

# Microvolt

Monthly newsletter of the Utah Amateur Radio Club

September 2026



## The Art of Reception



People love to say that it's better to give than to receive. Yet in the world of amateur radio, it's often better to receive than to give; that is, it's sometimes more important to receive than to transmit. That's because it doesn't seem to take much to get a good enough antenna up and send out your signal, but many struggle to receive a distant signal well enough to demodulate it into intelligent audio. Like we had mentioned exactly a year ago, *if you can't hear 'em, you can't work 'em*. But maybe there are aspects of reception that can help us contact better.

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## Cover – The art of reception

If you possess the kind of station that can transmit a lot more effectively than it can receive, we used to call you an *alligator*, because you have **more mouth than ears**. Conversely, if your station can receive better than it can transmit, we used to call you an *elephant*, because you have **more ears than mouth**. In most cases, we amateurs want to enjoy the benefits of both transmitting and receiving, but there are times when receiving is about all one can do.

For example, if you want to operate on an amateur frequency outside your current amateur privilege, you can either transmit in the same room with an amateur who holds the appropriate license, using his or her call sign, or be resigned to only listen. That being said, using the amateur frequencies outside your privileges is perfectly acceptable when a life-threatening circumstance requires their use, and no other communication means is available.

### Listening tools

Experienced operators have long understood that a good pair of headphones or a head set can help them better hear their contacts, better distinguish one station from another, or listen better for cues that help them know when to (and when not to!) speak or key up. They can also help you detect conversation nuances that can clue you in to subtle changes in noise, a person's stress level, or even band conditions, which you can use to help others.

Another great tool for receiving amateur radio signals is the [WebSDR](#). You won't be able to use it to transmit, but if your own antenna or location makes it difficult for you to hear that much-needed contact, turn down your AF (volume) all the way, and try using the WebSDR to receive the contact. If the distant contact is not inside the skip zone of the WebSDR, you might be able to hear the station better than with your own receiver.

FYI, prior to today's convenient *transceivers*, original amateur radio gear separated transmitters from receivers. Legacy transmitters and receivers were quite heavy due to their bulky transformers, coils, tubes, and other high-voltage components. Combining them into a single unit made portability rather impractical. Also, consolidating the units meant the use of a massive relay that could switch between the two, to prevent burning out the receiver's front end.



### Extracurricular

Many radio listeners world-wide enjoy the activity of [SWLing](#), or shortwave radio listening. At its height, shortwave radio included numerous AM stations in many countries that broadcast news, weather, propaganda, music, religious services, talk shows, and more, often in their native languages. Today the stations are not so numerous, but still broadcast some of the legacy programming.

In several countries around the world, arrays of [radio telescopes](#) are installed to "listen" to what's out there. They use parabolic dishes to detect faint signals from objects that visible light telescopes are unable to let us see. Gradually, they help scientists listen for behavior patterns of (pulsing, spinning, erratically moving) heavenly bodies, explore new extraterrestrial object types, and map the universe, all without the obstruction of a cloudy sky.

For non-amateur portions of the radio spectrum, any person is permitted to receive and listen to a signal license-free, except for mobile phone signals. For privacy, phone signals are encrypted, even though their frequencies might reside within the amateur radio allocation. Be aware that many non-amateur stations (police, EMS, military, etc.) encrypt or encode their signals.

Finally, there's [broadcast radio](#) and [television](#), most of which provide news, information, sports, music, product advertisements, and a host of other services, typically paid for by listeners and viewers. These have great value contributing to the peace-of-mind of your family during a disaster or even small emergency, to keep you informed about the ongoing incident, even if you're only listening to them

*Microvolt editorial staff*

## Editorial – The art of listening

The art of listening is important in radio, because it helps us become more aware of what we're receiving than what we're transmitting, although both skills can contribute to one's enjoyment. The traditional suggestion is, *before transmitting to make a contact, first listen, then listen some more*. Both UARC and the ARRL support this [idea of listening first](#).

