

PROPER COMMUNICATING PROTOCOL AND "HAM ETIQUETTE"

PERIODIC IDENTIFICATION EVERY TEN MINUTES

You must always identify yourself at regulated periods while operating on ham frequencies by giving your call sign. This must be done every ten minutes and at the end a communication; and if a conversation last less than ten minutes, then just at the end of the communication. You must identify yourself even if you are conducting a test. Don't get nervous about this, just keep in mind when you need to do it and throw out your callsign every once in a while, at the end of a transmission. This will also serve to prompt your buddy to do the same. Always identify yourself: anything else is considered an illegal **unidentified transmission**. When chatting with a foreign station, you must identify yourself in English, no matter what language you are using with your foreign contact. CW can always be used, regardless of current operating frequency, to identify your station.

FREQUENCY RIGHTS

There are some bands in which amateurs must share frequencies with other radio services. The FCC divides **shared band** users into **primary users** and **secondary users**. Primary users have priority of use over secondary users, so secondary users can only use those frequencies when not in use by the primary users. For example, packet networking can only take place secondarily on the 219-220 MHz band - marine users have the primary right-of-way.

With non-shared band frequencies, it's a game of "every man for himself" - regardless of license class or power output. Nobody really has rights over others when it comes these frequencies, *unless you were there first*. So, when trying to find a frequency to transmit on and you come across one that is already occupied, find another one - unless you think they won't mind you joining in on their conversation. If not, you will find out fast enough. Also, take a moment to listen in on a frequency just to make sure it is clear before using to ensure that you are not interrupting.

The only exception to the rule is **emergency traffic**. You can break in on an occupied frequency if you have a bonafide emergency. By that same token, if someone breaks in on your conversation with an emergency, they have the "right-of-way". In fact, as a responsible ham, you should do everything you can to help the person out.

CQ CALLING

Amateur radio allows a ham to speak directly with another ham (remember: no broadcasting). But what can you do if you are monitoring a frequency and want to know if somebody is out there listening? You can use a "**CQ**" call, which will allow you to ask if anybody is monitoring the frequency that would like to talk. "CQ" means "calling any station".

Procedure:

VOICE MODE: To call, say "CQ" three times, then "this is YOUR CALLSIGN". When answering, say calling station's name, then "this is", then your callsign.

ANSWERING IN CW: Send the other station's call sign twice, followed by "DE" (meaning "this is"), followed by your callsign twice.

CALLING IN RTTY: Send the letters "CQ" three to six times, followed by "DE", followed by your callsign sent three times.

On a local repeater, it's safe to say your callsign, followed by "monitoring". That will tell other hams that you are out there and willing to talk.

JOINING IN ON A CONVERSATION

You may be monitoring a frequency and happen upon an interesting conversation between a couple of chums. If you want to get in on the conversation, it's kosher to simply say your callsign to let them know that you are there and would like to join in. It makes for a great party line.

THIRD PARTY COMMUNICATIONS

Third party messages (messages sent between two hams for someone else) over the ham radio bands are allowed - but the control operator must be present at all times to monitor the call. If it is an international call, then it can only be with a country in which we have a third-party agreement with. Third party communications also allow you to utilize a repeater's autopatch and speak with an unlicensed person - that person essentially becomes a third-party user.

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS

It's OK to speak with people in any country that you can make contact with, as long as the governments of both countries approve of amateur communications with each other. If it is a third-party communication, make sure that there are no restrictions for third-party communications with that country, and there are a few. Amateur operators in the U.S. are required to sign off (end communications) by stating both your callsign and the station's that you are in contact with.

REMEMBER: NO BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS

When should you expect to get compensated for working the ham bands? Hardly ever, with a few exceptions. You can put your radio equipment up for sale as long as you are not making a living at it. Some clubs can pay employees as part of their job duties - but there are very stringent requirements. Teachers can expect their normal pay if they are licensed and want to teach their class about ham radio and transmit for illustration.

REPEATER USE

When using a repeater, try not to use "ham jive" so that listeners can understand what is being said. Repeater communications should be kept to a minimum in case someone needs to use it for an emergency; always use simplex mode if you can. It is good practice to allow a pause after ending your transmission in case someone needs to break in.

Repeaters can't be used by just anybody unless they are deemed "**open**" by the sponsoring club. **Closed** repeaters are open for use to club members only. If you find it necessary to use a

closed repeater, most of the time it just requires club membership with a \$5-10 membership fee.

"CB TALK"

CB jargon is often used on the ham bands. When monitoring, you are likely to hear people say "over" when ending a transmission or "10-4" to acknowledge reception of a transmission, or "roger that", "what's your handle", etc. This is fine to do, even though you'll find that it may agitate some die-hard hams. Let's face it, they worked hard to get licensed, while anybody can pick up a CB mike and yak into it. You can expect some degree of separation.

PREVENT UNAUTHORIZED ACCESS

Being a ham carries certain inherent responsibilities, such as making sure that no one has access to your station while you're not around. Handhelds are pretty easy to keep an eye on - you can lock them away, or at the very least disconnect the antenna and carry it with you if you are going to leave your HT behind. With base units, you can install a key-operated switch in the main power line - this simply prevents your station from being powered up when the switch is locked in the "OFF" position. With mobile units, you can disconnect the mike and lock it up or carry it with you.

AMATEUR RADIO RECORD-KEEPING

Record-keeping - the cruelest words known to man. At one time the FCC required amateur radio operators to maintain a logbook which was supposed to be updated with a record of each transmission that you placed. That's not so anymore, but some people will recommend that you do. Use your best judgement.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED: JOIN YOUR LOCAL HAM CLUB

One thing that you should do for sure after getting your license: join your local ham club(s). Most only require a small membership fee in the range of \$5-20 annually. It is a great way to get acquainted with local hams and find out what is going on in your pocket of the ham world. You'll be able to find out where and when the upcoming exams, when contests will be taking place, and what the technical status of your local ham network is. Most importantly, it is the local ham club that makes ham functions possible on a local level, and also, they are usually the ones paying for the towers, repeaters and other equipment that you probably use to transmit on. So, any fees or dues that you pay go to a great and worthy cause that all users benefit from.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Whenever another ham is using your radio, you should be right there with the equipment (at the **control point**). There's no problem with you using another hams station to transmit on or vice-versa, but remember that both the owner and the visiting operator are responsible for proper operation of the station.
- Use VHF and UHF communications when available over short distances to keep from interfering in the HF bands.

- Ham radio transmissions are not permitted on commercial aircraft due to the potential for interference with instrumentation and aircraft communications equipment.
- Remember the "low power" rule discussed in the interference section? You can use the **RST (Readability, Strength, Tone)** signal reporting system to communicate the quality of a signal. Readability and signal strength are usually reported during voice transmissions. When someone tells you that your signal is "5 x 9", then you are coming in exceptionally clear. Visit [KB2BK's RST signal reporting page](#) for more information.
- Any licensed ham can operate an amateur space station. Amateur space stations are amateur stations located at least 50 kilometers above the earth's surface. NASA has the authority to give approval for communication with earth-bound hams and astronauts on a shuttle.
- In closing, I recommend that all incoming amateurs take a close look at [Part 97 of Title 47](#) to fully understand what government rules apply to ham radio operations, and to understand the rights that you have acquired as a licensed operator.

Reference: <http://www.qsl.net/ng3p/haminfo/ham-tutor/protocol.htm>