

**KNW-160**  
**HOW TO SOUND LIKE AN EXPERT OPERATOR**

Written by KJ5EMP 09MAY2021.

Free for distribution for non-commercial use.

This article is intended to help new radio operators side-step many of the cringe worthy errors many new operators make and help demystify some of the practices heard but not explained that a new radio operator may encounter on many repeaters in the US, especially in the greater Houston/South Texas area.

The first tip offered will be Listen. Listen a lot. Different regions operate with different protocols and normal practices; by listening, you will get a feel for what your local group of radio operators consider normal. Even the most experienced operator can look like a newbie blundering around unaware of local radio culture, local band plans, etc.

Ignore spurious transmissions or people broadcasting with deliberate intent to disrupt, simply move to another frequency, band, or mode. The best way to discourage people trying to ruin the hobby for others is to simply ignore them, out-class them by not recognizing they exist.

Follow the band plans and listen on the frequency and mode before you transmit, if the frequency is clear, announce your callsign and intent. "This is KJ5EMP mobile, listening for contacts." You may also include the repeater name and/or output frequency, it helps folks who are scanning hundreds or thousands of presets across multiple radios respond quickly.

Do not call CQ on a repeater, and do not "kerchunk" the repeater- this means keying up your radio for a split second just to hear the repeater ID or output carrier in response. This is often done by new operators to see if their radio can hit the repeater or not. Both are considered poor form. Key up and give your callsign, asking for a radio check. Example, "KJ5EMP, radio check, am I making it into the repeater?" A response of "full quieting" would indicate great signal.

Announce your callsign at least every 10 minutes during a conversation (AKA QSO), and at the end of your last transmission with the other party. When giving your callsign, do not use uncommon phonetics: "This is Kitchenware Juggler 5, Evil Monkey Power." You will hear a few exceptions to this rule (such as Kilowatt, North America), but if you are unsure, it is better to maintain a high degree of professionalism when you cannot know who is listening. Split long transmissions up by saying, "break" to both give the repeater duty cycle a rest, and to allow any potential emergency communications access to the frequency.

You can join active QSO's by announcing your callsign during a pause, and waiting for the participants to acknowledge you. Do not use CB 10-codes or lingo (10-4, what is your 20?), and do not use any marginally questionable or unacceptable language on the air.

Maintain respect and dignity with everyone you talk to and appreciate the fact that good repeaters are objectively expensive to build, operate, and maintain, they are a privilege often provided by volunteers supported by donations, they are not a right and can go away at any time.

Lastly, as an honorable mention- on open/informal and non-traffic nets, it is customary (at least on the greater Houston area repeaters) to join a net by transmitting, "This is," then un-keying your mic, waiting 2-3 seconds to listen for doubles, and then announcing your callsign to check into the net. While this really helps reduce pileups on these casual nets, remember it is not appropriate for Emergency or Auxiliary Communications (EmCom/AuxCom) nets.