

Newcomers and Elmers Net: Repeater Etiquette (Revisited) 01.17.16

Gathered from Sources around the Net – Presented by Gary KB8MYC

- 1.) Even 'mild' obscenities are not good operating practice. This includes suggestive phrases, and suggestive phonetics.
- 2.) **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!**
- 3.) If you feel compelled to interrupt an existing conversation, remember that it is **no more polite** to do so on the air than if you did it 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?
- 4.) Ignore jammers and others who try to disrupt the repeater's normal operation. Without any reaction from the repeater users, they will have no audience and probably go away in short order.
- 5.) 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.
- 6.) Transmit your call sign when you first come on the air. Make sure you ID once every 10 minutes, but there is no need to identify too often. Ignore stations who break-in without identifying.
- 7.) Don't cough, clear your throat, sneeze, etc., on the air; Unkey your microphone first.
- 8.) 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.
- 9.) Do not use the word "break" to join a conversation. It is not considered good operating practice and in some circles the word "break" is reserved for announcing

emergencies. The appropriate amateur radio term is break-in. If you simply want to join in, just transmit your call sign.

10.) Promptly acknowledge any break-in stations and permit them to join the conversation or make a quick call.

****11.)** Always remember we have people listening or participating with wide ranging religious, political, or social views. Amateur radio is not the place to discuss such topics in any derisive or negative way. In other words, if you are discussing something with another ham, keep a positive tone or pick another topic when it comes to these areas. There are plenty of other useful things to talk about which will not risk causing dissention, and amateur radio is all about comradery.

12.) 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.

13.) Following a roundtable, or rotation format is the best way for 3 or more to participate. Don't ignore people by not passing it to them for several turns.

14.) Not all repeaters have "courtesy tones". Sometimes we rely on courteous operators rather than courtesy tones. Provide a brief pause between transmissions in order to allow folks to join in. People breaking into a conversation should transmit their call sign when the current user un-keys. Do not wait for the repeater tail to drop.

As a general rule of thumb, I do not interrupt a conversation that is ongoing via a repeater. It is shared by many users in many cases. However, I will ask one of the stations if I may make a call to another station that may be listening to the repeater. If it's not very urgent, I specifically ask if they would mind if I call another station, while letting the station who were to normally have replied with his comments to whoever he was chatting with, do so. Other people, ask if they can make a call and do so. Neither is wrong or right, just a matter of preference. If the conversation is "wrapping up", I wait until they are done. I try not to be rude. Some hams do have a different viewpoint than myself when listening to a conversation that they may have something to contribute. They feel that it is rude to join in a conversation that they might have some input since I am talking with another ham. I would prefer that they do join in to us with the conversation. It's always nice to have more info or a different perspective.

I generally do not join in a conversation where 2 hams may be coordinating something, like directions to a location. They may need to communicate between themselves quicker and I may be intruding and delaying that.

There are occasions I may back out of a conversation. For instance, I was talking about astro-photography with a ham for which I was inquiring more about it from his expertise. Another ham joined the conversation who also had plenty of experience. I did not feel that he was barging in, but I backed out to listen. I learned more from their conversation than if I had stayed and asked my beginners questions. They had a great deal in common and I would have hampered their chat. I do not always do this, sometimes I still want to learn more, but I do give this some consideration when this situation comes up.

Take into consideration WHAT you say BEFORE you say it. Remember that you will meet a wide variety of people on the air, and many more will be listening forming their impression of you and your actions. Keep in mind that facial expression and body gestures are a form of communications amongst people and will be missing from a contact on the radio. I myself have said something innocent enough to a good friend on the radio ('ole KC8RPL), only to tell by his reply back that what I said had offended him. I didn't realize that what I had said, although it was not meant with any harm had been interpreted with some malice by him. I had some apologizing and explaining to do to him. (He told me on the phone a day later, he thought about it and realized I had meant it in a different way. We are still good friends to this day...Thank God! Long Live the "Bob & Dave Show")

In the early days of radio, a couple of subjects were taboo amongst hams: religion and politics. My opinion is to be observant and considerate of others on these topics. (Remember there may be other people listening who do not share your views.) I shy away many times from some rather heated debates others have. I do not feel it to be a problem to compliment another foreign ham on some political ideal their country has or a religious belief they have. Particularly if you ask them some interesting questions about their religion and/or beliefs respectfully. This will be up to you to decide on this gray area and what you will act as.

