

Hot Tips

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



Too good to be true

One day while searching online, you come across an advertisement about an unusually small antenna that can support all ham radio bands. What's more, it's priced under twenty dollars. Your first thought is, *Wow, what a steal!* or *Finally, somebody has developed the miracle antenna!* Then, reality begins to return, and you catch yourself before you've fallen for another scam.

Deal of a century

As the saying goes, *If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.* Most of us know some good exceptions to this so-called rule, such as penicillin and free electricity from the Sun. When it's apparent that a proposed device violates the laws of physics, such as a perpetual-motion machine, however, then you have every right to be skeptical or question its integrity. When that violation is **not obvious** is when we often get into trouble.



Most of us are fairly well-educated, or we wouldn't have passed the ham radio exam. Still, we can get fooled, sometimes by our lack of experience. When it seems like a product is unbelievably fabulous or low-priced, ask around. Because of pride, we might feel foolish asking questions, because it seems that we should already know the answers, but the fact is that *we don't always know.* There's no shame in asking even the dumbest questions, but there might be *if you don't ask.* While Google can be your friend, a kind



elmer that doesn't mind your basic questions can be an even better one. Lowering your pride and asking questions of others can save you even more embarrassment and money than if you hadn't.

Just so we're clear, there are no miracle radios, no miracle antennas, and no free lunch. It's true that some antennas do perform better than others, and it's true that you can get a wonderful handheld radio for under twenty dollars. It's just that when you hear of a six-inch-tall antenna that can enable your radio to let you talk around the world, you need to wonder whether that's even possible.

But wait, there's more

On social media, people are sometimes quoted as saying **You get what you pay for**, but do you? In other words, does paying more get you more? Keep in mind that the opposite might also be true; that is, just because a product comes with a high price tag, it doesn't mean that somehow the high price magically makes the radio a scientific marvel. It might host extra features and higher quality than a lower-priced brand, but a handheld radio, for instance, can only do so much, and paying more doesn't always make it *do more.* Therefore, paying less also doesn't always mean the radio's junk, either.