



often called *International Morse code* to distinguish it from (the now obsolete) *American Morse code*.

Gerke perceived the disadvantages of American Morse code which consisted of four different hold durations (the amount of time the key was held down), and some letters containing inconsistent internal durations of silence. In Gerke's system there are only "dits" and "dahs", the latter being three times as long as the former and the internal silence intervals are always a single dit-time each. His new code was first adopted by the Deutsch-Oesterreichischer Telegraphenverein (German-Austrian Telegraphic Union). See Figure 1.

### 1865 International Telegraph Convention

Our thanks continue, this time to whoever they were who decided on the almost-final version of International Morse which was yet a further improvement upon both Morse and Gerke code. (See Figure 2 for a comparison of all three). What we generally use today for CW was declared at the International Telegraph Convention held in Paris in 1865 which also formed the International Telegraph Union which was later renamed as the International Telecommunication Union.

Interestingly the original 1865 Convention declaring the International Morse code we use today had a rather impractical spacing: between letters the official duration was three dits as it still is, but spacing between words was decided to be only four dits, an almost indistinguishable difference between letter and word spacing. These days the recommended spacing between words is seven dits duration.

Otherwise all letters and numerals decided upon in Paris in 1865 are the same as we use today. Only a couple of punctuation signs have changed since. For example, di-dah-di-dah-di-dah was later changed to be a full stop,

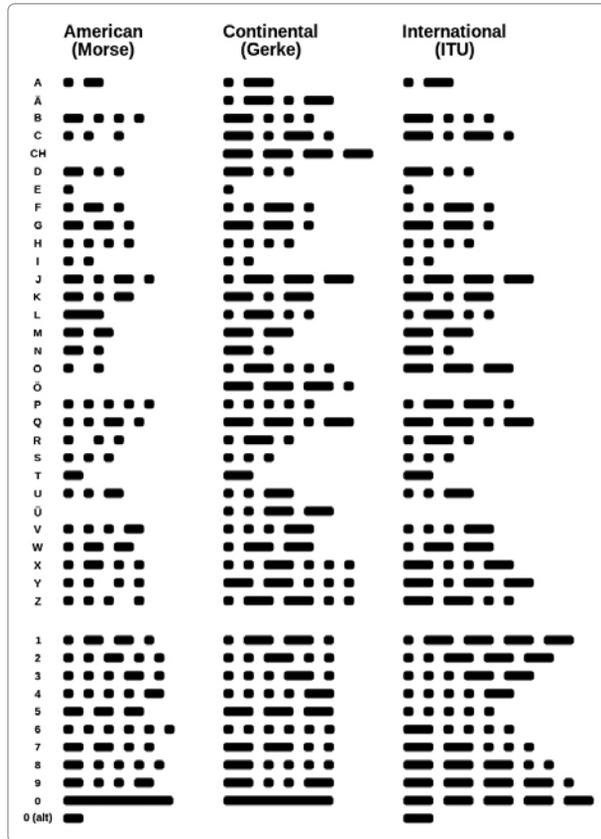


Figure 2: A comparison of American, Continental and International codes.

rather than a comma, replacing the original full stop which was identical to III (di-dit di-dit di-dit). What we now use as comma (dah-dah-di-di-dah-dah) was an exclamation mark. In the maritime radio service this continued in use as such and some nation's ship's radio officers, certainly in the Mediterranean Sea area such as Italy and Greece, used it as an insult, to swear at someone [insert insult here!] especially when sent as dah-dah dit dit dah-dah for emphasis.

Of course there is also Morse for other languages such as Russian, Japanese, Korean, Arabic and many more besides. CW continues to be an evolving and international language, and could even be called the "Esperanto" of the third millennium, as explained in *Zen and the Art of Radiotelegraphy* by Carlo IK6YGJ.

a rag chew in CW without use of decoder aids, for at least 30 minutes at 25 wpm or more is required with five existing members to sponsor your application. Even today HSC has less than 2,000 members world-wide.

Many other CW clubs exist that you may like to join, with various activities, publications and membership requirements. See the VKCW.net website for some further clubs and activities you can become involved in.

