

Repeater Etiquette

Starting a QSO via a directed call.

There are two main ways by which a QSO can begin, one is via a directed call and one is via monitoring. A directed call is where one amateur calls another amateur individually, such as "N7XYZ from K7ABC". In such a case, K7ABC is looking for one particular individual, N7XYZ. It generally is not an invitation for anyone other than N7XYZ to return the call. If N7XYZ doesn't answer the call, K7ABC may just clear off by saying "K7ABC clear".

Likewise, just saying your call by itself with nothing following it is meaningless.

Starting a QSO via a monitoring call.

If the repeater is not in use, simply stating your callsign followed by "listening" or "monitoring" implies that you are listening to the repeater and are interested in having a QSO with anyone else. Calling CQ on a repeater is generally, not common; a simple "N3XYZ listening" will suffice. There is no need to repeat the "listening" message over and over; if someone hasn't answered after a few tries, it probably means there is nobody around. If someone is listening and wants to QSO, they will answer back. Avoid things like "is anybody out there" or "is there anybody around on frequency".

Joining a QSO in progress.

If there is a conversation taking place which you would like to join, simply state your callsign when one user unkeys. This is one reason for having a courtesy tone: to allow other users to break into the conversation. One of the stations in the QSO, usually the station that was about to begin his transmission, will invite you to join, before making his own transmission. Don't interrupt a QSO unless you have something to add to the topic at hand. Interrupting a conversion is no more polite on a repeater than it is in person.

Interrupting a QSO to make a call.

If you need to make a directed call to another amateur but there is already another QSO going on, break into the conversation during the courtesy tone interval by saying "Call please, N7XYZ". One of the stations will allow you to make your call. If the station you are calling returns your call, you should quickly pass traffic to them and relinquish the frequency to the stations who were already in QSO; don't get into a full QSO in the middle of someone else's conversation. If you need to speak with the party you called for a significant length of time (say, more than 15 seconds), ask them to either wait until the current QSO has cleared, or ask them to move to another repeater or simplex channel to continue the conversation.

Nets.

Nets are run in many ways. A formal, or directed net has a single net control station (NCS) that manages its operation for a given session. The NCS operator calls the net to order at its designated start time, periodically calls for participants to join, listens for them to answer (or check in) keeps track of the roster of stations for that particular net session, and generally orchestrates the operation of the net. The key is to listen, identify the NCS, and follow the directions. The behavior of other net members is your guide. If you're not a regular net member, wait until the NCS calls for visitors. When you check in, give your call sign and first name once.

Roundtables and "Turning it Over".

When more than two amateurs are in a QSO, it is often referred to as a "roundtable" discussion. Such a QSO usually goes in order from amateur A to amateur B to amateur C and eventually back to amateur A again to complete the roundtable. To keep everyone on the same page, when any one amateur is done making a transmission, they "turn it over" to the next station in sequence (or out of sequence, if so desired). At the end of a transmission, turn it over to the next station by naming them or giving their callsign, such as "...and that's that. Go ahead Joe." or "...and that's that. Go ahead N7XYZ." If it's been close to 10 minutes, it's a good time to identify at the same time as well.

IDing and Who's Who?

By FCC regulations, you must always identify at 10-minute intervals and at the end of a transmission. If you are making a test transmission or calling another party, this is a one-way transmission. Since it has no "length" as there is no QSO taking place, you should identify each time you make a call or a test transmission. When identifying yourself and another party (or parties), or when making a directed call, your callsign goes LAST. "N7XYZ, K7ABC" means that K7ABC is calling N7XYZ, not the other way around. There is no need to identify each time you make a transmission, only once every 10 minutes. You do not need to identify the station with whom you are speaking, but it is generally polite to remember the call of the other station. Avoid phonetics on FM unless there is a reason for using them, such as the other station misunderstanding your callsign. When phonetics are needed, stick to the standard phonetic alphabet.

Demonstrations.

