

Rules and Etiquette for the Calvert Amateur Radio Association Repeater

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 callsign of a party you were calling. Be concise, but be complete.

Starting a QSO via a monitoring call. If the repeater is not in use, simply stating your callsign, followed by 'listening' or 'monitoring' indicates that you are listening to the repeater. It is a statement that you are available if communications assistance is needed and may also be used to express your interest in having a QSO with anyone else. Calling CQ on the 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 that you would like to join, simply state your callsign 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 or afterwards. Don't interrupt a QSO unless you have something to add to the topic at hand. Interrupting a conversion 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 that 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.

Language. Aside from some of the techno-syncretacies 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. Avoid politics. 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 freewheeling in that there are people jumping in and out of conversations constantly. Others primarily have directed calls on them and discourage rag chewing. 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, 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.

Control Operators. The control operators have been entrusted with maintaining decorum on the system and ensuring operation within Part 97 regulations. If a control operator interrupts a QSO and identifies himself as "control", please allow them to pass whatever messages they need to or perform any control functions. The control operators have the final say in what is/is not appropriate on the repeater. If a control operator makes a comment or suggestion, take it as constructive criticism. If you disagree with what a control operator says or does, that is your prerogative, but it is not justification for contesting the control operator on the air.

Shutdowns. A control operator may shut off the repeater either due to a violation of the W3ZNW network policies, violations of FCC regulations, or flagrant disregard for "good amateur practice". A shutdown should be taken as a hint that something was wrong, either with the conversation or with the operating practices.

"Remember that amateur radio is a hobby. We are not deputized to serve as agents for government agencies, including the police, fire or emergency medical personnel. When such officials require the assistance of the amateur radio community, they will request specific assistance via the ARES or RACES organizations. All amateur radio operators are encouraged to participate in the ARES and RACES training activities within the county."

Approved by the members of the Calvert Amateur Radio Association
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