

Newcomers and Elmers Net: Best Amateur Practices 2-02-14 Robert AK3Q

The following is a combination of thoughts and suggestions from various sources, and there are additional resource links below

-- in discussing best practices we are really seeking to make (and keep) amateur radio bands an enjoyable place for all, new and old ham alike

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The Radio Amateur's Code

The Radio Amateur is CONSIDERATE...

He never knowingly operates in such a way as to lessen the pleasure of others.

LOYAL...

He offers loyalty, encouragement and support to other amateurs, local clubs, the IARU Radio Society in his country, through which Amateur Radio in his country is represented nationally and internationally.

PROGRESSIVE...

He keeps his station up to date. It is well-built and efficient. His operating practice is above reproach.

FRIENDLY...

He operates slowly and patiently when requested; offers friendly advice and counsel to the beginner; kind assistance, cooperation and consideration for the interests of others. These are the marks of the amateur spirit.

BALANCED...

Radio is a hobby, never interfering with duties owed to family, job, school or community.

PATRIOTIC...

His station and skills are always ready for service to country and community.

-- adapted from the original Amateur's Code, written by Paul M. Segal, W9EEA, in 1928.

Basic principles that should govern our code of conduct on the ham bands are:

- Social feeling, feeling of brotherhood, brotherly spirit: large numbers of us are all playing radio on the same airwaves (our playing field). We are never alone. All other hams are our colleagues, our brothers and sisters, our friends. Act accordingly. Always be considerate.
- Tolerance: not all hams necessarily share your opinions, and your opinions may also not be the best ones. Understand there are other people with different opinions on a given subject. Be tolerant. This world is not for you exclusively.
- Politeness: never use rude language or abusive words on the bands. Such

behavior says nothing about the person it is addressed to, but a lot about the person behaving that way. Keep yourself under control at all times.
–Comprehension: please understand that not everyone is as smart, as professional or as much an expert as you. If you want to do something about it, act positively (how can I help, how can I correct, how can I teach) rather than negatively (cursing, insulting etc.).

Some subjects which are a no no in amateur radio conversations on the air are:

- religion;
- politics;
- business (you can talk about your profession, but you cannot advertise for your business);
- derogatory remarks directed at any group (ethnic, religious, racial, sexual etc.).
- bathroom humor: if you wouldn't tell the joke to your ten year old child, don't tell it on the radio;

Don't be a frequency cop, and don't respond to or encourage frequency cops
-- it is not our job to police each other
-- if something needs to be handled try an email, phone call or other means, but not over the air; it just doesn't work

Here are some of my ideas for your consideration. *K4QKY "Don"*

Do



Always be polite regardless of the circumstances. If not, avoid transmitting.



Set a good example especially for short wave listeners who may be thinking about becoming a ham.



Be a good listener. It will help you better organize your thoughts before transmitting.



Reply to a CQ, or call CQ yourself. It helps keep alive the magic of ham radio.

- ➔ Speak clearly and slowly, especially when giving your call sign to someone you have never worked before.
- ➔ Promote friendship and goodwill to DX contacts. Look for ways to get to know each other rather than simply exchanging signal reports and 73s!
- ➔ Try to keep track of everyone in the QSO. Hopefully someone has assumed the role of "traffic director" to make sure everyone has a chance to contribute to the discussion. If not, don't hesitate to do it yourself.
- ➔ Make it clear at the end of each transmission which station is expected to transmit next. Try to do this even when operating VOX.
- ➔ Operate on frequencies that are in whole KHz (e.g. 18.130 KHz). This alleviates ambiguity and makes it easier for everyone to be on the same frequency.
- ➔ Openly praise other hams when you observe them doing something that you feel is especially deserving. e.g., helping demonstrate ham radio to a group of scouts.
- ➔ Always be ready to quickly and calmly respond to emergency situations. Rehearse what you would do if presented with various scenarios.
- ➔ Pause between transmissions. "Quick keying" gives the appearance that other hams are unwelcome in your QSO.
- ➔ Consider using the Internet to enrich your QSO. Many hams have developed their own comprehensive websites which you can usually find through QRZ.COM.
- ➔ Respect the privileges of hams operating in other modes on the HF bands including those who enjoy AM.
- ➔ Make a point to try 17 and 60 meters. Good operating practices are especially prevalent on these bands.
- ➔ Look for opportunities to "Elmer" newly licensed hams when you hear them on the HF bands. Welcome them, solicit their questions and give them pointers on good operating practices.

→ Remember that no one country can proclaim to be the leader of the Amateur Radio world. Likewise, no one country's foreign policy is any more right or wrong than that of another country.

→ Develop good operating practices. You will be doing your part in helping insure the continuance of our long and proud tradition of self-regulation.

Don't

→ Act like some sort of Broadcast Radio station. Your fellow Amateurs will most likely not appreciate such a blatant display of personal ego.

