



VANITY CALL SIGNS 101

BILL CLARK / WK4F

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AMATEUR RADIO CLUB OF COLUMBIA COUNTY

OUTLINE

- Licensing statistics.
- What is a Vanity Call Sign?
- Why would I want a Vanity Call Sign?
- What types of vanity call signs are available?
- I want one but can't decide which one.
- How do I know if my choice is available?
- How do I get one? When will I get it?
- My journey to WK4F.
- Useful Websites and Tools.

LICENSE STATISTICS

- Information courtesy of www.hamdata.com
- New Technician licenses granted at an average rate of 24 per day (427,458).
- New General licenses granted at an average rate of 12 per day (192,789).
- New Extra licenses granted at an average rate of 8 per day (157,909).
- Novice licenses decreased by 2 per day (8,118) and Advanced licenses decreased at 5 per day (38,784).
- Georgia
 - 20,915 amateur radio operators with active licenses
 - Ranks 14th in US
 - 10,149 Techs
 - 5,086 Generals
 - 4,132 Extras

WHAT IS A VANITY CALL SIGN?

- What the FCC Says.

- The vanity call sign system offers you the opportunity to request a specific call sign for your primary station. A vanity call sign is selected by the FCC from a list of call signs requested by the station licensee.
- There are three different request types for requesting vanity call signs for a primary station. The requestor may list up to twenty-five call signs in order of preference. The exact prefix, numeral, and suffix must be given for each call sign. Requests stated in general terms such as, "Any call sign with my initials" or "Any call sign having the prefix (or suffix)_____" will be dismissed. The first assignable call sign on the list for which the requestor is eligible will be shown on the license grant for the requestor's station and **the original call sign will be vacated.**
- The three request types are: "By List", "By Close Relative or Former Holder Now Deceased", and "By Former Request Holder".

- Real World Definition

- A call sign that I choose that complies with all of the FCC's call sign requirements for class, structure, and physical location.

WHY WOULD I WANT A VANITY CALL SIGN?

- Maybe your current call sign is long phonetically.
 - N7SJI (14 syllables) or KI4DNS (14)
- Hard to pronounce or easily misunderstood
 - N9DVB, W8AEV
 - Contains lots of B's, D's, E's, G's, etc... or other similar sounding letters
- A silent key relative's call sign.
- I want my call sign to reflect my license class.
- I want to stand out in a pile-up.
- I want to recognize _____.

WHAT TYPES OF CALLS ARE AVAILABLE?

- Technician & General – Group C or D
 - K, N, or W with number and three letter suffix (1x3)
 - K or W with another letter, number, and three letter suffix (2x3)
- Extra – Group A, B, C, or D
 - K, N, or W with number and two letter suffix (1x2)
 - A, N, K, or W with letter, number and 1 letter suffix (2x1)
 - A with another letter (thru L), number, and 2 letter suffix (2x2)
 - K, N, or W with letter, number, and 2 letter suffix (2x2)
 - Plus all call signs available to General and Technician

WHAT CALLS ARE NOT AVAILABLE?

1. KA2AA-KA9ZZ, KC4AAA-KC4AAF, KC4USA-KC4USZ, KG4AA-KG4ZZ, KC6AA-KC6ZZ, KL9KAA- KL9KHZ, KX6AA-KX6ZZ;
2. Any call sign having the letters SOS or QRA-QUZ as the suffix;
3. Any call sign having the letters AM-AZ as the prefix (these prefixes are assigned to other countries by the ITU);
4. Any 2-by-3 format call sign having the letter X as the first letter of the suffix;
5. Any 2-by-3 format call sign having the letters AF, KF, NF, or WF as the prefix and the letters EMA as the suffix (U.S Government FEMA stations);
6. Any 2-by-3 format call sign having the letters AA-AL as the prefix;
7. Any 2-by-3 format call sign having the letters NA-NZ as the prefix;
8. Any 2-by-3 format call sign having the letters WC, WK, WM, WR, or WT as the prefix (Group X call signs);
9. Any 2-by-3 format call sign having the letters KP, NP or WP as the prefix and the numeral 0, 6, 7, 8 or 9;
10. Any 2-by-2 format call sign having the letters KP, NP or WP as the prefix and the numeral 0, 6, 7, 8 or 9;
11. Any 2-by-1 format call sign having the letters KP, NP or WP as the prefix and the numeral 0, 6, 7, 8 or 9;
12. Call signs having the single letter prefix (K, N or W), a single digit numeral 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and a single letter suffix are reserved for the special event call sign system.

I WANT A VANITY CALL SIGN BUT CAN'T DECIDE WHICH ONE, WHAT SHOULD I CONSIDER?

