

When it comes to operating on HF, there are many things that operators can enjoy. From long distance contacts over voice to digital modes, amateur radio offers something for everyone. With the plethora of options that are available, it becomes clear that there must be some sort of guidance on making contact with other operators. What this means is simple. A set of guidelines must be established to ensure that all operators can be on the air and have a pleasurable experience. We are going to cover a very comprehensive set of guidelines that all operators will be able to take away as an education, or perhaps a reminder if you have been licensed for many years.

Let's first talk about making contacts on the HF bands. Your initial call with another operator will sound like this: KL7AA, WB1ILS, over. When calling another station you will always transmit their callsign first followed by yours. Another variation of an initial call, with a question at the end inquiring if they are on frequency would go as follows: KL7AA, WB1ILS. Are you on frequency, over? Using your call first then the station you are contacting causes mass confusion and is not considered to be proper operating technique. If you have no other contacts to make and you don't hear the station you are calling, please let anyone else who is listening know that you are clear by announcing so. This is done by simply saying "...WB1ILS clear".

As you are in QSO with another operator, some things need to be taken into consideration. First and foremost we need to talk about identifying your station. Many operators feel that it is imperative to identify every transmission, or perhaps every two or three. That is not necessary. The Federal Communications Commission's Part 97 rules require that an amateur radio operator identify every ten minutes during a contact and at the end of the QSO. Some countries, like Canada only require you to identify your station every thirty minutes during a conversation and at the end of your

contact using the English or French language. Other countries have similar rules on the books for station identification. In essence, we do not need to identify every other time we key up the mic. By remembering this simple thing, our conversations go much better and can be more streamlined, as opposed to having hangups which are not necessary.

If you are in QSO with another station one very good thing to remember is for a short break to be allowed in between transmissions, usually at least a second. Why do we need to allow a short break? Great question. If there is someone on frequency that would like to make a comment, or if there is someone that has an emergency and is trying to get a station's attention having that short break could make a difference if there is someone in distress. If you, or someone else is listening to a QSO in progress and are wanting to comment, simply transmit the word "comment" in between transmissions. Any courteous operator will acknowledge the comment and allow you to make your statement. If you have an emergency and are needing to get the immediate attention of an operator, transmit the phrase "break break" followed by your callsign and upon immediate recognition proceed with your emergency.

One thing we need to talk about is handing the conversation back to another station, or responding to another station after having the conversation handed over to us. Lots of operators do not know how to properly "pass the mic" so how does this happen? Another great question. If I am in a QSO with KL7AA and I want to send the conversation back to that station this is the proper protocol to make it happen: KL7AA, WB1ILS over. If you are in a group QSO it is typically recommended that you pass the mic over to the next station in a particular order. For example, if there is a QSO between KL7AA, WL7O, WB1ILS and NL7WW I would pass the mic to the next station in that list by simply saying the following: NL7WW, WB1ILS ... over. After that

the last station would then pass it back to the first and back down the list again. That, is what we call a round table QSO.

Let's cover another interesting subject pertaining to HF radio and that is calling CQ. As many of you know, calling CQ simply means "calling any station". Unfortunately, lots of new operators are not aware of the procedural call for seeking contact with any station. To call CQ on HF, you would say the following: "CQ, CQ, calling CQ ... this is WB1ILS, WB1ILS, WB1ILS, over". It is highly recommended that you use full ITU phonetics when transmitting your callsign over the air. If you are looking to speak with a station outside of your country then you would use CQDX instead. If you wanted to reach a station in a certain country or on a certain continent you would use CQ Afghanistan or CQ Asia.

One topic of amateur radio etiquette that does not receive enough attention would be net procedures and protocol. In a perfect world, all nets over the amateur bands would run in identical fashion, however anyone who has been operating over HF could quickly say otherwise. If you know there is a net that will be coming on air, do remember a few very important things. One, give courtesy and respect to the net control station. Most nets have a constructive purpose and allowing them to run smoothly is everyone's goal. Two, if you are tuning in as the net is starting pay close attention to any preamble or additional instructions from the net control station. Spare yourself any embarrassment by paying attention. Three, when you are checking in to a rag chew or traffic net and asked to make a comment do not spend fifteen minutes talking about your entire day and giving us a news report. That can be done at a later time, or on another frequency. Remembering these things will ensure that any net will flow with ease and also keep other stations on frequency for the duration of that net.