### Technical

One way to improve our ability to hear transmitted amateur signals is by erecting a better antenna. On one hand, creating a better receiving antenna often requires [aperture](#), or the amount of surface area facing a wave front. On the other hand, the physical lemma of [reciprocity](#) states that for a given antenna, *its receive properties are identical to its transmit properties*, such as its [radiation and receive patterns](#), and symmetry of its [impedance matrices](#), which means if your antenna transmits well, chances are, it will also receive well.

One problem that seems to plague many operators is noise, whether that's from surroundings (atmosphere, static, power lines) or generated (inverter, LEDs, defective devices). Indeed, many find that their ability to listen and make contacts seems inversely proportional to received noise, known as SNR, or [signal-to-noise ratio](#). If you can either raise your received signal or lower your received noise, your on-air experience can be greatly improved.



One way to improve reception is by using an SDR, such as the [WebSDR](#) or an RTL-DR dongle. In 2015 [Clint KA7OEI wrote an article](#) about using an early version of the RTL-SDR dongle that suffered from a few issues, such as image due to poor Nyquist sampling, low sensitivity due to passive filtering, and SNR degradation. In 2024 your editor took the liberty of writing [a less-technical article](#) using an updated version of the RTL-SDR dongle, which sports enhanced features as well as many improvements over previous versions.



### Personal

Face it: many of us love to talk, and some even possess the [gift of gab](#), or the propensity of avid conversation. For them, talking before an audience, at church, or even on the radio is almost second-nature. For most of us amateurs, however, the speaking part can be anywhere from a little scary to intimidating, even to the point of triggering anxiety.

While it's fun to engage a ham from across the globe, it can also be frightening to strike up a QSO with a complete stranger whose customs and culture are unknown to you. Simply listening might be preferred by hams who are satisfied to armchair the two-way conversations, and that's perfectly fine.

### Finally

Remember that your PTT (push-to-talk) button doubles as an RTL (release-to-listen) button. This can be especially important when communicating through a repeater system, such as the [Intermountain Intertie](#) or the [Sinbad System](#). Due to the numbers of linked repeaters that are transmitting because an operator had keyed up, be sure to listen for most, if not all, the repeaters to "drop" before attempting to key up. Pressing your PTT prematurely might cause the first one or two seconds of your voice to not be transmitted by all linked repeaters, resulting in people missing something important you might have said.

Whether or not you're talking through a repeater, be sure to speak up, especially if you normally speak softly or quietly. Unlike the terrific audio amplifiers of mobile phone technology, amateur radio microphones are not often equipped with top-grade audio components, potentially preventing others from fully enjoying the art of listening...to you.

Anything to add? Email [editor@utaharc.org](mailto:editor@utaharc.org)

## Letters to the editor

Dear Editor:

Just outside my shack the ground from our cable TV box is tied to a ground rod just below it. Is it alright to drive another ground rod for my antenna like 24 inches from the cable ground rod?

George in Brigham City

Dear George:

For all amateur intents and safety purposes, it's perfectly acceptable to drive a ground rod 24 inches from another established ground rod, especially in Utah, where our ground is less than ideal. Keep in mind, however, that the NEC (National Electrical Code) specifies that ground rods must be driven no less than six feet apart ([250.53.A.3](#)) to minimize ground resistances in ideal ground. Once you install the antenna ground rod, I recommend you bond the rods together using bare 4 AWG copper wire buried between the rods.

Dear Editor:

I've heard that I should use dielectric grease on some connectors, like for coax. What is dielectric grease, why should I use it, and how do I use it?

Steve in Murray

Dear Steve:

Great questions that I wish more hams would ask. [Dielectric grease](#) is an inexpensive silicone-based gel that's used to prevent water damage and corrosion (oxidation, lime, rust) on metal electrical contacts. It's non-conductive and will retain its consistency (won't harden) for many years.

