Participant Guide

<small>Yes, I may have a bit of bias on at least one of these points.</small>

General Etiquette:
Be Ready: Both you, your equipment, family and your environment.
> Bathroom visits done, note pad and pen at hand, food eaten, TV off, kids elsewhere, etc. When you start, you should start as "Having Done" everything else, so you can focus on the Net.

Listen Before You Transmit: Always listen to ensure the air is clear before talking.
Follow the Net Control Operator (NCO): Follow all directions given by the NCO. Only transmit when asked to do so.
Do not try become NCO or direct things: unless asked to! Then be courteous and clear.
Keep Communications Clear and Concise: State your messages clearly, briefly, and avoid unnecessary chatter or jargon. If asked for phonetics, use the ITU phonetics, don't make up your own.
Acknowledge Instructions: After receiving instructions, acknowledge them by repeating back key details to ensure accuracy.
Wait for Your Turn: The NCO will call for check-ins or specific reports. Be patient and wait for your call sign to be recognized before speaking.
Avoid Jargon over-using callsigns: Chances are most all know who you are. Just follow FCC guides – once every 10 min during, and then just your own, once, at the end of your communications. Don't fill air-time just because you can.
Check In When Called: Wait for the NCO to request check-ins. When called, respond clearly with your call sign and first name. Use ITU Phonetics only if requested. If not requested - don't.
Listen for Instructions: The NCO will assign specific tasks. This may include relaying traffic, providing weather reports, or participating in simulated emergency responses.
Be accurate: With what you say, what you write and what you do.
Take notes: You never know what may come up and the goal is to avoid calling for repeats because you didn't write down something that was already shared.

Example Response Formats:
> If asked to relay traffic:
> "Net Control, this is [Call Sign], I have a message for [Station]."
>
> If you have no message to send:
> "Net Control, this is [Call Sign], no traffic."

Net Control Operator (NCO)
You are responsible for managing the net, ensuring smooth communication between participants, and addressing any issues that arise.

Starting the Net:
>Begin by calling the net into session:
>"This is [Call Sign], My name is [Name] and I'll be net control for the [Event Name] Net. Please stand by for check-ins. In the event of a problem with the repeater, those that can will meet on [Frequency] simplex and continue the net." or whatever you want to use, just be sure it's written down and you're ready to speak it clearly.

Call for check ins:
"Stations with emergency or priority traffic, please call now." then later, "All other stations, please check in with your call sign."
NCO will log check ins according to method/media/instructions appropriate for that net

Managing Traffic:
Prioritize handling emergency and priority traffic first.
Handle non-priority traffic when there is time. Use short, clear responses to direct traffic flow.
Ensure operators follow net procedures by confirming all messages.
Ask for repeats if needed.

Handling Challenges:
>Repeater Failure:
>If the repeater fails, calmly instruct all participants to switch to a simplex frequency:
>"This is [Call Sign], Net Control. The repeater has failed. Please switch to [Simplex Frequency] for continued operations."
>
>Interference:
>Address interference in a neutral tone:
>"This is a formal net in progress. Please keep the frequency clear." If the interference continues, move the net to an alternate frequency.
>
>New Check-ins:
>Welcome new participants, briefly explain procedures, and give them simple tasks to familiarize them with net operations.
>
>Close the net:
>When all net business is concluded, NCO will close the net:
>"This is [Call Sign], Net Control for the [Event Name] Net. The net is now closed and we release the [Repeater] to normal Amateur use."

TIPS for being a Net Control Operator (NCO)
What you do and how it's done is based on what kind of net you're holding as well as the directions of the Net Manager, traditions and what you want to do. Club, Rag-chew, informal, ARES, Skywarn, NTS, events, etc.

No HTs: Only use an HT if that's your only option and no one else can take over as NCO. Unless you're VERY clear and direct into the repeater, you're well organized and can juggle your HT, pen and paper. You really want a clear, loud speaker, the best signal into the repeater (means a good antenna) and enough radio to have a good clear signal to all participants. Special if the repeater acts up, an HT may not be able to reach enough participants to continue. If you must use an HT, at least use a hand-mic so you can hear well and can minimize fumbling while you're writing.

Be punctual: Be ready to start on time – many NCOs use an NTP or WWV based clock. I like the phrase 'having done'. Radios setup and working, Food done and cleared, talked to family, they're out of the room, dogs/cats outside, TV is off, other radios muted, been to the bathroom, etc. Idea is everything else is done or gone so you can focus on the Net.

