

- Have an idea of what you want before you go looking to buy
- take someone with you who knows what's what if possible
- better to buy a lower level new product for now than to get burned on a higher grade old item
- when looking at old equipment like radios or amplifiers see if it works and test it out (or better, someone knowledgeable)
- if the seller isn't willing to do this then pass on by
- if buying used make sure you can afford to lose the money if the radio turns out to be a dud

- if buying from somewhere like eBay, make sure item is returnable and covered under eBay's guarantee
- if buying online make sure what you are seeing in the photos are the actual items, not manufacturer's photos
- buying used from a local source may be more expensive, but cheaper in the long run (R&L, Universal)
- similarly buying used from a national store can be safer – such as HRO or Gigaparts, Texas Towers, etc.
- Buying used from a club member is also potentially safer – most regular club members are good guys who want to keep a good reputation
- also if you belong to a club, chances are good you can get someone's help who is more experienced
- one of the things about buying used equipment with someone who has been a ham for a while is that they may know some of the quirks or issues with an older radio
- say for example an older radio is known to have problems drifting off frequency, or maybe a particular part tends to go bad
- plus experienced hams often know where to look for information on an old radio or amp, and can then find out things to look for

- eham.com is a useful site for learning about radios and their strengths and weaknesses based on real-world use
- not everyone who posts there are geniuses, but with enough reviews you can usually form a decent opinion of a piece of equipment
- if an item only has 5 reviews that may not tell you much, but if it has 25, 35 or 50 reviews you will likely learn the pros and cons of the radio
- whenever you read a review from anywhere, try to judge whether the person is being fair or on a rampage; some folks will post negative reviews on a rig just because they may prefer Icoms over Kenwoods
- this is where doing some research before you buy helps
- if going to Dayton, have a list of things you want to look at and questions you want to ask the seller

- If looking to buy new, Dayton Hamvention is the perfect place to see more new equipment than you can imagine, with knowledgeable sales people to boot
- this is a place where putting a radio through its paces is encouraged
- the Hamvention is a great place to see if a radio feels right to you
- are the controls logical, understandable? Is it going to take a lot of effort to learn how to use the equipment and do you have the time?
- A good radio should be able to be operated within a few minutes – not every feature, or even most features, but it should be intuitive enough that the basic functions are clear in a short amount of time
- still, be aware of too much pressure to buy – reputable people will encourage you to buy, but not pressure
- similarly with used equipment, beware of the “sleazy used car salesman” approach; if the person sounds slick, they probably are in a bad way

- buy from amateur radio operators; beware of people selling for a friend, or folks who bought something at a “yard sale” and are now selling it again
- if someone says they don't know much about it, chances are they don't, and you don't want to be the guinea pig
- again, if you can test it or get another ham to test it, well and good
- ask questions of the seller (or have another ham ask the questions who knows when someone is being less than forthright)
- if the seller doesn't want to answer questions or acts like you are putting them out, move on to someone else

- if you are buying from a source where the item will need to be shipped to you, make sure the seller is going to box it up properly—things can get damaged easily in shipping, and a conscientious seller should want to take the time to package properly
- at the same time, don't whine about shipping costs if the person is going to do it right—double boxing is the norm, and you should be prepared to pay well for shipping and insurance to make sure the item is covered properly
- make sure what the terms are for an item arriving DOA—does the seller have a return policy, or is it sold “as-is” meaning no returns and you get whatever comes?

- When shopping for a specific item such as a radio, try to get some hands-on time before you purchase, the more the better
- see if other hams will let you try out their equipment
- most hams are proud of their station and like to show it off, and they may be able to tell you what specific things they like about their radios or what they have learned through experience to be important features
- for example, there are a lot of radios offering roofing filters now and they can be useful—but radios with these tend to be expensive; if you are just starting out it is unlikely they will be of much use to you, so a more basic radio could be a better investment

- likewise the color LCD screen look really nice with their spectrum analyzers and so on, but do you need this starting out? I would say you can probably get a very good radio significantly cheaper with a basic monochrome display, and save some serious coin
 - same thing is true with amplifiers: don't buy one until you know you need it
 - spend more getting a good antenna system which is far more important
 - making a commitment to a radio is a big deal, but not so big that you should get into analysis paralysis: research and try out several radios if possible, fix a budget in your mind, and then stick to it
 - your budget should include the radio, the power supply, the microphone, the antenna system, possibly a tuner and an SWR/power meter if working HF
 - also you might want to think about several areas of the hobby at once; by buying used equipment you might be able to have an HF station, a mobile for the car, and a portable all for the money spent to buy a loaded new radio; I am just sayin'
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- you will have to decide for yourself between new and used equipment; new equipment has a warranty which you hope you will never need; if you can get a warranty for used equipment, all the better
 - used equipment requires some knowledge or a lot of luck, so get someone with some knowledge like the Elmers here in the group or other hams to help
 - and keep in mind the old saying—consider the source; if someone blasts everything else but his or her brand of equipment, they are probably not a good resource
 - a person who tries to listen to you and figure out what will be best for you is likely a good resource
 - most of the time a deal “too good to be true” usually is, but every now and then a gem comes along so keep that slim possibility open too!
 - And whether new or used, shop around! You might be amazed at the different prices different stores have on things
 - I always shop around for prices for new things, and for used items, I try to get a feel for what I should expect to pay
 - if possible see what similar items are selling for, or what others are selling equipment for
 - there may be ten sellers on eBay selling a particular model of radio—compare them for price and quality
 - even at the hamvention there are likely multiple people seeing a similar used piece of equipment—don't buy the first thing that you see unless you know for sure it is a great deal
 - Be patient; having patience is a real advantage because it allows you to make good decisions and get the things you will enjoy for a long time to come