compiled my ideas from things that worked for me, mistakes I have made, and listening to what worked for others.

Suggestions:

1. Learn your code at 18-20 WPM character speed (Farnsworth speed), but spaced out to 5-8 WPM speed. Farnsworth speed is how fast the dits and dahs are for one letter. This will force you to learn what a character, or letter, sounds like at speed. It will still give you time between characters to think of what it was. This really helps later as your WPM speed increases. If you start off with slow Farnsworth speed, you will find yourself counting the dots and dashes, deciphering it in your head, then writing it down. Where if you learn at a Farnsworth speed like 18-20, you recognize the sound of the character, and you cut out the counting. This will really help later as you try to increase your speed. You will hear the characters, and it will be reflex to write them down. You will also start hearing words easier for even fast speeds.
2. There will most likely be a point where you will say, "I just can't do this", "My brain just doesn't get this", "I am too old to learn this", or whatever other excuse. I found when it gets hard, and you feel like giving up, you are very close to breaking through, and getting it. If you do apps, websites, or whatever training, go slow so you get the letters down that you are working on, before you move to the next lesson, and practice. If you only put in 10-15 minutes once a day, it is going to be harder and take longer to get code. If you can do a 10-15 minutes session 2-3 times a day, it will come much easier.
3. Once you have learned your letters and numbers, start using apps/websites that send entire QSO's. This will keep you learning, and you will be familiar with how a normal CW contact goes, what people talk about, and the way CW ops abbreviate things. Good= GUD You Are/ Your= UR Fine Business= FB Thank You= TU or TNX Good Morning, Afternoon, or Evening = GM, GA, GE.
4. There is a very good group online called the CW Academy. <https://cwops.org/cw-academy/cw-academy-options/> They have a very good program, and meet twice a week for about an hour each night. They do training via Skype or Zoom, online, and over the air training. These classes fill up quick, so you may have to sign up for a class 6 months down the road. Even if you do, that gives you plenty of time to get the characters down, and give yourself a better chance in these classes.
5. Lastly, years ago we had a Novice license class and there were sections of several HF CW bands that the Novices and slow code was popular. That has kind of gone away these days. Some still operate around those old frequencies, but not near as many. If you want to start getting on the bands and making your first QSO's on CW, there are two very good groups you can join. These will give you plenty of people to contact, and 85% of these operators will slow to your speed and help you out. These two groups are the SKCC (Straight Key Century Club) and the FIST CW Club. For the SKCC, you have to be using a straight key or another mechanical type key (see their rules). This means no paddles that use electronic keyers in the radio or out of the radio. SKCC is very active, and free to join. They have over 21,000 members. The FIST Club, did have a membership fee last I looked. I am not a member there, so don't know much about them. Many CW ops are members though, at all speeds.

<https://www.skccgroup.com/>

<https://www.fistsna.org/>

Tools for Learning CW that I like

Phone Apps: Morse Toad and Ham Morse

Websites: I prefer <http://aa9pw.com/morsecode/> This website has many options, and you can setup speeds how I suggested above. IE... Sent at Speed = 5 WPM and Farnsworth Speed = 18 or 20 WPM

Other items: If you don't want to do this on a cell phone or computer, MFJ makes an item that is very good. It is called the MFJ Pocket code tutor. You can set speed as suggested, do letter groups, or QSO's