



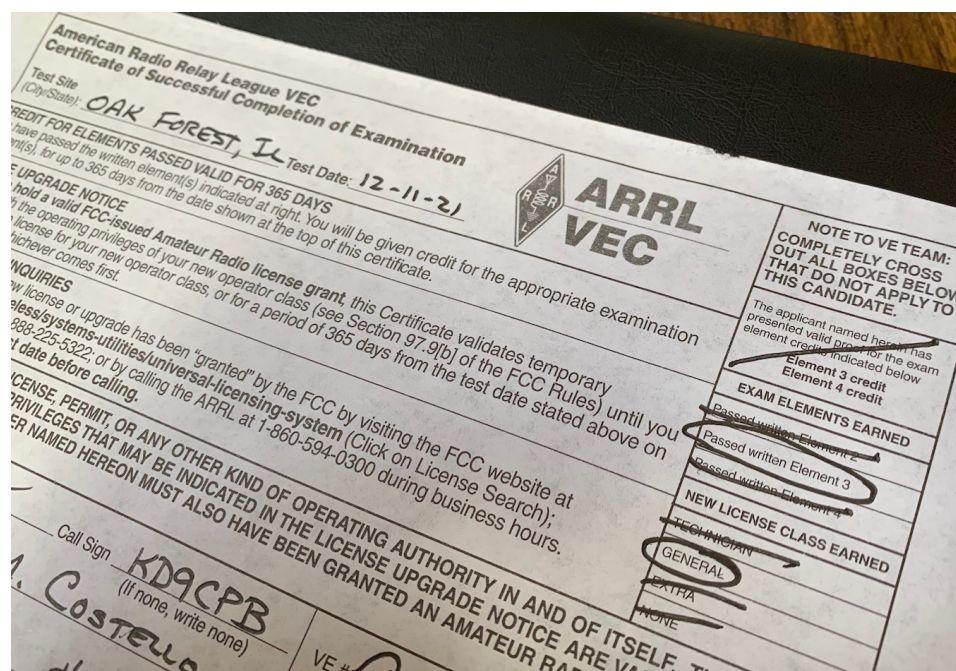
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Ham Radio

kd9cpb

First posted 12/11/2021

It only took 7 years of procrastination and excuses since getting my tech license in 2014, but as of today, I finally have a General ticket!



