

This guide was written in an effort to help Elmer newly-licensed hams (and those who may or may not have a CB background) on **common conventions** used when operating on repeaters. None of us are perfect and even long-time hams slip up now and then, but we hope that this guide will help you sound like a pro when operating on repeaters. The following are meant as positive guidelines, not hard and fast rules. Your ham license won't be revoked, no one is going to laugh and point, but you are more likely to get a positive response when you sound like you know the lingo and use it appropriately.

How to sound like a pro when operating on a repeater

Not necessary	Explanation
<callsign> for the bell	Your callsign is your ID. Everyone knows that. Extraneous verbiage like "for the bell" or "for ID" isn't needed.
<callsign> for ID	
<callsign> after every transmission when in a group discussion	
Over to you OR Back to you	Releasing your PTT button indicates you are finished with your current transmission and it is the other person's turn. IF you just want to take a pause and continue on with your thoughts, use the word "Reset" (to reset the repeater and avoid timing it out.) You can also just say you are going to pause for a moment.
Copy that	Only necessary when the other person has given you a phone number, e-mail address, website name or address. May be appropriate at other times, but <i>rarely</i> .
Roger OR roger that	Rarely appropriate.

CB Talk	Ham Talk	Proper response(s)
Can I get a signal report?	Testing my <radio><microphone> Can someone tell me how I'm hitting the repeater?	"you are full quieting into the repeater," (full quieting means there is no white noise or static of any type) OR "you are coming in loud and clear," OR "you are hitting the repeater just fine," OR "you are hitting the repeater, but there is a little popcorn static" —"popcorn" is used to describe the popping kind of static, OR "you are not holding the repeater" (they may be cutting in and out) OR "you are hitting the repeater, but your volume is low" OR sometimes when a station is mobile, you can hear "picket fencing". You will know picket fencing when you hear it, that's a perfect description.
	Testing	Some people may not want a comeback, so when in doubt, ask "are you looking for a comeback of your test?"
10-4 or other 10 codes	---	We aren't cops. We don't use 10 codes on repeaters.

CB Talk (continued)	Ham Talk	Proper response(s)
I read you 5x5	“You are full quieting into the repeater” or see above section on “signal report” for other appropriate responses.	There is no such thing as 5x5 on a repeater (and this isn't <i>Smokey and The Bandit</i> ☺). There is a RST System of Signal Reporting that was created for CW, and sometimes used in non-repeater operations like HF. By common convention the RST system isn't used on repeaters. Some hams operate repeater-only and won't be familiar with the RST system anyway, so it is better to use plain English (see the “signal report” section above.) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RST_code OR http://www.hamuniverse.com/rst.html
<callsign> on the side	<callsign> monitoring OR <callsign> monitoring 940	‘On the side’ is a CB term. Monitoring can mean that you are looking for a conversation or that you are not going to be active in the current conversation for a bit, but are not signing off completely. It is easy to determine the meaning by the context. If you hear <callsign> monitoring on an otherwise silent repeater, go ahead and respond; start a conversation! That's what ham radio is all about. Some people add the last 2 or 3 digits of the frequency for those who might be in scan mode and miss catching the frequency the party is on. That is a perfectly good and acceptable practice.

Ham Talk (incorrect)	Ham Talk (Correct)	Explanation(s)
73s	73	73 means “Best regards.” You wouldn't say “Best regardses.” Don't pluralize 73.
CQ	<callsign> monitoring OR <callsign> monitoring 940	CQ is not used on repeaters. Again, just common convention. See above entry for ‘<callsign> on the side’ for a full explanation of the use of ‘monitoring.’ You can almost be assured that a person calling CQ on a repeater just got their license. It's always nice to extend a friendly hand.
Q-signals or terms. Originally created for CW, Q signals are <i>rarely</i> used on repeaters and most hams only know these few from memory.	QTH	QTH (current location) is the most commonly heard Q-signal and is fine. Some people incorrectly use QTH as their destination. It is your <i>current location</i> .
	QSY	QSY is used to indicate you are changing frequency “I'm going to QSY to the .940” means you are going to change frequency to the 146.940. Since you mainly hear only the last 2 or 3 digits, it is presumed that the person they are speaking to already knows the prefix.

Ham Talk (incorrect - continued)	Ham Talk (Correct)	Explanation(s)
Q-signals or terms. (Continued)	QSO	Conversation. "We had a good QSO." Again, as with all "Q" signals, use sparingly.
QRT	Not used on repeaters.	When on a repeater, it's unnecessary to announce you are shutting your station down for the night. Presumably, you have already cleared with anyone you were conversing with so no one cares.
	QST	Message to all ham radio operators. Used by a local club to announce their net is beginning.
Hearing someone on a repeater calling QST to signal they are open to conversation, or using other "Q" codes frequently, can be off-putting to other hams. As mentioned, they were created for CW and hearing them frequently on a repeater can signal that those using them lack basic repeater knowledge and etiquette. Others are unlikely to respond, for instance, to a ham calling QST or CQ, but will engage when hearing the standard "<callsign> monitoring" that indicates the ham calling is open to having a conversation.		
QRZ	Not used on repeaters.	You are being called; we have news for you. Formerly the name of a local club newsletter, now the name of their blog. Also the name of a website and magazine. (Unrelated) Not used on a repeater.
"I'm destined."	"I'm at my destination. <callsign> I'll be clear on your final." OR "<the party you are speaking to call sign> <your callsign> Clear" or "clear on your final."	While not technically incorrect, you can be sure that a large number of hams who hear the phrase "I'm destined" are gritting their teeth. :-). No rule against it, but in any case, it is poor English.

BREAK! (and RESET)

The word BREAK has a specific meaning in ham radio. That means you are interrupting current traffic because you have an emergency or priority traffic. If the word is used during a net, all other traffic is suspended and the Net Control Station (NCS) handles the emergency or priority traffic. They may need to ask the BREAKing party for clarification and then call 911 to report the matter.

When BREAK is used at any other time (not during a net), someone needs to take over the lead role and handle the emergency or priority appropriately. "Breaking party, what is your emergency?"

Mayday (internationally recognized) is also used to signal an emergency on ham radio.

BREAK is never used during a net to drop the repeater so it won't timeout. "RESET" is the proper term for that.

BREAK is never used to get the attention of the NCS so that you can relay normal traffic. Your callsign is used for that purpose.

Conducting business on the air

FCC Rule part 97.113 lists prohibited transmissions, one of which is *“Communications in which the station licensee or control operator has a pecuniary interest, including communications on behalf of an employer,”*

Be mindful of this rule about conducting business on ham radio. Sometimes it can be a fine line between responding to questions and overstepping the boundaries set by the rule. Responding to questions about what you do and how you do it can be topics of interesting conversation, but can slide into the prohibited area quickly. It is sometimes better just to take a conservative tact and tell the other party that you don't feel comfortable discussing the matter further than to violate the rule.

HAVE FUN!

Clubs install and maintain repeaters for the enjoyment of their members and other hams. They are there to be used and enjoyed. This document was created in the hopes that your proper usage of terminology will bring an active and positive response from other hams, thereby increasing your use and enjoyment of the repeaters in your area. Have questions? Just ask! Hams are known for being friendly and willing to share their knowledge in a positive manner. Enjoy!