Nets are a long standing tool in Amateur Radio. As such, there are often strong feelings associated with them. Know this is not meant to be the be-all or end-all of net operations and is certainly NOT conclusive! Each net is it's own being, has its own rules, traditions and methods. This is meant to help folks get started and comfortable with the idea of a net. We're going over Concepts here. Not hard or fast 'how tos', rules or laws that have to be followed. The only "Must Dos" are the FCC rules for ID and even then, only while on the air. Everything else is guidance.

So, what is a net?
        A meeting or gathering, often over a radio network for sharing information or training.
        Any time you have 2 or more folks conversing, you're in a type of net. The more participants, typically, the more formal things get
        So, yes: this meeting/exercise is an example of a Net

Types of Amateur Radio Nets

Nets are usually categorized into one of several types based on their purpose and organization.
        Basically: Informal and Formal, also called Undirected or Directed.

Informal (Undirected) nets:
        Typically run more loosely – may not even have an NCO. Often a round-table or 'Talking Stick' format. Usually for rag-chew or casual use. Participants often know each other, maybe quite well and are used to each other's quirks and habits.
If you're just talking with the others, chewing the rag, you're likely in an informal on undirected net. Even if it's only 2 of you.

Directed nets:
        Are formal and have a set of rules, procedures or net directives and often have numerous participants.
        Divided into two types: Scheduled and Unscheduled (or Adhoc) nets.
                Scheduled nets: have fixed times, frequencies, and formats that are either known or published for participants.
                Adhoc or Emergency nets: happen when they're needed – whatever the need may be.

Flavors of Directed nets:
ARES nets are open to any licensed amateur radio operator and may serve agencies like the Red Cross, Salvation Army, be used for training/practice, or any other non-governmental agency.

RACES nets typically serve and are operated on behalf of a Government Agency. They have their own rules, training, requirements and procedures. RACES is out of scope here.

Traffic nets pass and deliver formal written messages in a specified format. They are operated by the National Traffic System (NTS). NTS is also out of our scope here, but as a relay station you may be asked to pass traffic into the NTS via an NTS net or station.

Emergency nets provide communication to one or more served agencies, the general public or groups of hams and may well have very different purposes, rules and procedures according to the needs of the

minute. These may start out as an informal net, and as numbers increase, adopt more formality to facilitate effective communications

Remember to allow the repeater to drop. This resets the Time Out Timer (TOT) and will prevent interuptions

If you have an emergency, when you can call out "Break, break, break" and wait for the NCO to respond

Tonite, we're going to Simulate a net – as an orientation to those not yet familiarize

Instead of radios, we'll just talk (please turn off or mute your HTs). But only ONE person can talk at any given time. If Two folks are talking at the same time, assume that NO ONE was able to understand what was said.

We'll use several things to simulate common issues and they will be directed by the "Simulation Umpire" (SU), tonite that'll be me. Either as a passed note, message or even just a whisper in your ear.

Such exercise events may include everything from hardware issues to people issues:
  Interference
  Doubling (two or more at the same time)
  Problems with the repeater
  Problems with your own radio
  Various roles of participants in the net
  Emergency traffic
  New folks that don't know what to do
  Experienced folks that are inpatient with such things
  Other experienced folks that think they can do it better, etc.

Lots of options

The idea is to learn, increase your confidence, skills and become better over the air (OTA) communicators, resources and hams