Tips to Checking-In to Nets
by Vanessa, W1IRL

You got your license and now you should start using it, why waste your efforts to get it! One of the best ways to practice or keep your skill honed is to check into your local nets. For technician license holders that usually means VHF/UHF voice or digital nets via repeaters. VHF nets on simplex are also available sometimes, especially for emergency nets. Remember the frequencies where you have transmit privileges depend on your license. If you are a technician, you can only listen to HF frequencies, unless you have privileges on a specific band for a specific mode. For example, technicians have CW privileges on a portion of the 15 meter band.

Before you check into a net, it is important to listen for a while to become familiar with the proper way to interact in that net, that is become familiar with that net's etiquette. A couple of weeks of only listening might be good, before you first check into the net. Some nets are very formal, they are directed. A directed net is orchestrated by a Net Control Station (NCS). The NCS is the director that ensures the smooth flow of the net and prevents chaos.

Asking for check ins is called the roll call. For some nets the NCS will ask for check ins based on the letters of your call sign suffix. For example, W1IRL, will check in when the NCS asks for those with an I in the suffix. KC1RTS will check in when NCS asks for check-ins from people whose suffix starts with R.

When your turn arrives, listen for first before you press the PTT button (key-in), to minimize or avoid duplicates. A duplicate is when one or more operators try to check-in at the same time, talk at the same time. A check-in might be like this: listen, you did not hear anyone, key-in and say "This is" or "Here is" or "I am", then release the PTT. Listen for a second, if no one else is talking, key-in again and provide the information net control requested. At a minimum you need to provide your call sign using proper phonetics based on the international phonetic alphabet, see figure 1 and your name. Some local emergency nets ask for your call-sign, name, location, power used (battery, commercial, solar, etc), title and emergency group affiliation.

Examples of net check-ins (remember the information provided depends on what net control asked)
Example 1.
(Press PTT) "This is" (pause by releasing   PTT)
(Press PTT again)"This is Whiskey One India Romeo Lima, Vanessa, Leeds, battery power, ARES and Skywarn for Western MA, good evening to the net" (release PTT)

Example 2. Not a home base location (that is, not at QTH)

(Press PTT) "This is" (pause by releasing   PTT)
(Press PTT again)"This is Whiskey One India Romeo Lima, Vanessa, *portable in Ware,* battery power, ARES and Skywarn for Western MA, good evening to the net" (release PTT).

Example 3.
(Press PTT) "This is" (pause by releasing PTT)
After everyone checks-in to the group that was called, NCS will acknowledge each person by repeating their call-sign in the order received. NCS will proceed to request the next group of check-ins.

(Press PTT again)"This is Kilo Charlie One Romeo Tango Sierra, Alex, Westfield, battery power, no affiliations, good evening to all" (release PTT).

Important:
In other nets the roll call is different. If you hear a net that calls for EOCs only at that point, only Emergency Operations Centers (EOC) to check-in, when net control calls for hospitals, only hospitals should check-in at that point. Only when net control calls for a group that might apply to you should you check-in. As an example, after calling for EOCs, hospitals, and other groups, net control might call for ARES or other amateurs interested in emergency communications regardless of affiliation. That is the opportunity for us not part of an EOC, Hospital, etc, to check-in. Do not check-in under a group that does not apply to you. Do not break the net! That is why it is important to become familiar with the net's specific etiquette.

The above is just scratching the surface. The process is not complicated, but it requires we listen, listen, listen and learn the specific etiquette for a net before we can be good participants.

Figure 1.

ITU Phonetic Alphabet

Word list adopted by the International Telecommunication Union.

A	ALFA	J	JULIET	S	SIERRA
B	BRAVO	K	KILO	T	TANGO
C	CHARLIE	L	LIMA	U	UNIFORM
D	DELTA	M	MIKE	V	VICTOR
E	ECHO	N	NOVEMBER	W	WHISKEY
F	FOXTROT	O	OSCAR	X	X-RAY
G	GOLF	P	PAPA	Y	YANKEE
H	HOTEL	Q	QUEBEC	Z	ZULU
I	INDIA	R	ROMEO		

References and attributions:

"Ask" icon by Freepick: Flaticon.com
"Director" icon by ultimatearm: Flaticon.com
"Ear" icon by Freepick: Flaticon.com