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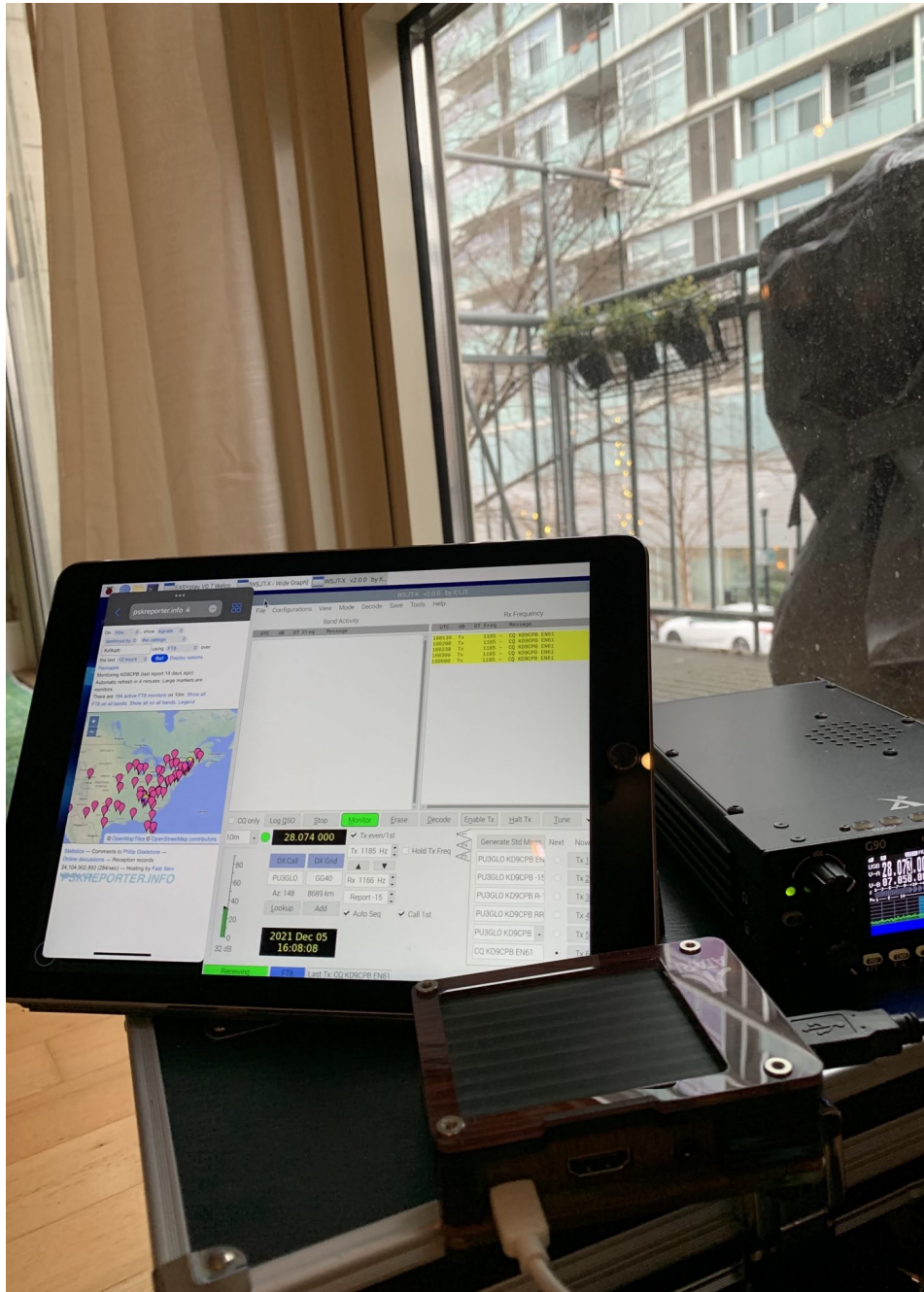


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Not only do I have the new license finally under my belt, but I also decided to buy a [Xiegu G90](#) to start taking advantage of my new 20/30/40/60/80/160 meter band privileges immediately. Can't wait to have much more action in the WSJT-X setup on my iPad + Raspberry Pi configuration than you see in the 10 meter picture below 😊



I bet some of you might have a few questions about why I went with the Xiegu G90, and why on earth someone that blogs about ham radio stayed a technician for so long. Below is a bunch of silly questions & answers I've come up with to better illustrate my situation in the hopes that it helps out others who might be newer to the hobby. If you think I got something wrong or have more questions, let me know in the comments!

Wait, I thought you were happy with your [HTX-100 10m FT8 setup using only a technician license](#), why go with a new radio & General license now?

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Carla Notarobot @CarlaNotarobot

13 Jan

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Tom Costello @kd9cpb · 10 Jan

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 Big thanks to the [@CiscoChampion](#)
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Ray [REDACTED] @RayRedacted · 10 Jan

Question: have you ever attended a
 virtual InfoSec conference where th
 topics included not only DFIR, SOC,
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 also Farming Fails, the history of LE
 Improv, and Antique photography?

Block off this Sunday, January 16th,
[@PancakesCon](#) !

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Tom Costello @kd9cpb · 10 Jan

I had a great time with 10m FT8, but after seeing how much more FT8 traffic was coming through on 20/40/80 meters using my [SDRPlay Duo](#) off the [condo balcony](#), I felt like it was time to finally take the plunge into HF bands other than 10m. Check out this screenshot of SDRUno monitoring 20m & 40m, the Xiegu G90 monitoring 30m, and my [Nooelec NESDR](#) monitoring 10m FT8:

As you can see by the 10m band only having one entry while all the other bands are packed with traffic, it makes it very clear that getting a General license with an all-band transceiver is going to result in a lot more QSOs than I'll ever see on the 10m setup.

