

Ham Radio 101
How and What to do After Getting Your License
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Ok, you studied hard and passed the test for your Technician or General Class License. Now, what do I do?!

I remember when I got my novice license (WN6WXO); I was afraid to call CQ because someone might hear me and answer the CQ!

Here are some operating tips that you might consider. If you just got your Technician license and are going to operate in the VHF/UHF spectrum, then I would review your license manual to make sure the frequency allocations for your class license.

Now, you have bought your very first rig. It might be a hand-held 2 or 3 band radio that covers 2M, 220Mhz and 440Mhz. If you are a SOARA member, then you should have your handbook ready to add the SOARA repeater frequencies to memory. What you say?! How do I do that?

My suggestion is to study the manual that comes with the radio. Hey, you say, I am no electronic genius. I just studied the license manual, memorized what I needed to pass the exam.

Believe me, I know the frustration and have gone through the same exercise and even with an EE degree, the manual left me somewhat confused. Do I press this button for greater than 1 second or do I press the button momentarily? Each company that makes radios has a different scheme for storing frequencies.

However, all of the models that I have used have the operator put the radio in the VFO mode.

Then select the simplex frequency, or frequencies for repeater frequency storage. Also select the correct CTSS frequency for that repeater, the correct frequency off-set, and the transmitted power level. Once you have done that, and then try to add that to memory. If you still can't store the frequency, then following my suggestion in the next paragraph.

My suggestion is to bring the manual and the hand-held radio to the next SOARA meeting and we will be glad to Elmer you and get you started.

Next, you buy a mobile radio from one of the popular companies that manufacture VHF/UHF radios and you want to install it.

If you are thinking of buying a used radio, make sure that the manufacturer is still supporting that model.

Here are some tips for installation into a car or truck. The radio comes with heavy duty cables to hook up to the battery. They usually have some magnetic chokes in line with the cable. The purpose of the choke (Inductor) is to reduce or eliminate the alternator noise.

The best thing to do is to connect the cable to the battery terminals itself. The red lead goes to the positive terminal and the black or red/black lead goes to the negative terminal.

Most new cars have a convenience sockets. You might want to try using the convenience socket for the radio. If you are told that you have an alternator noise, then you can attach the cable to the battery itself.

The cables also come with in-line fuses that will protect the radio. Make sure that the in-line fuses are installed with the DC cables that are attached to the battery.

There are a number of antenna mounts ranging from a mag-mount (Magnetic Mount) that attaches to the steel car roof to a variety of trunk mount brackets. You can check the Diamond or Comet web sites to get a picture of what the mounts look like.

Ok, you have the mobile radio installed, connected to a power source and to an antenna. You have programmed your radio to the SOARA repeater. Now what?!

There are some definite dos and don'ts on the repeater. First of all listen to see if the repeater is being used.

Never, Never call CQ on the repeater. It is permissible to say "This is KJ6XXX monitoring the repeater". That will let anyone listening to the repeater give you a response.

Do not key the repeater transmitter (known as ker-chunking the repeater) just to listen for a response for the repeater. Give your call sign and ask for a radio check.

Conversely, if you hear a station announcing he or she is monitoring the repeater, then go ahead and give the person your call sign and carry on a QSO (conversation).

It is also permissible to ask for a radio check. "This is KJ6XXX requesting a radio check" You may want to try this from an outlying area.

Do not hog the repeater. This is for the use of everyone within range of the repeater. If there is a QSO going on, then let the other hams finish their QSO.

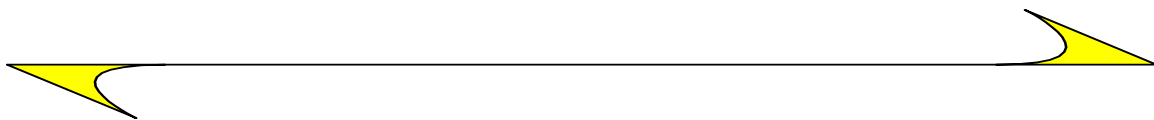
Keep transmissions short to allow others to break in with priority traffic. I used the LA County Sherriff's 2M open repeater to report a traffic accident to the system operator. He in turn called 911.

If you want to engage in a longer QSO, then use an open simplex frequency. 146.52Mhz, 146.55Mhz and 146.58Mhz are examples of approved simplex frequencies.

The watchword is courtesy. It is advisable to look at the license manual section of rules and regulations. You will find that the license manual stresses courtesy.

To get a comfort zone with the SOARA repeaters, come and join in on the SOARA net every Tuesday evening at 8:00PM. There is access to the net via the Laguna Repeater 147.645 Mhz (PL 110.9; offset -.6Mhz)), Santiago Peak Repeaters 224.640Mhz (PL123.0; -1.6Mhz), and 447.180Mhz (PL 131.8; Offset -5.0Mhz).

If you have any questions or comments, please contact either myself Hal Silverman at WB6WXO@SOARA.org or Heiko Peschel at AD6OI@SOARA.org



Continued next month: Do's and Don'ts for operating the HF bands