From time to time, an amateur may want to demonstrate the capabilities of amateur radio to another non-amateur. The typical way to do this is to ask for a "demo" such as "N7XYZ for a demonstration." Anyone who is listening to the repeater can answer them back, usually telling the calling party your name, callsign, and location is what they are looking for, not a lengthy conversation.

Signal Reports.

If you are unsure how well you are making it into the repeater, DO NOT kerchunk the repeater. Any time you key up the repeater, you should identify, even if you are just testing to see if you are making the machine. "N7XYZ test" is sufficient. Do not use the repeater as a "target" for tuning or aiming antennas, checking your transmitter power, etc. Use a dummy load where appropriate, or test on a simplex frequency. If you need someone to verify that you are making the repeater OK, ask for a signal report such as "N7XYZ, can someone give me a signal report?" "Radio check" is a term most often used on CB, "signal report" is what most amateurs ask for.

Language.

Aside from some of the techno-speech inherent in amateur vernacular, use plain conversational English. The kind of English that would be suitable for prime-time television, not R rated movies. Avoid starting or encouraging conflicts on the air. If a topic of conversation starts to draw strong debate, change the subject. Avoid "radio-ese" lingo whenever possible. CB has its own language style and so does amateur radio, but the two are not the same. Amateurs have "names", not "personals". Although many new hams have graduated from the CB ranks, let's try to keep CB lingo off the amateur bands.

Visiting a New Repeater.

When visiting a new repeater, take some time to monitor before jumping in to get a feel for the type of traffic and operating mannerisms of that particular system. Some repeaters are very free-wheeling in that there are people jumping in and out of conversations constantly. Others primarily have directed calls on them and discourage ragchewing.

Emergencies.

If there is a QSO going on, break into a conversation with the word "Break" or "Break for priority traffic." **DO NOT USE THE WORD BREAK TO JOIN IN A QSO UNLESS THERE IS AN EMERGENCY!** All stations should give immediate priority to any station with emergency traffic.

Malicious Interference.

If there is malicious interference, such as kerchunking, touchtones, rude comments, music etc. **DO NOT ACKNOWLEDGE IT!** Continue the QSO in a normal fashion. If the interference gets to the level where it is impossible to carry on the QSO, simply end the QSO as you normally would.

Power.

Use the minimum power necessary to complete a QSO. However, if someone says that you are noisy, increase power or relocate or take whatever measures you can to improve your signal. The amateur radio manufacturers continue to come up with newer, smaller handheld radios, many with power levels well under a watt. Many new amateurs start out with a handheld radio as their "first rig". Although convenient, they aren't the most effective radios in terms of performance. Without a good external antenna, operating a handheld radio indoors or inside a car is going to result in a lot of bad signal reports.

AND NOW WE COME TO THE NO-NO'S OF HAM RADIO TRANSMISSIONS:

Unidentified transmissions - Any transmission without an identifying call sign during the required time period.

False or deceptive signals - Transmissions intended to deceive the listener, such as using someone else's call sign.

False distress or emergency signals - Because of the legal requirement to respond, these are taken very seriously by the FCC and other authorities.

Obscene or indecent speech - Avoid controversial topics and expletives.

Broadcasting (other than a legitimate "QST").

Music

Generally speaking, **regular communications that could reasonably be performed through some other radio service are also prohibited.** For example, regularly directing boat traffic on a lake should be done on marine VHF channels, not ham. Communications for compensation is also prohibited.

Business Communications. No transmissions related to conducting your business or employer's activities are permitted. There are plenty of radio services available for commercial activities.

But one's own personal activities don't count as business - such as shopping or ordering things, etc. It is also okay to advertise equipment for sale as long as it pertains to Amateur Radio and is not your regular business.

OK:

- Use a repeater's autopatch to make/change a doctor's appointment
- Advertise a radio on a swap and shop net
- Describe your business as part of a casual conversation

NOT OK:

- Use a repeater's autopatch to call a business client and change an appointment
- Sell household/sporting goods on a swap and shop net
- Regularly sell radio equipment at a profit over the air
- Advertise your professional services over the air