→ Acknowledge the presence of deliberate interference. After all, that's most likely the overall objective of the person doing the interfering.

→ Be excessively long winded especially when in a round-table discussion and during times when band conditions are changing.

→ Just talk about ham radio. Most hams have many more interests.

→ Operate when you are in a bad mood. You will be that much more vulnerable to losing your temper.

→ Overuse Q-codes and other ham jargon on the phone bands.

→ Claim or homestead any particular frequency for nets, schedules, etc. If your designated frequency is already in use, simply move up or down as necessary.

→ Transmit before first determining that the frequency is clear. This includes transmitting within 3Khz of other known QSOs.

→ Break into an ongoing QSO unless you can hear the majority of the participants.

→ Ignore someone new to a round table QSO. We should all do our part to make everyone feel welcome. Avoid making the discussion appear exclusive to your particular circle of friends.

- Test your transmitter over the air. It is far better to use a dummy load.
 - Cough, sneeze or clear your throat into your microphone.
 - Operate VOX except when in a QSO with three or less participants. It tends to foster "quick keying" which may give the appearance that you don't welcome breakers.
 - Become a "Band Policeman" quick to tell others what you feel they are doing wrong. In instances where it may be called for, always be polite and constructive.
 - Turn up your microphone gain or resort to excessive speech processing in order to be heard. Such practices will most likely result in diminished audio quality and increased likelihood of interference to nearby QSOs.
 - Use the word "break" when wanting to join an on-going QSO. Simply give your call sign between transmissions and reserve the use of the word "break" for more urgent situations.
 - Join an ongoing QSO unless you have something to contribute to the discussion. It is especially rude to interrupt other hams with a request for audio checks, signal reports, etc.
 - Operate in any fashion that is not in keeping with good amateur practice. Be certain to always comply with the provisions of Part 97 of the rules.
 - Knowingly interfere with an ongoing QSO just because you are working DX, especially split frequency.
 - Say that the frequency "is not" in use when you hear someone inquire. Refrain from responding at all unless you know for certain that the frequency or one nearby "is" in use.
 - Ridicule other hams or express any negative views of the overall state of Amateur Radio. If you don't have something positive and constructive to say, avoid saying anything at all.
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Good Operating Practices – Santa Barbara Amateur Radio Club

Aim to project a professional image with proper operating practices, whether you're a net controller or a field unit.

Keep traffic to a minimum. Say what you have to say then release the frequency. *Silence is Golden* -- it allows someone else to use the channel when he or she needs it.

Some things to remember to help you be an efficient, professional sounding radio operator include:

Speed. Too slow and your listener may try to anticipate your next words or may not understand you because it's an unnatural speed. Too fast is worse! Make it a point to slow down slightly when talking on the radio. If you normally talk very fast, slow way down! When transmitting call signs, addresses, names, and other items that must be remembered, noted, or written down, be a bit more deliberate. The speed at which you transmit should be such that the listener can easily understand and/or take notes. Sending logical phrases at nearly normal reading speed followed by ample pauses to allow the receiving operator to finish writing and the results will be fast, error-free transmissions. You tend to talk faster when emotions run high and things get exciting, but that's just when your message **MUST** get through! Take a deep breath, get yourself under control, plan what you're going to say, and say it slowly.

Enunciation and Pronunciation. Clear, distinct pronunciation is essential to communications, especially over the radio. Sloppy articulation includes lazy or mush speech, slurring words, and running words together. Santa Barbara has a lot of Spanish names in its heritage and most of us learn the pronunciation by listening. When transmitting over the radio, use the commonly-used pronunciation. Don't talk with objects or food in your mouth. It makes understanding you very difficult. Of course, someone always calls you just as you take a bite of that sandwich you've been waiting an hour to eat, but take small bites so you can swallow quickly!

Emotions. It's sometimes difficult to not let your emotions show in your voice, especially when you're tired, angry, or busy. These emotions can be misunderstood by others. You may be very busy, but a curt response could be interpreted as your being surly, sarcastic, or angry, and now you have someone more concerned about your answer and intentions than about the task at hand.

Think before you speak. Know what you're going to say before you call Net Control. Always wait a second after you push the mike button before you talk. This will avoid clipping the first word or syllable of your message. This will also allow two or more repeaters which are "linked" together to complete the circuit before you start. Remember "*Push-2-Talk*." Push the mike button, count 1-2 (to yourself), then talk. If you have a one-word answer, it's best to add a word or two before it. Instead of "one," you might say, "There is one person here." Or, "I say again, one."

Use expected phrases and words. Anything out of the ordinary may result in confusion and your having to repeat or rephrase. If your message is technical or unusual, slow down and warn your receiver, or put the event official on the radio to talk direct with the person he wants the message to go to.

Use common words. Don't try to be funny with some "cutsey" phrase. Avoid slang; not everyone knows your jargon. It's OK and in fact necessary to use specialized terminology, but be sure your listener speaks the same "technical-ese."