Remember that we are supposed to be ambassadors of our country, and community to others. I remember hearing a bunch of American hams on HF radio act rather belligerently toward another ham. This was during the Gulf War after what many Americans perceived as an unpopular political act by France to America. There was a ham operating HF radio from a French possession island in the Caribbean, and American hams were hurling insults and other vulgarities against him..."Go home Frenchie !!", and like sayings. They weren't listening, but he kept trying to tell him that he was an American who was just vacationing on the French island. I felt ashamed for us Americans, I could just think of another foreign ham if he were to happen to hear it, thinking to himself, "Stupid Americans". I do not feel that was proper behavior towards another ham, foreign

or not. We are supposed to be a brotherhood, more camaraderie needs to be shown. We can bridge gaps and put aside other differences in a friendship across the world. -- DAVID A EDENFIELD W8RIT

* Please limit your continuous use of a repeater to a reasonable length. We recommend 10 minutes as a guideline.

* While we want our repeaters to be active, it is discourteous to use a repeater to talk to someone who is within easy simplex range. If you can hear each other on the repeater input frequency, switch to a simplex frequency for that long-winded conversation. Similarly, don't use a wide-area repeater if one with more local coverage will do.

* The FCC rules permit the use of amateur radio for transmissions of a technical or personal nature. Unfortunately, some amateurs use the repeaters to discuss what they don't like about the actions of another amateur or a particular group. Such comments have no place on a repeater. Keep them to yourself or take them off the air directly to the individual(s) involved. Please don't use the repeaters to air "dirty laundry" (yours or anybody else's). –Irving Amateur Radio Club

Repeater Operating Practices (from ARRL Repeater Directory)

1. Monitor the repeater to become familiar with any peculiarities in its operation
2. To initiate a contact, simply indicate that you are on the frequency. Various geographical areas have different practices on making yourself heard, but generally, "This is (your call sign) monitoring" will suffice.
3. Identify legally; you must identify at the end of a transmission or series of transmissions and at least every 10 minutes during the communication.
4. Pause between transmissions. This allows other hams to use the repeater (someone may have an emergency). On most repeaters, a pause is necessary to reset the timer.
5. Keep transmissions short and thoughtful, Your monologue may prevent someone with an emergency from using the repeater. If your monologue is long enough, you may time out the repeater. Your transmissions are being heard by many listeners including nonhams with "public service band" monitors or scanners; don't give a bad impression of our service.
6. Use simplex whenever possible. If you can complete your QSO on a direct frequency, there is no need to tie up the repeater and prevent others from using it.
7. Use the minimum amount of power necessary to maintain communications. This FCC regulation (97.313a) minimizes the possibility of accessing distant repeaters on the same frequency.
8. Don't break into a contact unless you have something to add. Interrupting is no

more polite on the air than it is in person.

9. Repeaters are intended primarily to facilitate mobile operation. During the commuter rush hours, base stations should relinquish the repeater to mobile stations; some repeater groups have rules that specifically address this practice.

10. Many repeaters are equipped with auto patch facilities which, when properly accessed, connect the repeater to the telephone system to provide a public service. The FCC forbids using an autopatch for anything that can be construed as business communications. Nor should an autopatch be used to avoid a toll call. Do not use an autopatch where regular telephone service is available. Autopatch privileges that are abused may be rescinded.

