

Welcome to Amateur Radio

First and foremost join a local club. They may seem like a bunch of old geezers. There is a wealth of knowledge, and training, if only you take the time to listen and ask questions. They won't bite.

[Columbia Amateur Radio Association](#)¹ is our club serving Columbia County. The [Amateur Radio Relay League](#)² (ARRL) has a [search engine](#)³ for locating a club in your neighborhood.

Looking for a new, or new to you, radio.

- [Ham Radio Outlet](#)⁴. They have a local (Tigard) brick & mortar store.
- [Giga Parts](#)⁵
- [DX Engineering](#)⁶
- [Amazon](#)⁷
- These are just a few of NEW vendors. For a more complete list see ARRL's monthly magazine [QST](#)⁸.

Used radios can be purchased from the usual sources

- [Ebay](#)⁹
- Craigslist
- [QRZ](#)¹⁰
- [QTH](#)¹¹ Classifieds

What should I purchase for my first radio?

- Whom do you wish to communicate with?
- Will you be operating predominantly fixed, mobile or portable?
- If portable,
 - Do you want known quality?
 - Easily programmable in a field environment
 - These manufacturers set our industry standards (Alinco, Icom, Kenwood, Yaesu)
- Do you wish to operate on some of the new digital modes ([dmr](#)¹², [d-star](#)¹³, [ysf](#)¹⁴, [wires-x](#)¹⁵)?
- If you hike or off-road you may want [APRS](#)¹⁶ capabilities. With this mode activated others will know [where you are](#)¹⁷ and your current status.

On what [frequencies](#)¹⁸ can I operate? What [types](#)¹⁹ (am, fm, ssb, cw, digital) of communication takes place on each band.

If you are like me, my first radio was a Handie Talkie (Handheld or HT). I figured I could operate in the car, in the yard or in the house with just one radio. I quickly learned that the small amount of RF produced by the radio **AND** the small antenna radiating was severely limiting (< 10 miles).

I own a dual band (VHF & UHF) mobile (> 50 watts) radio for my house and car and a gain antenna for operating most repeaters within 25 miles. I still own a couple of HT's for portable operation.

For communications over-the-horizon (> 50 miles) I own an HF (3 - 30 MHz) radio. With this radio I am able to communicate with almost anyone in the U.S. limited only by current band conditions (another subject for another time).

What local repeaters are accessible to my radio? I utilize Repeater Book for almost all of my searches for both local, on the road, and visiting friends and family. For local (< 10 miles) on an HT I may have access to a [few repeaters](#)²⁰. When I'm operating from my mobile or in the house my area of operation [increases significantly](#)²¹ (> 25 miles).

Now after having said all that and you've gone out and purchased a HT or Mobile radio. Follow the [link](#)²² on how to program the radio.

Like I stated in the beginning, find a club. Secondly join [ARRL](#)²³. They:

- Are our liaison with the Federal Communications Commission
- Sponsor conventions and on-the-air events
- Provide a monthly magazine with all the latest and greatest radios and gadgets
- Training materials and webinars
- I could devote a whole page to the describing the value they add to amateur radio
- Should I join ARRL? Yes

References

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