

Hot Tips

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



Tinkering

Are you one of those folks who can't help but get your nosy fingers into the workings of something? When you encounter a piece of gear, are you tempted to disassemble it beyond recognition, just to find out what makes it tick? If so, some say you might have the *knack*, while others claim that you're a hopeless tinkerer.

Tinkering can mean exploring, modifying, adjusting, fixing, reviving, enhancing, or investigating a new or curious device. Using American slang, it can also mean fiddling, poking, tweaking, and messing; you get the idea. While tinkering can apply to things that are not quite as tangible, such as software, literature, and designs, the focus of our tinkering tends to be *physical gadgetry*.

Achtung! Alles Lookenspeepers!

Das computermachine ist nicht fuer gefingerpoken und mittengrabben. Ist easy schnappen der springenwerk, blowenfusen und poppencorken mit spitzensparken. Ist nicht fuer gewerken bei das dumbkopfen. Das rubbernecken sichtseeren keepen das cotten-pickenen hans in das pockets muss; relaxen und watchen das blinkenlights.

For many of us, tinkering is what we do. We can't let a fine chunk of machinery be, and not wonder how it looks and works under the hood, so to speak. We can't take any piece of equipment for granted; we are driven to open it up and explore. Curiosity might kill the cat, but it's what keeps us tinkerers young and alive.

And speaking of young, if you admit to play-

ing with the DIY toy set that is named for our very weakness, the *Tinkertoy*, you'll be dating yourself. It was the Lego of yesteryear, created more than 110 years ago, partly in an effort to inspire kids to use their imaginations. Another tinkering toy called the *Erector Set* was created around the same time, and became hugely popular in the US because it was one of only a few toys that allowed the little tinkerer to couple a small electric motor with the construction.

But wait, there's more

Tinkering for fun, for curiosity, or to troubleshoot a problem is a terrific vice, but you can take it one step further. Use your tinkering mind in the service of others; let your curious mind help those who are not so fortunately blessed, by teaching them, mentoring them, and setting an example of a true elmer by sharing your wonder and your enthusiasm.

Many people shy away from trying to fix a problematic device out of fear. They often don't have your tinkering background, and are afraid of making a bad problem worse. You, on the other hand, have long since cast off your doubts and inhibitions, and are ready to put your skills to the test. But, *instead of doing it for them, have them do the repair or installation*, which will help them learn by first-hand experience and gain some tinkering confidence.

Clubs and social groups are always looking for people just like you to not only participate in assembling a project, but to show the rest of us how it's done. The next time you learn of a home-brew night, a DIY meeting, or other ham radio event (such as a fair, a hamfest, special event station, and so forth), volunteer your time and talents, and show off your tinkering wizardry and allow others to feel the same excitement!