Speak in while but brief sentences. That's what your listener expects to hear. Don't speak in shorthand. Don't ramble on and don't repeat your message by rephrasing it unless asked.

Use plain English and no "10" codes or "Q" signals.

Remember your ABCs: Accuracy Brevity Clarity

Standardization

Standards have been developed by various organizations to facilitate accurate, clear, and brief communications. These standards make communications easier, faster, and more accurate.

The phonetic alphabet we use in amateur radio is the International Phonetic Alphabet and it is used by most organizations except law enforcement. Practice it so you can use it easily.

Numbers also have standard of pronunciation, both as individual numbers and groups of numbers. For example, 13 is said as "one three," 45 is "four five," 136 as "one three six," 500 as "five zero zero," and 1,478 is "one four seven eight." Number groups are also given as they are commonly written or spoken. For instance, the phone number 681-4100 is given as "six eight one" (slight pause) "four one zero zero."

It is a good idea to learn and use 24-hour time. This avoids confusion between a.m. and p.m. and you will find it useful in other aspects of Amateur radio.

Prowords are also very useful in standardizing how two operators communicate. For instance, "Say again?" replaces: "Could you repeat that, please?" "What did you say?" or, "I didn't hear your last transmission." By using a standard phrase, we know exactly what you've said and how to respond.

Try to send any message given to you exactly as it was received. This is why it's a good idea to have a pen and paper with you. If it is very detailed, put the official on the radio. Don't try to paraphrase or interpret a message; you could send the wrong information.

When you receive a message to relay to your official, be sure you have it right before you acknowledge. If something is not clear, ask for a repeat. Write it down if you need to.

Net Control

The job of net control is to make sure traffic flows smoothly. Just as a traffic cop stands in the middle of the intersection and directs vehicles, the Net Controller is placed in the middle of a event net. Each case requires visibility to carry out the job. A traffic officer sees cars approaching and directs them according to the flow of road traffic. The Net Control operator directs message traffic so it flows in a smooth manner.

Note that Net Control is a *traffic facilitator*. He or she does not have all of the answers; in fact, just the opposite is true. So don't come on and ask Net Control a question because he or she probably doesn't know the answer. Look at your assignment sheet for a likely contact, or briefly summarize your needs to Net Control.

Always listen before you transmit. It is quite annoying for someone to start talking right in the middle of someone else's conversation; it wastes air time, causes confusion, and makes the Net Controller very unhappy!

Net Control operators keep written logs of everything that occurs on the net, including a summary of everything you say. The logs are useful as a reference during the event to answer questions that might come up. They are also the only legal documents kept about an incident and have been invaluable when questions arise later about such things as accidents.

Always give the identification of the station you wish to call first, followed by your call. For example, "Net Control, this is Check Point Three."

Keep a copy of your event information sheet with you. This enables you to determine what Event Communicator is assigned to each location and/or official. When you need to pass a message, ask Net Control to "go direct" with that operator. For example, "Net Control, Check Point Three, request direct with Run Director." Net Control will say, "Go Ahead." You say "Run Director, Check Point Three." The communicator with the Run Director answers, he says, "Check Point Three this is Run Director. Go ahead." You then proceed with your traffic. At the conclusion of the exchange, each Event Communicator will sign off with his or her FCC call sign.

Net Control is frequently very busy with work on the other frequencies, the telephone, or other tasks. If you call Net Control and don't get an immediate reply, be patient and call again in 30 to 60 seconds. If it is an emergency, say so. If you still get no answer, proceed with emergency traffic without Net Control. However, the reason you don't get an answer may be that you are in a bad location and not being heard; try moving to another spot and try again.

If you have emergency traffic, use the word "Break." *This word is for emergency traffic only!* All communicators will immediately cease use of the frequency and yield to the breaking station.

Sometimes several stations have traffic or messages at the same time. Net Controllers usually like to solve one problem before moving to another. If you are asked to stand by, please do so. The Net Controller will get to you either in the order of your call or by the nature of your traffic.

If you must move off your assigned frequency for some reason, advise Net Control when you leave and again when you return.

If someone is having trouble with a radio, or some other kind of question comes up, don't jump in to help unless you are asked! It often causes much confusion, so let Net Control handle it.

When your assignment is completed and you are ready to leave your position, "check out" with Net Control. This insures we can account for all our people. If you go home without telling us, we have no way of knowing that you didn't fall down and break both your leg and your radio!

Resources

<http://www.sbarc.org/publications/informational/eventcomm.html>

<http://campus.murraystate.edu/org/msuarc/goodoperatingpractices.htm>

<http://www.ham-operating-ethics.org/files/1-Eth-operating-EN-IARU-R1-V3-CORR-2011.pdf>

http://www.w9uvi.org/?page_id=68

<http://www.on4ww.be/OperatingPracticeEnglish.html>