

Hot Tips

Good info for the new ham, and old stuff to refresh your memory



Lighten up

We hold amateur radio licenses that are issued by the FCC, meaning the federal government. That privilege is therefore accompanied by a degree of natural seriousness, and rightly so. Yet, can an operator maintain a degree of professionalism on the radio, and still enjoy it?

Last June, it was our privilege to hear Riley Hollingsworth K4ZDH, former ARRL Chief Counsel and former FCC Special Counsel on Amateur Radio Enforcement, speak to us in our [monthly club meeting](#). His message had multiple topics, but included a warning against taking radio so seriously. He said, *Lighten up*.

Cut to the chase

We amateurs need to realize that we're not the police, we're not the military, and we don't run tactical for the fire department, at least not while we're operating in an amateur capacity. It's alright that you expect some strict discipline from yourself; just don't insist that others follow the same way of operating.

- **Avoid correcting another ham** on the air, unless it's important, and you can tactfully and kindly help the person. If an operator happens to say *broadcast* instead of *transmit*, or forgets to ID, remember that you're not the ham police, and more than likely, he's not a ham criminal.
- If [alternate phonetics](#), military jargon, or a CB word rubs you the wrong way, **let it go**.
- There's **no need to repeat yourself**, if you feel that you might have missed or mis-spoken something. Your listeners *want* you to succeed.
- **It's alright to be light-hearted** and joke around on the radio. Remember, however, that sexual innuendo and suggestive remarks have no place on amateur airwaves.

Experience is key

With practice, you'll come to understand just how far to take humor, how far to look away from a supposed offense, and the right words to use, when you help somebody on the air. Meanwhile, it's alright to stumble and mess up. Acknowledge your mistakes, and all will be forgiven.

Many hams are humble enough to accept your unsolicited advice, but a few are not. Often, it's more tactful and less embarrassing to offer to call the person on the phone, so you can work on issues outside the earshot of others.

Furthermore, others listening to you give the unwanted advice might become silently irritated at your counsel. It requires time and good judgment on your part to distinguish helpful guidance (*if you get near a window, your signal might get out better*) and advice that's not as useful (*if I were you, I'd throw away that radio and get an Icom*).

Let's have fun

Experiment, play with the radio, announce your name and call sign on the repeater, call out on the radio for somebody to talk with, challenge another ham to get on and talk with you, change frequencies, find some common ground to discuss. Very few on-air conversations are about radio; they tend to be about family, work, school, sports, and the weather, making radio the tool it was intended to be.

After all that's been said and done, let's enjoy the craft. Amateur radio might not be everybody's definition of fun, but the more pleasant we make it, the more new folks are apt to make the scary attempt and get on the air, and the more experienced folks are apt to get on and ask questions or volunteer their time.