

Onboarding New Members Effectively

Your onboarding process determines whether new members stay active or quietly disappear after their first week. A smooth, welcoming, and technically successful first experience converts curious newcomers into committed network participants.

The Onboarding Journey

1. **Discovery** - They learn the network exists
2. **Acquisition** - They obtain hardware
3. **Configuration** - They get the node on the network
4. **First contact** - They exchange messages with another member
5. **Deeper engagement** - They explore features, attend events, consider contributing infrastructure

Hardware Recommendations

Standardize on 1-2 recommended hardware options. Current recommended starter kit:

- **Budget option:** Heltec WiFi LoRa 32 V3 (~\$18) - USB-C, built-in OLED, no GPS. Good for indoor/desktop use.
- **All-in-one option:** LILYGO T-Beam (~\$40) - GPS built in, battery connector, excellent for portable use
- **Premium:** RAK WisBlock Starter Kit (~\$60-80) - Modular, excellent build quality, best for fixed outdoor installations

Pre-Configured Firmware Distribution

- Create a saved configuration file with your community channel key, frequency preset, and node naming convention pre-filled
- Host it on your community wiki or website
- Link to meshtastic.org flasher with your settings pre-loaded
- Document: "Flash this firmware, scan this QR code, done." - Three steps maximum.

First-Week Checklist for New Members

- Node powered on and flashed with community firmware
- Channel key loaded (via QR code scan or manual entry)
- Node name set to community naming convention
- Sent a test message received by at least one other member
- Joined community Discord/Signal channel
- Node visible on meshmap.net or community map

Assign a "buddy" - an experienced member who agrees to be on-call for a new member's first week. A quick DM check-in on day 3 dramatically improves retention.

Managing Stale and Orphaned Nodes

Every network accumulates abandoned nodes - nodes still visible on the map but owned by someone who has moved on. Management strategies:

- **Annual "node census"** - Message all known node operators, ask for a check-in. Non-responders after 30 days are marked as inactive.
- **Automatic expiry** - Meshtastic shows "last heard" timestamps. Nodes not heard in 30+ days are visually distinguished on your community map.
- **Node decommission policy** - Backbone/shared infrastructure nodes require formal handoff if an operator leaves. Document the process.

Revision #2

Created 2026-05-03 06:20:49 UTC by Mesh America Admin

Updated 2026-05-03 13:02:09 UTC by Mesh America Admin