Your Goals are: Clear, Concise and Professional
	Clear: everyone understands, not just hears, what's being said and asked for.
	Concise: Use as few words as possible while being understandable.
	Professional: Varies, but generally you should sound like you know what you're doing

Avoid over use of callsigns or Jargon: Likely everyone who's checking in knows who you are already. Follow FCC rules, that's enough – once every 10 minutes, at the end of things. You don't need to give your call at each check in.

Have all information to be shared ready: Who, what, when, where, why and references for further
	Good to have it in print in front of you, either on screen or paper so you don't have to look for it
	or try to remember it all

You'll likely want a Net control script
	Idea is to know what to say 'n do before it happens. Should cover expected communications.

Preamble: Announces the net, clears the air, sets the tone and rules. Identifies what type of net is happening. Has prepared calls for check-ins, traffic, etc. Helps you be CCP

Call for check ins – and log them
	Notepad, steno book, use what works for you, ICS-309, spreadsheet
	spare pens, pencils, beverage (unsipllable), etc. If you use a computer, have a backup handy

	Don't worry about missing a few characters. You'll better with practice, ask for repeats if
	needed. Maybe practice logging check ins before you're net control.
	For less formal nets, welcome each check in by name - helps you learn who is who.

If you anticipate the net will be long, lots of check ins or traffic – feel free to open things up for early check ins. Just keep track of them. Get the early birds on paper so you have more time later.

New Check-in

New Check-in Operator:
You will simulate an operator who is unfamiliar with formal net procedures. This role helps the NCO practice onboarding new participants.

Guidelines for Your Role:
Check In Incorrectly at First: Deliberately make minor mistakes during your initial check-in, such as not waiting for the NCO's instructions, speaking out of turn, repeating other station's callsigns, using phoenetics when not asked to, etc.

Ask Questions: As a new operator, ask questions about how the net operates. This tests the NCO's ability to explain procedures.

Gradually Improve: Once the NCO explains the procedures, follow instructions and perform your role as directed.

Relay Station Guide

Role of the Relay Station Operator:
You will act as a bridge between the V/UHF net and other nets, such as HF nets or National Traffic System (NTS) nets, ensuring important messages are passed accurately and promptly.

Key Responsibilities:
Pass traffic to where it'll get to where it needs to be: You may have HF capability, digital, phone – even be sitting next to a non-ham that is getting a message. Whatever it takes, get it where it's going.

Maintain Contact with The Net: Primarily you need to follow the net you're checked into, while also ensuring you can communicate via whatever means you need to use to pass traffic without interfering with or missing activity from the net. Once that traffic passed to the 'next step', let the net know what you've done and traffic is on it's way. If you have to wait until after the net – ask permission and make sure it's not urgent enough for you to drop out of the net and get it done – if you do wait, log what you've done so you'll know what was done, with who and how and the time

Accurate Message Passing: Relay messages exactly as given to ensure no information is lost. Confirm the receipt of each message. Log messages with time-stamp

Report Any Issues: If you are unable to make contact with the other net or experience difficulties, report this to the NCO.

If relaying traffic to an HF station:
"This is [Call Sign] relaying a message from [Station] to [Destination]. The message reads: [Message]."

ITU Phoenic Alphabet (also called the NATO Poenetic Alphabet)

Letter to be sent	Code word used	Spoken As
A	Alfa	AL – fah
B	Bravo	BRAH-voh
C	Charlie	CHAR-lee
D	Delta	DELL-tah
E	Echo	ECK-oh
F	Foxtrot	FOKS-trot
G	Golf	Golf
H	Hotel	HOH-tell
I	India	IN-dee-ah
J	Juliett	JEW-lee-ett
K	Kilo	KEY-loh
L	Lima	LEE-mah
M	Mike	Mike
N	November	no-VEM-ber
O	Oscar	OSS-cahr
P	Papa	Pah-PAH
Q	Quebec	Keh-BECK
R	Romeo	ROW-me-oh
S	Sierra	See-AIR-rah
T	Tango	TANG-go
U	Uniform	YOU-nee-form
V	Victor	VIK-tah
W	Wiskey	WISS-key
X	X-ray	ECKS-ray
Y	Yankee	YANG-kee
Z	Zulo	ZOO-loo
0	Zero	ZAY-roh
1	One	WUN
2	Two	Too
3	Three	THE-ree
4	Four	Fower
5	Five	Five
6	Six	Six
7	Seven	Seven
8	Eight	Ait
9	Nine	Niner
.	Decimal	Day-SEE-mal