

REPEATER ETIQUETTE

Going Simplex

It is standard procedure to move to the simplex frequency of 146.520 or 146.550 any time the repeater is non-functioning. This reduces the coverage area considerably, for you are 100% dependent on your own equipment and that of others with whom you converse. Because you are not using the repeater frequency pair, you will hear no courtesy tone either.

If you are uncertain whether the frequency is in use, simply put out your call and unkey. If you get no response, it's likely the frequency is clear and you may attempt your contact.

Base stations will be able to "hear" at further distances than mobiles, handi-talkies or stations with smaller antennae (such as inside ladder-line or wire antenna).

BREAK, BREAK, BREAK: The Proper Use

In Amateur Radio, the word BREAK is used to convey an emergency, which means all non-emergency traffic stops and yield the frequency to the emergency. It also means that any and all Amateur Radio Operators on frequency must stand-by to support the emergency.

So, how do we properly use BREAK?

Use of BREAK BREAK.

As previously stated, using BREAK indicates an emergency, but the Radio Operator initiating the emergency call MUST provide information about the emergency to other Radio Operators so they will know how to provide assistance. After an Amateur Radio Operator responds to the Radio Operator initiating the emergency, he/she will provide information about the emergency and state what assistance is being requested.

There is an ongoing conversation on the frequency.

If there is an ongoing conversation on the frequency / repeater, you wait for a pause between transmissions in the conversation and you transmit "BREAK, BREAK, BREAK. I have an emergency." Or "BREAK, BREAK, BREAK. I have emergency traffic." At this time operators

participating in the conversation immediately cease their conversation and offer or standby to assist the operator initiating the emergency.

There is no ongoing conversation on the frequency.

If there is no ongoing conversation on the frequency / repeater, you transmit "BREAK, BREAK, BREAK. I have an emergency." Or "BREAK, BREAK, BREAK. I have emergency traffic." Any operator monitoring the transmission will immediately respond to the operator initiating the BREAK and offer assistance.

Who is in Control?

The operator initiating the emergency becomes the On Scene Control Operator. The first operator to respond becomes the "Net Control" Operator and must remain in that position to provide assistance. If the Net Control Operator cannot continue as the Net Control Operator, he/she must designate another operator as the Net Control Operator, however, before this hand-off occurs, the outgoing Net Control Operator must contact the On Scene Control Operator and inform him/her who the new Net Control Operator will be.

The Net Control Operator will broadcast on the frequency / repeater "This is the Emergency Net Control Operator, [callsign]. An emergency is in progress. Please use an alternate frequency / repeater for regular use." This broadcast should be sent every ten (10) minutes or so. This broadcast is not to impede support to the emergency. This will prevent other Amateurs, not aware of the emergency, from breaking in to use the frequency / repeater.

Who terminates an emergency?

Only the On Scene Control Operator can end the emergency and release the frequency / repeater back to normal use, at which time the Net Control Operator will make the announcement.

Following this procedure will eliminate confusion and provide support to the Amateur involved in an emergency!

Use of Call Signs

It's easy, in the course of a conversation, to forget some of the 'softer' rules and regulations we all learned in order to achieve the licensing we have.

One of the easiest to forget is appropriate transmission of your call sign when exiting a conversation, especially during a net event. When you end a conversation or complete a

check-in during a net, it is appropriate that you transmit your call sign to end the conversation. Often, a net control operator, if aware you intended to end the conversation, will provide one final opportunity for you to sign before moving on to the next check-in or putting out a call for more check-ins.

Another easily forgotten rule is to regularly transmit your call sign during the course of a conversation lasting more than 10 minutes. There are two reminders available, right on the repeater. The first is the repeater ID itself. This occurs at 10-minute intervals, especially if the repeater is in use. If you hear the repeater ID, then you should do so and continue your discussion. The second could be the amateur to whom you are speaking. If they ID, chances are it's because they heard the repeater ID during your last transmission. That means it's a good practice for you to ID as well.

It is unnecessary to state your call and use the phrase "for identification purposes".

General Repeater Etiquette

Starting a QSO via a directed call.

There are two main ways by which a QSO 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 QSO 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 QSO. 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 call sign of a party you were calling. Be concise, but be complete. If no one comes back to you, no further transmission on your part is necessary. Phrases like: "negative contact" or "nothing heard" serve no purpose and should be avoided.

Starting a QSO via a monitoring call.

If the repeater is not in use, simply stating your call sign followed by "listening" or "monitoring" implies that you are listening to the repeater and are interested in having a QSO 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 QSO, 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 QSO in progress.

If there is a conversation taking place which you would like to join, simply state your call sign 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 QSO, 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 QSO 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.

Interrupting a QSO to make a call.

If you need to make a directed call to another amateur but there is already another QSO 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 QSO; don't get into a full QSO 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 QSO 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 QSO, it is often referred to as a "round table" discussion. Such a QSO usually goes in order from amateur A to amateur B to amateur C and eventually back to amateur A again to complete the round table. 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 QSO, 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 call sign, 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."

Pause Between Transmissions.

Pause between transmissions. Listen for others who may need to use the repeater, especially when there are multiple users in a QSO.

Keep your transmissions short and thoughtful.

A long monologue may prevent someone with emergency traffic from using the repeater. Remember the repeaters have timers that will cut your transmission if you talk too long.

Leave your CB lingo next to your old 11 Meter rig.

You worked hard for your amateur license. Listen a lot and learn how to sound like the licensed amateur that you now are.

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 QSO 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 call sign 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 call sign, 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 call sign. When phonetics are needed, stick to the standard phonetic alphabet.

It is unnecessary to state your call and use the phrase "for identification purposes".

Demonstrations.

From time to time, an amateur may want to demonstrate the capabilities of amateur radio to another non-amateur. The typical way to do this is to ask for a "demo" such as "N3XYZ for a demonstration."

Anyone who is listening to the repeater can answer them back. Usually telling the calling party your name, call sign, and location is what they are looking for, not a lengthy conversation. Someone doing a demo may ask for stations in a particular area to show the range of amateur radio communications, such as if the calling station is in the Poconos they may ask for any stations in south Jersey or Harrisburg areas, which is more interesting than demonstrating that they can talk to someone in the same town as they are in.

Signal Reports.

If you are unsure how well you are making it into the repeater, DO NOT kerchunk the repeater. Any time you key up the repeater, you should identify, even if you are just testing to see if you are making the machine. "N3XYZ test" is sufficient. Do not use the repeater as a "target" for tuning or aiming antennas, checking your transmitter power, etc. Use a dummy load where appropriate, or test on a simplex frequency. If you need someone to verify that you are making the repeater OK, ask for a signal report such as "N3XYZ, can someone give me a signal report?" "Radio check" is a term most often used on CB, "signal report" is what most amateurs ask for.

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. 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.

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.

Emergencies.

If there is a QSO going on, break into a conversation with the word "Break" or "Break for priority traffic." DO NOT USE THE WORD BREAK TO JOIN IN A QSO UNLESS THERE IS AN EMERGENCY! All stations should give immediate priority any station with emergency traffic.

Malicious Interference.

If there is malicious interference, such as kerchunking, touch-tones, rude comments, etc. DO NOT ACKNOWLEDGE IT! Continue the QSO in a normal fashion. If the interference gets to the level where it is impossible to carry on the QSO, simply end the QSO as you normally would.

Power.

Use the minimum power necessary to complete a QSO. 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.

The following hyperlinks provide general information on good repeater operating practices. We thank those groups/individuals for providing this information.

<http://www.w2li.org/operatingpractices.htm#Special>