

Hot Tips

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



Move up to a mobile radio

You might have discovered that your little handheld radio is a wonder of science, enabling you to communicate with friends, loved ones, and others, for fun or in a moment of need. But if you've used it enough, you've also discovered that the little guy has a few limitations. Some of these limitations can be resolved by a change in your transmitting location or a better antenna. But there are times when it would be nice to have a little more juice behind that signal of yours. If this extra signal boost is on your mind, then purchasing a **mobile radio** might just be for you.

A mobile radio is a transceiver that's typically larger in physical size than most HTs (handheld transceivers), and can normally transmit on a higher power level than most HTs. Most require an external power supply and an external antenna, and most come with an external hand microphone. And most hams use mobile radios in any of three ways: in a vehicle, at home, or portable.

In a vehicle

A mobile radio was obviously designed to be installed and used in your car, truck, or RV, which offers the convenience of having great communication ability from the comfort of your vehicle. If your mobile radio and antenna are installed more or less permanently, all you need to do is pick up your mic and push the PTT. Also, if your service is needed at a location away from your home or work, your mobile can help you communicate and stay informed while traveling.

Can you do this with an HT? Yes; in fact, you can connect your HT to an outside-mounted antenna (mag-mount, lip-mount, or hole-mount) and your signal will be heard much better and farther than it could with any whip or duck antenna. Furthermore, unlike a true mobile radio, which is tethered by connections

to the car's antenna and battery, you can easily remove your HT and take it with you when you get out of your vehicle, because it carries its own *power supply* and antenna.

At home

Many hams have a mobile radio at home as their *base* unit; that is, their main home radio, where they transmit for nets, for emergency, and for ragchewing. Keep in mind that a home base like this requires an external **power supply**, an external antenna, and coaxial cable. Your power supply for this home mobile radio should be able to supply 30 amps, even though your radio specifications state that it requires much lower. For the antenna, use a **Pockrus J-pole**. For coax, use RG-8X, terminated on both ends with PL-259 connectors.

Portable

In the context of mobile radio, the term *portable* means the ability to quickly grab a radio that's more powerful than an HT, but yet available enough for you to collect it (along with its battery, antenna, and coaxial cable), and head out the door. Portable can also refer to the ability to carry a radio more powerful than an HT with you on a hike or a bike trip.

Most HTs can transmit a maximum of 4 to 8 watts, depending on the model, while most mobiles can transmit 5 watts at their lowest setting. There are times when the extra power is helpful to get around buildings, get down the canyon, and be heard on that distant repeater, and a mobile can often do the trick.

Please understand that this is not meant to have you rush out and spend your hard-earned cash on new hardware. It's only meant to offer you an option, in case you're getting tired of bad signal reports and the need to constantly repeat yourself over the air, in spite of having installed a superior antenna.