

K4TS REPEATER ETIQUETTE

Newcomers to the hobby, and old-timers alike, should take the time to read this section. This not only applies to our repeater, but is good advice for use on any repeater. Some repeaters have different personalities, so take time to listen when strangers in a strange land -then, "do as the Romans do."

1. Listen before transmitting. One of the most important rules is LISTEN FIRST. Nothing is more annoying than someone that "keys up" in the middle of another conversation without first checking to make sure the repeater is free or having the volume turned down and not checking; open your squelch to make sure your radio's volume is turned up. If the repeater is in use, wait for a pause in the conversation and simply announce your call sign and wait for one of the other stations to acknowledge your call. To initiate a contact, simply indicate that you are on frequency or give a short call to the station you wish to speak to. "K4TS Listening" is the usual sort of message if you aren't calling a specific station. If no one comes back to you, no further transmission on your part is necessary. Phrases like "negative contact" or "nothing heard" serve a purpose and could be used to indicate that you didn't hear a reply to a specific call. When you're done with your QSO, sign off with "K4TS listening" or just "K4TS. "

2. Identify legally. FCC requires that you identify your station at least once each 10 minutes during the contact, and at the end of the contact.

3. Pause between transmissions. Listen for others who may need to use the repeater. There are a lot of us who are guilty of this one.

4. Keep your transmissions short and thoughtful. A long monologue may prevent someone with emergency traffic from using the repeater, especially during rush hour. Remember that repeaters have timers that will cut your transmission short if you talk too long (ours is set for 3 minutes).

5. Roundtable's. When 3 or more hams are in a QSO, amateur A should turn the conversation over to amateur B, who should turn it over to amateur C, and so on until it gets back to amateur A to complete the roundtable and start over. If you don't turn it over to someone, there could be a long period of dead silence or several stations talking at once (usually it's the latter).

6. Speak plainly. Amateur radio lingo is not always understood by newly licensed hams, or by long time hams in some situations. Each hobby has its jargon so listen up and ask if you don't understand what someone is trying to communicate. Communications is the goal, not miscommunications.

7. Audio reports and kerchunking. If you are unsure how well you are making it into the repeater, DO NOT kerchunk the repeater. Don't break a conversation just to get a audio report, its rude! Wait until the conversation is done then ask for an audio report. If you're responding to an audio report request, make sure you're giving accurate information. If you can't hear the repeater itself well, it will be difficult to report back accurate information to the other station. Remember that the information that's useful is how the other station sounds coming out of the repeater. Unless you're actually at the repeater site and monitoring the repeaters input frequency, you're not capable of giving any type of report of how well the station is doing on the input. The SARA repeater actually has a recorder capable of replaying what it received on the input. This is way cool, but costs more money.

8. Lower your power when able in order to help to avoid activating multiple repeaters at the same time. The nearby repeater using the same frequency on 147.015 MHz is in Ocean City, MD. Using a lower output power could help avoid activating that repeater unintentionally. You'll most likely hear N3KZS output during hot summer months when ducting occurs. We have initiated an output tone of 88.5 Hz for you to use, if you wish to only receive our repeater's transmissions.

9. During emergency nets, many stations may have high priority traffic they need to pass. Please keep your own reports as brief as possible but do try to make them as complete as possible. This will help ensure that all critical traffic gets through with the least amount of delay.

10. Support your repeater. Our repeater is open. However, if a non-member is a regular user, he or she should be encouraged to join to help support the repeater. Invite your friends who use the repeater regularly to become members of our club and help support our excellent repeater system.

11. Don't acknowledge or encourage any station causing malicious interference. If necessary, telephone or email a Control Operator. Our club website www.qsl.net/rvarc shows how to contact our club president and he can direct you to the proper control operator.

12. Never argue with a Control Operator over the air. Control Operators have a thankless job. They must police the club's repeater as they deem necessary in order to protect the Trustee's license. If you disagree with the actions of a Control Operator, you should write down your grievance and contact the RVARC officers. The most common two statements you'll hear from us over the air is "Kerchunking Station, Please ID yourself" or "Please pause between transmissions."

13. Leave a pause. When you are using the repeater leave a couple of seconds between exchanges to allow other stations to join in or make a quick call. Most repeaters have a "Courtesy Tone" that will help in determining how long to pause. The courtesy tone serves two purposes. Repeaters have a time out function that will shut down the transmitter if the repeater is held on for a preset length of time (normally three or four minutes). This ensures that if someone's transmitter is stuck on for any reason, it won't hold the repeater's transmitter on indefinitely. When a ham is talking and releases the push-to-talk switch on their radio, the controller in the repeater detects the loss of carrier and resets the time-out timer. When the timer is reset, the repeater sends out the courtesy tone. If you wait until you hear this beep (normally a couple of seconds), before you respond, you can be sure that you are pausing a suitable length of time. After you hear the beep, the repeater's transmitter will stay on for a few more seconds before turning off. This is referred to as the "tail". The length of the tail will vary from repeater to repeater but the average is about 2 or 3 seconds. You don't have to wait for the "tail to drop" before keying up again, but you should make sure that you hear the courtesy tone before going ahead. Waiting for the courtesy tone before transmitting also has another good reason. This allows time for other stations to break in, and allows the system to reset but most importantly it allows users with emergency traffic to get in. Just put yourself in their place, what if you were mobile and had an emergency but couldn't get into the repeater because everyone was "quick keying" and not allowing you to get in?

14. Definitions to some terms used: "Control Operator" (someone that is able to modify the repeater, if necessary); "Listening" (listening for any station that wants to chat); "Monitoring" (listening to the machine but may only respond to a direct call); "Clear" (done with the machine and clearing off the frequency, usually the same as shutting down or going QRT - can be combined with "Monitoring" to indicate they're done with the machine but staying on frequency or "Listening" to indicate they're done with a QSO and willing to still chat with another station.)

15. Remember that while using the repeater while mobile never let yourselves be distracted from the safe operation of your vehicle. Also, all stations should understand that someone operating mobile may need extra time to respond, or may need to give all their attention to the traffic, and to simply standby and wait a bit longer for them to respond when they can do so safely.