11. All repeaters are assembled and maintained at considerable expense and inconvenience. Usually an individual or group is responsible, and those who are regular users of a repeater should support the efforts of keeping the repeater on the air.

Etiquette rule number one. Avoid controversial topics. The airways are not an excuse to get on your soapbox. What seems perfectly logical and normal to you, may be completely offensive to others. Not to mention... it's just plain awkward. In this day and age of political correctness, it probably still needs to be said. Avoid talk of religion, politics or anything else that may be deemed offensive. So dismount that soapbox and find another, safer topic that is a conversation starter and not a conversation ender.

Etiquette rule number two. Always listen before you speak! When you are comfortable that you are not going to interrupt any conversations, *then* hit the push to talk, *then* count to two while you breath in, *then* identify.

Etiquette rule number three. Get in the habit of looking down at your screen every now and then. When you hit the PTT the first meter you will encounter is the output power level meter. Keep an eye on this one since you want to use the least power possible to get the job done.

As you let off the PTT, the second meter you will encounter reflects the squelch tail. The squelch tail is a burst of white noise from the repeater's receiver. The significance is, it means the repeater is hanging "open" just in case something else is said. During a conversation, if you key up before the squelch tail ends the first part of your sentence will be lost so it pay to wait.

When you are listening to an incoming transmission on a repeater, the third meter you will encounter is the output signal of the repeater. This `will tell you how well your receiver is picking up the repeater. If you're having trouble hearing, this may indicate you need to change locations (if you're on an HT) or that you need to bump up the power level. (fact check this)

Etiquette rule number four. There are some repeaters that are not open for rag-chewing, but they are very few and far between. Most club repeaters are open to everyone, club member or not. But when in doubt, check out the repeater book ap.

Etiquette rule number five. Multi-party conversations are possible, but you have to leave a little space in between transmissions to allow for someone to join the conversation. Entry into a 3-way

conversation is like entering into double-dutch jump rope. Timing is everything. After you're in, keeping the conversation going becomes a Round Robin. Whoever you came in behind is always going to be the transmitting station in front of you. And whoever came behind you will always be behind you. It's a neat system, really, as long as you can remember who you're behind.

Etiquette rule number six. Repeaters typically time out after about three minutes, but it can be shorter, so be careful. Time out means that after a certain amount of time, the repeater will stop transmitting to avoid overheating and allow for other traffic if someone is being particularly long-winded. So don't be *that person* who times out the repeater. The easiest way to avoid timing out a repeater is to be a good neighbor and not hog the conversation. During a net, you will often hear the net control operator or presenter say, "Pause to rest" or "reset". All that entails is letting off the PTT and resetting the repeater's timer back to zero.

Etiquette rule number seven. Avoid any terminology that smacks of CB lingo. One thing I've found is hams are a little snobby when it comes to their geek speak. Some will go so far as to not answer you if you offend their ears with a "ten four". Actually, I get it. I got a phone call from a friend one day who knew I was ham. She asked, "You got your ears on?" I cringed. "I'm not listening to the radio, if that's what you're driving at." Get this. She actually wanted a traffic report because apparently I-35S was shut down and of course, I must know something about it since I talk to truckers on the radio. I called the TXDOT 1-800 number and got her the information she wanted and after that was over, I set her straight real quick about the difference between "ham" and "CB". Only coffee cups have handles, people.

Etiquette rule number eight. Be a little adventurous. Set your radio on scan every now and then. Find out the frequencies for the different club repeaters and go have a QSO with someone new. New people bring new perspectives. The chances are that you'll probably run across that person at some time in your ham life and you can say, "Oh hey, I remember you!" when you meet face to face. – Young Ladies North Texas Net

Gary – here are some links with more material should you find them useful:
<http://www.hamuniverse.com/repeater.html>
<http://lcarsonline.org/Documents/Repeater%20Etiquette.pdf>
<http://www.mbarc.org/repeater-group-1/beginners>