



But I'm Afraid To Talk Into That Microphone!

- Alan Jones, KD7KUS

We have all had mike fright and it can strike beginners and experts alike. This session will help you overcome mike fright by explaining amateur radio etiquette - knowing the procedures will help you build confidence to get on the air. The dos and don'ts of talking over the radio will be discussed and you will have an opportunity to both observe and practice these techniques on the air in a friendly environment. We'll go over typical net procedures, how to check in to a net, and how to start a contact on the air with someone you've never met.

1. Radio Etiquette

1.1 PTT / RTL Button – *Don't think on the air; compose your thoughts beforehand*

1.2 Speak *across* the mic to prevent breath sounds; put your “thumb-in-your-cheek”

1.3 Beginning a Transmission

1.3.1 Listen to a frequency for several seconds before transmitting. If there's no conversation, say your <call sign>, <call sign> – “Listening”, or <call sign> - “Monitoring.” You can use “CQ” on any band to solicit a conversation.

1.3.2 If there is a conversation and you wish to join, wait for a break and say your <call sign>. Considerate operators will always leave breaks before keying up during a conversation.

1.3.3 If you want to speak with a particular person/station, give their call sign and then your call sign: “N7HXX, this is KD7KUS”. Wait 30 secs and call again. If no one responds, announce “<your call sign> Clear” and try again later.

1.3.4 If a conversation is on the frequency you want to use to contact a friend, wait for a break, give your call sign, wait to be recognized and ask to make a quick call. If your friend responds, tell them to move to another frequency or standby for the current conversation to end.

1.3.5 If you're conversing and you hear a call sign, recognize the caller. Try to accommodate their wishes to join your conversation or make a call. Be polite.

1.4 Simplex Operation

1.4.1 Underutilized. Affords more privacy than a repeater. Can usually have extensive conversations without interruption.

1.4.2 As a beginner, try simplex with a friend. Use low power and try both VHF (2 m) and UHF (70 cm). National simplex frequencies are 146.52 and 446.00 MHz.

1.5 Repeater Operation

1.5.1 Remember to pause for “1001” after keying and before speaking. Most repeaters are “open” – anyone within range can use them.

1.5.2 After you release, you'll hear the unmodulated carrier for a second or two. It tells you that the repeater is working.

1.5.3 Repeaters have time-outs (90 secs up to 10 mins). Don't drone on without a break – unkey your mike! If you time-out, the repeater may shut down for several minutes. Limit your key-down to a couple of minutes and say “Break.”

- 1.6 Everyone can hear you. No profanity, no disparaging people by name, don't give out your address and announce that you'll be away for a week. Most people refer to one another by call sign and/or first name; don't use surnames.
- 1.7 Verbal Interference – NEVER acknowledge the heckler by rising to the bait.
- 1.8 Exercise verbal efficiency – keep transmissions short and use plain language.
- 1.9 Emergencies: FCC rules require that you make every effort to contact a caller who has an emergency.
- 1.10 Give your <call sign> every 10 minutes and at the end of the conversation. You don't have to transmit your friend's call sign, although many do. Illegal to key up without your call sign. If you want to test your radio, say "<call sign> Testing."

2. Net Procedures

- 2.1 What is a net? (*a group of stations who gather on one frequency with a common purpose. Nets provide structure to allow for an orderly flow of messages or information*)
- 2.2 Nets serve a function: rag-chewing, swap meets, emergency communications, regular social interaction among friends
- 2.3 Some nets are directed, some are open and informal. A net may or may not have a **Net Control Station** (NCS).
- 2.4 If the net is formal there will be a check-in controlled by NCS. Check-in is either by roll-call or general invitation.
 - 2.4.1 Roll-call: unusual for big nets, but typical for small, regular nets
 - 2.4.2 Check in with your call sign and anything else the NCS requests (any items of business or traffic?). No need to say your call sign at the end of the net.
 - 2.4.3 General Invitation by Call Suffix or Geographic Region
 - 2.4.3.1 There will be pile-ups and people stepping on toes – Don't Worry!
 - 2.4.3.2 Be patient, Net Control will sort out the pile-up. Wait for Net Control to refer to your call, a suffix or a prefix, etc
- 2.5 Nets are like roundtable discussions, not telephone calls. Be courteous and contribute when you have something to say.

3. Ragchews

- 3.1 Be a good listener. Ask questions that follow your friend's conversation. You're from South Dakota? Is it really that cold there? Are you using a vertical antenna? How many radials did you lay down? You're a retired teacher? Do you miss teaching?
- 3.2 Enter an existing conversation with "Break" or your call sign. One speaker should recognize you and allow you to join in.

4. First Letter, Last Letter – CommAcademy Net Exercise

- 4.1 Turn on your H-T and set it to 146.52 MHz, simplex, low power.
- 4.2 First person says a word, the community he/she lives in and their <call sign>. Next person says a word that begins with the last letter of the previous speaker's word, the community he/she lives in and then their own <call sign>. Repeat *ad infinitum*, or until it's time for lunch!