### CW nets

There are a number of CW nets that you can participate in here in Australia. The most famous is the 43 year old 40 m CW net on Sunday mornings at 10 am Eastern time which is open for two hours. You can come and go at any time, check in with "QNI" and ask to leave with "QNX". Net control will pair you off with another station and assign

### Clubs and activities

FISTS is a CW Club with three aims: Further the use of Morse code; Engender friendships among members; Encourage newcomers to use Morse code. Registered as the International Morse Preservation Society, you can find information about the club and how to join it at [www.fists.co.uk](http://www.fists.co.uk)

Membership of the High Speed Club founded in 1951 is a goal many aim for. Good operating practice and ability to have

you a frequency for the QSO. At midday the net closes with a list of participants. For those who are unable to reach net control on 40 m, try the 20 m CW net which takes place after the Sunday morning 2200 UTC CW Broadcast repeat has finished and call backs have been completed, officially starting at 2250 UTC (during Summer) on 14022.5.

Col's CW net takes place every Saturday and Sunday at 3.30 pm Eastern time on 7115 kHz in SSB and CW after a quiz which starts at 3.00 pm for 15 minutes, with answer given afterwards. Another good place for beginners is the nightly "CW Bash" hour at 8 pm Eastern time. For up-to-date details of these and other nets and activities see [www.VKCW.net](http://www.VKCW.net).

### CW broadcast

Every Saturday afternoon at 0400 UTC, Sunday morning at 2200 UTC and Monday evening at 1000 UTC, a CW news bulletin (QST) is broadcast on three frequencies simultaneously, covering not only all of Australia but beyond. Frequencies include 7022.5 and 14022.5, with a full schedule available on the QST menu at [VKCW.net](http://VKCW.net). In winter, transmissions may be an hour later. QST is a

good way to keep up-to-date with the latest CW news of interest to VK CW operators without even the need for the Internet. Call backs and reception reports from listeners are always appreciated.

### Getting a Morse key

For those who are starting out – or returning to – CW, or wishing to upgrade their Morse key, there are many options available.

Whether or not you are a beginner, everyone should have a "straight key" which is the traditional Morse key most people are familiar with and which is reliable at speeds up to 20 wpm or so. Most modern rigs have an inbuilt electronic keyer, so you could also find a "paddle" for sending CW at higher speeds, with practice. For the more adventurous, bug keys and other mechanical types are also available. The above mentioned e-book by Carlo IK0YGJ will run you through the various types of keys.

Morse keys are still in abundance from the 1930s and 1940s, many sitting around unused in storage and can often be found free of charge via members of your local radio club.

Checking [vkclassifieds.com](http://vkclassifieds.com).  
au or placing a Wanted advert in

there and/or in the Help Forum at [VKCW.net](http://VKCW.net) can also yield results. MorseExpress.com, the FISTS Newsletter, internet searches, hamfests, or even making one yourself are all further good options.

### Go on air!

CW is fun, and easier to learn than often imagined, as is riding a bicycle. These *CW Today* articles in *Amateur Radio* should have shown you the many ways you can get started. If you find the band quiet, or are looking for some on-air practice, try putting out a CQ call on 7050 in CW where many of us will welcome newcomers and old timers alike at all speeds.

Future editions of *CW Today* may cover news and issues of interest in the world of CW. If you have anything to report, please do contact the online CW community via [VKCW.net](http://VKCW.net) or even pass on your news in CW after a CW news bulletin (QST) so that news of short-term value can be included in future broadcasts and news and events of interest longer term can also appear in this column.

Hoping to see you in QSO and until next time,

73 & 77 de Lou VK5EEE.



## Hamads

### WANTED – VIC

Relay for 2 metre linear amplifier model ELH 230. Battery valve type 3A5 twin triode. Copy of circuit for Kenwood 2 metre hand held transceiver model TH-205A. Any information on I.C.E. (Electronics Communications Equipment Corp.)

for 6 metre transceiver circa 1968 model FDAM – 3. Word processor Citizen Model CPM 10wp, working or not but the LCD screen must be complete and undamaged. Phone Brewster on 03 9527 2661 after 6 pm, if no answer, please leave a message. B Wallace VK3YBW.

### WANTED – QLD

Copy of Handbook and circuits for VICOM FDK Multi2000 Synthesizer Transceiver. Price to Brad Booth VK4CDL/VK2BTB, 48 Gregory Street, Cardwell, 4849 Queensland. Email: [bradtimmy@hotmail.com](mailto:bradtimmy@hotmail.com)