

Amateur Radio – Understanding Callsigns

When you listen on the amateur radio bands, you will hear many call signs. Usually an amateur gives his own callsign and that of the station with whom he is in contact at the beginning and end of each transmission. Callsigns are allocated by the regulatory authority for UK Amateur Radio which is Ofcom. Current callsigns in England begin with the letter 'M' or '2E' and an additional prefix is added for stations in other parts of the U.K. for example:-

M England	MD Isle of Man	MI Northern Island	MJ Jersey
MM Scotland	MU Guernsey	MW Wales	

These prefix letters are followed by a number which denotes a Foundation, Intermediate or Full licence and three letters for individual identification. i.e. M3ABC indicates an English station with a Foundation licence.

The Foundation Licence is the entry point into amateur radio with operation on the main frequency bands at low power. The licensee can progress to the Intermediate licence and then to the Full licence with operation permitted on additional frequency bands with increased power at each stage. The callsigns allocated indicate the type of licence as follows:-

Foundation	Intermediate	Full
M3AAA to M3ZZZ	2E0AAA to 2E0ZZZ	M0AAA to M0ZZZ
M6AAA to M6ZZZ	2E1AAA to 2E1ZZZ	M1AAA to M1ZZZ
		M5AAA to M5ZZZ

Earlier Full licence holders were issued callsigns with the G prefix. These include G1, G2, G3, G4, G5, G6, G7, G8 and G0 range, all with 3 letters. There were also a number of two letter callsigns issued e.g. G2MI, G8LT, G5LP - all Full licence holders.

Special event callsigns may also be issued and have the prefix 'GB'. These callsigns are held up to 28 days to cover particular events. The letters of the callsigns are chosen by the event organisers and are usually connected with the event. For example GB4NDS stands for 'Northampton District Scouts', GB2GP for Gilwell Park etc.

Other countries use different systems and prefix letters. A few examples are given below:-

F France	HB Switzerland	I Italy	EA Spain
VU India	LX Luxembourg	VK Australia	VE Canada
OE Austria	CT Portugal	ZL New Zealand	ON Belgium
SK Sweden	LA Norway	OZ Denmark	PA Netherlands
VP Falklands	W USA		