

Repeater Etiquette – Assume the World is listening to you because it is!

(A compilation from Around the Web) – Robert AK3Q 1-8-17

Starting a CONVERSATION via a directed call.

There are two main ways by which a CONVERSATION 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 "N3XYZ from K3ABC". In such a case, K3ABC is looking for one particular individual, N3XYZ. It generally is not an invitation for anyone other than N3XYZ to return the call. If N3XYZ doesn't answer the call, K3ABC may just clear off by saying "K3ABC clear", or may clear and listen for other calls by saying "K3ABC clear and listening". The "and listening" or "and monitoring" implies they are interested in hanging around to CONVERSATION with anyone else who might be listening at that time. "Listening" and "monitoring" don't mean you are listening to somebody else's conversation, they mean you are listening for other people who may want to call you to start a new CONVERSATION. Likewise, just saying your call by itself with nothing following it is meaningless. If you were to say "N3XYZ", people listening wouldn't know if that means you were monitoring for calls, whether you were testing, or whether they missed the callsign of a party you were calling. Be concise, but be complete.

Starting a CONVERSATION 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 CONVERSATION 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 again as you might do when calling CQ on HF. Once every few minutes should be more than sufficient, and if someone hasn't answered after a few tries, it probably means there is nobody around. If someone is listening and wants to CONVERSATION, they will answer back. Avoid things like "is anybody out there" or "is there anybody around on frequency"; it sounds like a bad sci-fi movie.

Joining a CONVERSATION 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 the reason for having a courtesy tone: to allow other users to break into the conversation. One of the stations in CONVERSATION, usually the station that was about to begin his transmission, will invite you to join, either before making his own transmission. Don't interrupt a CONVERSATION unless you have something to add to the topic at hand. Interrupting a conversation is no more polite on a repeater than it is in person.

Would you barge into a roomful of people engaged in a discussion without saying anything of interest? ...or even worse, saying something completely unrelated to the topic of conversation?

Interrupting a CONVERSATION to make a call.

If you need to make a directed call to another amateur but there is already another CONVERSATION going on, break into the conversation during the courtesy tone interval by saying "Call please, N3XYZ". 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

CONVERSATION; don't get into a full CONVERSATION in the middle of someone else's conversation. If you need to speak with the party you call for a significant length of time (say, more than 15 seconds), ask them to either wait until the current CONVERSATION has cleared, or ask them to move to another repeater or simplex channel to continue the conversation.

Roundtables and "Turning it Over".

When more than two amateurs are in a CONVERSATION, it is often referred to as a "roundtable" discussion. Such a CONVERSATION 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). Without turning it over to a particular station when there are multiple stations in the CONVERSATION, nobody knows who is supposed to go next, and there ends up either being dead silence or several stations talking at once. 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 XYZ." If it's been close to 10 minutes, it's a good time to identify at the same time as well, such as "...and that's that. N3XYZ, go ahead Joe."

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 CONVERSATION 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. "N3XYZ, K3ABC" means that K3ABC is calling N3XYZ, 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, only your own callsign, 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.

Language.

Aside from some of the techno-syncretisms inherent in amateur vernacular, use plain conversational English. The kind of English that would be suitable for prime-time television, not R rated movies.

Don't talk like you are in a bar – any innuendo, lewd talk, flirting, suggestive language stays off the air; there are children, boys and girls, listening, as well as people from all age groups and walks of life listening – would your grandmother approve?!

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.

Do not use phrases learned on 11 meters such as "handle", "making the trip", "got a good copy on me?", "the personal here is...", "what's your 20?", "you're giving me 20-pounds", and other strange phrases which should stay on CB. Speak plain English; this is not a cult.

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. Others are member-exclusive repeaters. Listen before you talk, when in Rome do as the Romans do.

Power.

Use the minimum power necessary to complete a CONVERSATION. However, the minimum power necessary doesn't just mean you are barely tickling the repeater receiver squelch. If someone says that you are noisy, increase power or relocate or take whatever measures you can to improve your signal. Continuing to make transmissions after being told your signal is noisy is inconsiderate to those listening.

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.

Repeaters are primarily intended to facilitate mobile communications. **ESPECIALLY DURING RUSH HOURS**, base stations should relinquish repeater use to mobile stations.

The commuting hours (drive times) should be left to the many mobile stations who have limited time to converse. Home based stations should refrain from frequent or prolonged use of the repeater during these hours. The repeater is there to help extend the range of mobiles and portables, so be courteous and give them priority during commuting hours.

Don't be a repeater hog. The dues of all members support the repeaters, and everyone should have equal access to them. If you have that much to say, you should use some other frequencies, too.

Remember that even your mother wouldn't want to hear your voice all day long.

Do not monopolize the repeater. If 90 % of the conversations for long periods of time, night after night, include you and one or two others, something is wrong. If other hams turn off their radios for big blocks of time because they can hardly talk to someone other than you, something is wrong. You do not own, nor single handedly finance the repeater. It is supposed to be a shared resource. Don't drive other people off the air. **You know who you are!**

If you are someone who is the subject of frequent interference, it may be a sign that **you** are aggravating people with your operating habits. This may be a sign that it is time for you to adjust your attitude and use of the repeater. This isn't always the case, but history has shown that those who have the most trouble with jammers are the ones who have caused the most friction amongst the repeater users. Be upbeat and courteous. Don't complain. This especially includes complaining about other hams, the repeater, or some aspect of the hobby. We all deal with unsafe and discourteous drivers, please don't describe their actions to us on the air.