If, and only if, you are hearing activity on frequency and just tuned in, let me give you four important rules before you transmit. Number one, listen. Number two, listen. Number three, listen. Oh, and number four, listen some more. If there is activity and you know there is a net on that particular frequency, do NOT call CQ or start a QSO on that frequency! It is very disrespectful to those who are listening to a net, or perhaps the net control station. This happens from time to time on HF and using common sense now will help avoid confusion later on. Again, a good operator will listen for two or three minutes on a frequency with activity before calling CQ. If you are on a frequency with a net currently in progress, it is perfectly normal to get the attention of any net control station to ask if the frequency is in use. As mentioned before, if asked to give a transmission do not spend 15 minutes replying to the net control station. A simple acknowledgment and a thank you is sufficient before you QSY.

One last item of interest regarding a net. Just as we mentioned earlier about handing the mic back to a station, the same rule applies when you are on a net. If you are getting ready to hand the mic back to the net control station, simple protocol for returning the frequency back to that operator is as follows: KL7AA, WB1ILS ... over. Some operators will say "back to net" or "back to net control" followed by KL7AA, WB1ILS ... over. If you are called upon by the net control station you would respond in this fashion: KL7AA, WB1ILS returning. Then carry on from there.

Something else we need to desperately cover is using the spotting system, also known as the DX cluster. Let's be truly honest and realistic here. Nowhere on HF is the DX cluster used in the same manner as it is on Hamsphere 4. When you see someone spotted on there, it is not your cue to jump on that frequency and start

calling. For starters it is uncalled for and it is disrespectful to a station, especially if they are on limited internet resources. Using the spotting system during a net is also uncalled for. Spotting a station and sending a note to contact them is absolutely ridiculous and in real operating conditions does you no good. Spotting any station during a net is not wise, as it causes severe disruption to the flow of a net. Remember, when you are on the air...listen, listen, listen! Doing that very simple thing will take you a long way in amateur radio.

Our last topic of amateur radio etiquette pertains to some things that are strongly encouraged, as well as other things to refrain from doing. We would call this the "do's and do not's in amateur radio". Here are some things we encourage in amateur radio. First, we strongly encourage courtesy and respect for one another. You see, the amateur radio service is to be of service. What that means is amateur radio operators have stood the test of time being first responders after major disasters and civil unrest all around the world. Our respect from law enforcement, the federal government and other agencies enshrines a level of integrity and trust that fails to be surpassed by any other service. Let's keep it this way and retain this standard. Being courteous and respectful to other operators while on the amateur bands will make a great environment for many generations to come. If you are listening to a QSO in progress and a station does not want to be contacted by anyone else, it is strongly encouraged that you adhere to their wishes. Besides, it isn't your decision, being the caller...it will always be the other side of that mic, thus being the other station. If someone wants to have a casual QSO without interruption it is their prerogative.

As with all things we need to cover some of the items that are strongly discouraged and in some countries, forbidden in amateur radio. Due to the simple fact that

radio waves have no boundaries we need to always remember where people are listening. Amateur radio frequencies are not private lines. Other operators are very likely listening to your conversation. Operators of all faiths, political orientations, ethnic origins, ages and both genders are on the bands. We do not talk about politics. We do not talk about religion. We do not talk about sex. We do not talk about illegal activities. We refrain from using profanity or other derogatory remarks while on the air. We also refrain from interrupting a QSO in progress unless it is a life threatening emergency.

We have covered a simple set of guidelines that will ensure all operators on the amateur bands will have a pleasurable experience and truly enjoy the friendship, fellowship and most importantly the art of amateur radio. This may not be an exhaustive lecture but one that should be taken with an open mind and applied at all times, no matter what your level of experience happens to be. All of us need a refresher from time to time and this happens to be a good time for it. May we all have the opportunity to enjoy amateur radio for what it is and the countless benefits the hobby offers. Remember, amateur radio is one of the greatest hobbies in the world. Let's keep it that way.