

Good Operating Practice for HF

1. Learn the controls on your radio before you get on the air. Read the manual !
2. How do you know the quality of your signal and if the transmit audio is okay? Ask another station to give you a signal report. It's a good idea to arrange to meet someone on an available frequency for the sole purpose of checking your transmit audio level and quality. Most HF rigs have one or more controls which effect your transmit signal.
3. One very important thing is to learn "K-H-T" "key, hesitate, talk". You must consciously learn to push the microphone button, pause slightly, and then begin speaking. If you push the button and speak simultaneously, the first word or part of a word may be cut off. This does not facilitate effective communications.
4. Be sure the frequency is clear before you transmit. Listen for 15-20 seconds before transmitting. If you want to call a station, listen first and if you don't hear another station, key the mic and ask "is this frequency in use?" If no one says anything, go ahead and make your call.
5. Stay within your operating privileges. Keep a frequency chart at your operating station and know the frequencies you can operate on.
6. Stay at least 2 kilohertz away from other stations to prevent interference.
7. To let anyone listening know you are looking for contacts, call CQ CQ CQ, this is (your call).
8. Use Q-signals sparingly. Once in a while is okay but don't use them very often. Common ones you will hear most often are "QSY" which means changing frequency and "QTH" which is where you live.
9. Avoid CB-style jargon and terms. General conversation using plain English is better. Terms such as "What's Your Personal" should not be used. Simply say "My name is" or ask "What is your name".
10. Using the term "for I.D." is not necessary and should not be used.
11. Keep your language polite. Profanity and or obscene words should not be used.
12. "10 codes" should not be used on amateur radio.
13. If you are listening to a conversation and would like to join in, wait for one of the stations to un-key and quickly key-up and give your call sign. That's it ! Don't say anything else. You will usually be acknowledged and allowed to join in the conversation.
14. The only call sign your required to know and use is your own. It's not necessary to use any of the other station call signs that you are in communication with when you give your own call sign.
15. When required, always use standard ITU phonetics.
16. Most operators you meet on the air are courteous and friendly, however, there's always a few that just seem to look for a chance to make trouble. Don't give them that chance. It's best to move to another frequency rather than argue with them.
17. Remember, a stranger is a friend you haven't met yet.

Note: Information presented of this page is just the opinion of one ham. As such, they are intended to be nothing more than a "shopping list" of suggested guidelines presented almost entirely from the perspective of a "rag chewer". DXers, Contesters and hams who enjoy other modes will most likely have somewhat different views. Equipment related issues, being generally well known, are purposely not included here. In any event, it is hoped that this list may prove somewhat useful especially for new operators. The overriding theme is common sense and courtesy to others. Let's always remember what a privilege it is to operate on the ham bands! This will help avoid doing anything that might impinge on the enjoyment of our hobby for others.