NEVER ARGUE WITH A CONTROL OPERATOR OVER THE AIR. Control Operators have a thankless job. They must police the club's repeaters as they deem necessary in order to protect the club's callsign. If you disagree with the actions of a Control Operator, you should write down your grievance and contact the Officers and/or Trustees.

Rules say you must ID once every 10 minutes.

Repeater owners are **big** on clear identification when you use our repeaters, but you don't have to overdo it. Give your callsign when you first get on (this isn't specifically required by the rules, but it is good practice), then once every 10 minutes, and again when you sign off. You don't have to give anyone else's callsign at any time, although sometimes it's a nice acknowledgment of the person you're talking to, like a handshake.

If somebody answers you, then have a good time! You can talk about anything you want – there are not many rules about the content of Amateur conversation. You **can't** use Ham Radio to conduct your business, but you **can** talk about where you work and what you do. Prime time TV language has been peppered with some *hells* and *damns*, and so has language on some repeaters. We discourage that. You're not having a private conversation – you may have lots of listeners, some of them children. Keep that in mind as you choose language and subject matter.

THREE-WAY RADIO.

Not all conversations are strictly two-way. Three, four or five or more Hams can be part of a **roundtable** conversation (five or more will be pretty unwieldy). A free-wheeling roundtable is a lot of fun... and it poses a problem: when the person transmitting **now** is done, who transmits **next**? Too often, the answer is **everybody** transmits next, and the result is a mess. The solution is simple -- when you finish your transmission in the roundtable, specify who is to transmit next. "... *Over to you, Rick. KN4AQ.*"

What about "Break?" The problem with just plain "break" is that nobody knows exactly what it means, and everybody has to stop and find out. Some Hams will tell you that break means "I just want to join in or make a call," "break-break" means "I have very important traffic," and "break-break-break" means "I have a dire emergency." That's fine, but not **everybody** knows that. Plain English works better.

Maybe somebody's breaking in on **you**. What do you do? Easy – let them transmit, **right now**, unless you know absolutely and for sure that they do not have an emergency. Maybe somebody hasn't read this guide and isn't the expert operator you are now, and they just say "break" or drop in their call, when what they really mean is "**HELP!**" So let them talk. Say "*go ahead,*" and give your callsign. And if they're one of those boneheads who's interrupting your perfectly good conversation for no reason but to hear themselves talk, well, bite your lip and be glad you know better.

The exception is when someone actually announces an emergency. Then **CLEAR THE DECKS! DO NOT TRANSMIT!** The station who declared the emergency has the frequency, and unless they ask for your help, don't give it. Unless... always an unless... they obviously don't know how to handle the situation.. and you DO. (You do, don't you?)

#\$%-á@&#+*!! What was that I just heard? A burst of foul language and nasty noises on the repeater? Jamming? Sounds like something straight out of CB! I'm **OUTRAGED**, and I'm gonna tell that sucker off! He can't get away with that on **our** repeater! Gimme that microphone!

Cool down. It doesn't happen often, but it does happen – it's a big world out there, and there are some bad people in it. Some of them find a Ham Radio now and then, and discover the delight of offending an audience. The key word is **audience**. Deliberate interference and bad language are designed to *make*

you react. The person doing it wants to **hear you get mad**. They love it. And if they don't **get** it, they go away, usually quickly. So when you hear the rare nasty stuff on the repeater, just ignore it. Don't mention it at all on the air. Don't mention that you're not mentioning it.

Sometimes a repeater control operator will decide that the best way to handle the situation is to turn off the repeater or one of its functions for a while, but the rest of us should bite our tongues and be silent.

SIMPLEX. This may come as a shock, but you don't **have** to use a repeater to communicate on two-meter FM. You can use simplex, which means **your** radio talking to **my** radio directly. We do have that five to fifteen-mile range – much more if we're on our home stations. Why not use it? But **don't** just pick any old frequency your radio can generate to talk simplex! You may end up on the input of a repeater and interfere with people you can't hear. Use the **Band Plan** simplex channels:

146.40

146.43

146.46 Input to Charlotte, NC and Clarksburg, VA repeaters

146.49

146.52 (the National Simplex Channel)

146.55

146.58

147.42 (RARS Official Simplex Channel)

147.45

147.48

147.51

147.54 Used for packet in the Triangle

147.57

TIMERS. Almost all repeaters have something called **timers**. A timer is a clock that starts counting when you begin to transmit through the repeater. Typically, this clock is set to **time-out** after about three minutes. That means that if you transmit continuously through the repeater for more than three minutes, the repeater will go off the air (we call it *timing out*). Repeater timers usually reset to zero when you, the user, stop transmitting. If the repeater has a *beep*, the timer probably resets when you hear the beep. So you have to keep your transmissions under three minutes, and always wait for the beep, to avoid having your transmission dumped by the repeater timer.

The three-minute timers are one way to comply with the FCC rules for stations being operated by remote control (most repeaters are remotely controlled). They are not designed as punitive measures for gabby hams... but come to think of it, given the party-line nature of repeaters, and the potential for that emergency traffic, it's a good idea to keep your brilliant monologues a bit shorter anyway. If you must ramble on, orator that you are, don't forget to let the timer reset, and check if somebody else needs the repeater, after a minute or two.