- If you are into CW, consider the “weight” of the call sign.
 - Counts dits and dahs to get a weighting factor
- If you are primarily SSB consider length, pronunciation, catchiness
- Or maybe you want to represent something such as:
 - Initials / Name
 - College / Sports Teams / Hobbies / Interests
 - Examples:
 - K9DOG, W4UGA, K4SRS, W8USA, K1GUY, KJ3IDX, N4BOB, WB4SRO
- Spreadsheet to evaluate your choices
 - See k8zt.com/vanity-callsign then scroll down to “Compare Your Callsign Choices”

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY CHOICE IS AVAILABLE?

- There are a number of useful websites available to assist you in finding that right vanity call sign. These are the most useful.
 - www.radioQTH.net
 - www.AE7Q.com
 - www.fcc.gov/wireless/universal-licensing-system?job=home AKA – the ULS
- If a call sign has been previously held, it becomes available for reassignment **two years and one day** after it expired or was cancelled.
 - This is key to knowing when to apply for a vanity call sign.

I WANT A 1X2 OR A 2X1 – IS THAT POSSIBLE?

- Generally yes – but.
 - High demand, low inventory.
 - As of Saturday, April 24, 2021
 - 24 “available” in 0 thru 9 call districts
 - 64 in the application process
 - 1,138 expired but not yet available
 - 682 cancelled but not yet available
 - 4,082 total pool in each call district
- Easiest to get – 8, sometimes 0, 9, 1
- Hardest to get – 4, 5
- Recent applications
 - AB4T – 15 applications
 - N4WG – 22 applications
 - W4CC – 51 applications

NOW THAT I'VE DECIDED, HOW DO I APPLY FOR MY NEW CALL SIGN?

- Log in to the FCC ULS License Manager website with your FCC Registration Number (FRN).
- From the “License at a Glance” page, choose “Request Vanity Call Sign”
- Answer the application questions.
- Select the Eligibility – Primary Station Preference List / Close Relative of Former Holder / Former Primary Station Holder
- Enter the Call Sign(s) that you are requesting.
- Validate your Licensee Information. (Note you are required to keep your address current with the FCC.)
- Review your request then if no changes, certify and sign your request.
- Print a copy of your request, just in case.
- Note – I have seen recommendations that you submit any address changes separately from vanity call requests to avoid having your vanity request held up if there is a problem with some other part of the change request.

TIMELINE FOR GRANTING A VANITY CALL SIGN

- Applications are “received” on the first Federal workday on or after the FCC actually receives the application.
- The FCC waits 17 calendar days in case applications are filed via the U.S. Postal Service.
- On the first Federal work day after 17 days after the receipt date, the FCC batch processes all applications with the same receipt date. Duplicates are dismissed and remaining applications are processed in random order.
- Selected applications are updated in ULS within minutes.

MY JOURNEY TO WK4F

- Originally licensed as a Novice in 1978. Let that license lapse in 1988.
- Re-licenses in 2014 as a Technician; assigned KM4FDM
- Applied for my old call sign (Previous Holder) but had to prove it by providing a copy of my old license. Application granted.
- Upgraded to Extra Class and began applying for 2x1's and 1x2's.
- Used the AE7Q website extensively to track my applications.
- Evaluated many options but wanted to keep the 4 call area and didn't want an "N" call as my overriding interest was phonetic length.
- Submitted multiple applications and tracked their status.
- Was in line to receive one that I didn't like so withdrew that application.
- A few misses along the way – WD4C came up (my initials) and I was hoping the "random" selection would pick me but no joy.
- Finally after about eight weeks of applying I got to a 1:1 ratio – guaranteed to be assigned WK4F.

USEFUL WEBSITES AND TOOLS

- www.ae7q.com
- www.radioQTH.net
- www.hamdata.com
- www.arrl.org/vanity-call-signs
- www.w5yi.org/page.php?id=269 (paid support for obtaining a vanity call sign)
- www.k8zt.com/vanity-callsign (spreadsheet for evaluating your choices)
- www.qrz.com
- <https://www.fcc.gov/wireless/bureau-divisions/mobility-division/amateur-radio-service/amateur-call-sign-systems>
- <https://wireless2.fcc.gov/UlsEntry/licManager/login.jsp>

CAUTIONS

- If submitting applications on multiple days, remember that granting of one application makes all other applications in queue void.
- If you expect to upgrade, wait until after your upgrade is processed or that too may make applications in queue void.
- Watch call sign availability dates. If the call is in high demand, only those that file on the right day will have an opportunity to obtain it. Applying a day or two early will not be considered a valid application.
- Multiple applications for the same call sign will not increase your chances. Duplicates will be denied.
- It does not matter what time of the day you file – staying up until midnight to file won't help your chances.
- Modifying an application will reset its processing date. Don't modify an application.
- Call sign requests must be valid for structure, operator class, and availability to be granted.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

- Be creative.
- Be persistent.
- Be patient.
- Questions?