I did end up operating 10m FT8 on the Xiegu G90 for a little bit just to see if the SDR stuff built-in to it would make a difference in receiving traffic compared to the Realistic HTX-100. It seemed to be about the same. I don't have an o-scope or much of anything to accurately test the transmit side of things other than looking at [pskreporter.info](#), but the Xiegu is definitely not performing any worse than the HTX-100 when used for FT8.

What did you use to study, and how long did it take you?

Normally I'm all about [reading physical books](#) to master new skills, but given how well written the [hamstudy.org app](#) has been, I ended up just using that for the most part. The "explain" option was incredibly helpful, and the \$4 cost was well within my budget 😊

I started to spend more time studying, usually no more than a half hour a day, right after Thanksgiving. I scored 30 out of 35, so I definitely didn't have full mastery of all the questions, but I knew the content well enough to pass with confidence.

One thing that seemed to help was staying off the air entirely to focus on studying instead of gabbing via VHF/UHF or trying to get FT8 contacts in. I even reconfigured my mini-shack next to the balcony for being strictly receive-only in early December. The cabling was ugly, but this setup got us that really nice 40/30/20/10 meter FT8 screenshot above!

I'm super excited to be a backup sp for [@PancakesCon](#) 3!!! Regardless of whether or not my talk sees the light of day, it's going to be an awesome time I can't wait

PancakesCon 3: Batter

Up @PancakesCon

Now, congratulations to our 2022 speakers - we are excited to see you! See the full schedule at <https://pancakescon.com/2022-conference-information/>

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Tom Costello Retweeted



Tim McC @juangolbez · 8 Jan

Signal boosting this for someone, it sounds interesting, check it out!

<https://lightbytes.es.net/2022/01/01/for-the-2022-women/>

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What do you plan on doing with the new license, and the Xiegu G90?

FT8 on 20/30/40m. Eventually, I want to do a lot more HF phone, but as long as I'm in the condo, it's likely going to be mostly weak signal FT8 fun for me. Hopefully we move somewhere with better antenna opportunities next year!

Speaking of antennas, I plan on keeping the 2x MFJ 1610-T "ham stick" dipole via MFJ 347 adapter on the balcony for all the 20/30/40m fun. This is possible because the Xiegu G90 has a built-in tuner, and ultimately this was the "killer feature" that resulted in me buying it instead of a [Yaesu FT-891](#), [ICOM 705](#) or other HF all-band radio. Sure, you can buy a tuner separate, but I wanted to keep costs down & buy something new as my first radio.

I came very close to buying a Lab599 Discovery TX-500 or Kenwood TS-590 used off eBay. Ultimately I decided against it because I wanted the simplicity + space savings of not dealing with extra tuner gear. Here in the condo, space is limited and I don't really plan on ever going over 10 watts off the balcony, so the Xiegu just felt like the right fit. That being said, I really want to get back into buying from the "traditional" radio vendors such as Kenwood, Yaesu and Icom for whatever my next purchase ends up being. The cheap stuff from brands like Xiegu, [Anytone](#) & BTEC is great for entering the hobby, but I really want to get something quality from a more established radio manufacturer once I'm older.

Really, just FT8 for now?

Yes, largely due to the [small bundle of joy](#) that came into my life earlier this year. At the end of the day, I don't have very much time to be on the air nowadays, and I can very easily get interrupted when I do. For that reason, I mostly plan on sticking with FT8 contacts at least until the little one gets a bit bigger. Plus the iPad running WSJT-X goes really well with the baby monitor 😊

Any regrets about not getting General sooner?

None whatsoever. I feel like not having the General ticket for so long ended up leading me down a path into DMR and 10m FT8 that I otherwise wouldn't have explored if I got General license privileges right off the bat. While I certainly wouldn't recommend waiting 7 years and taking some fairly extended breaks from the hobby before upgrading your license, I certainly don't have any shame in it either.

I'd like to close out this write-up with a big thanks to the volunteers at [Hamfesters Radio Club](#) for allowing me to test today, and everyone that's still reading this article for keeping me engaged with the wide world of ham radio on the world wide web! Hope to see you on the air soon!

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One thought on "New license, new radio!"

KD9JSB Tom Costello

[December 30, 2021 at 1:04 am](#)

Congratulations on the new setup.

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