Dielectric grease won't remove corrosion from a connector or contact, so applying it to a corroded contact can be counter-productive. Be sure to apply dielectric grease to new, clean metal surfaces for best results. The metal surfaces that make contact will push the gel aside when making a tight connection.

Once you apply dielectric grease to an electrical connection, take steps to cover or shield the grease from dirt and dust. **Do not apply dielectric grease to connectors that you plug and unplug from each other occasionally**, such as an RV electrical plug or portable ham radio coax connectors. It's made for connections intended to remain together permanent-



ly or for long periods of time, such as light bulbs, spark plugs, and outdoor coaxial cable connectors.

Dear Editor:

What kind of gear do I need to make contact with a DXpedition? I've tried twice now (W8S and 3YØK), but they never acknowledged me. I have an Icom IC-7300 connected to a Buckmaster OCFD 80-10 antenna on my roof about 24 feet in the air. Any ideas to help me make the contacts with these guys?

Jonathan in Draper

Dear Jonathan:

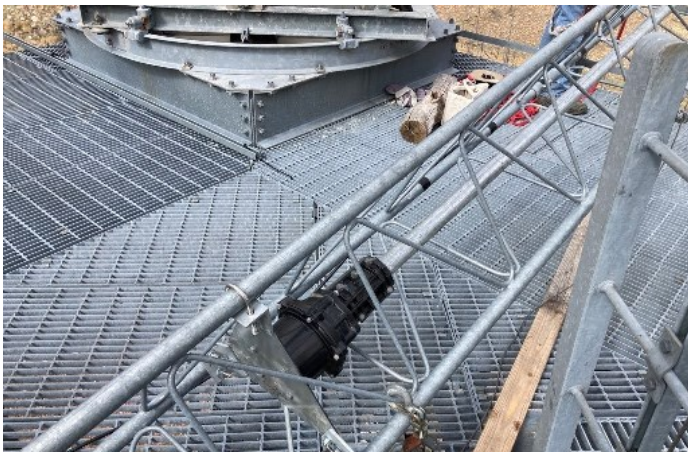
Making contact with a DXpedition is very rewarding to an amateur who enjoys "chasing" exotic DX stations. Because of their locations and equipment limitations, however, many can be a bit difficult to make that contact. Here are some tips that might help you complete a QSO with a current DXpedition:

- Research their information (and location relative to your QTH), to match their frequencies, times, and modes
- Understand how to work **split operation**, which most of them do
- Optimize your antenna for DX; that is, if you're using a wire, ensure it has sufficient height for the chosen band(s), but a Yagi beam might be better
- A 100-watt transceiver will often suffice, but an amplifier that outputs 500 watts to legal-limit might be more effective to break through pileups
- Check the band conditions between their station and your QTH, and watch for geomagnetic storms

Send your questions to [editor@utaharc.org](mailto:editor@utaharc.org)

## Club news

Because UARC doesn't hold a regular monthly meeting in August, this issue will simply have no news, and no news is good news!



The good news is that Gary Crum KK7DV was able to identify some problems with the antenna rotator for the Leamington remote site. Thanks for all your hard work, Gary!

BTW, you can view past many club meeting presentations on [our YouTube channel](#).



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## Fall 2026 UARC Potluck

You and your family are invited to a potluck dinner **6:30 pm Thursday 10 September 2026** at the [Salt Lake County Facilities Management Cafeteria](#), 2001 S State St, room S1-100. Details are posted [on our website](#). We'll have announcements and door prizes, but no presentations or long speeches.

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## 2026 UARC Homebrew Night

The annual UARC Homebrew Night will take place this year **Thursday 08 October 2026** at the University of Utah Warnock Building. It's a chance for you to show off your project, your latest purchase, or something else you've been cooking up during the year.

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## 2026 UARC Christmas Dinner

You and your family are invited to the annual UARC Christmas Dinner **6:30 pm Thursday 10 December 2026** at the [Golden Corral, 665 E 7200 S](#), in Midvale. More posted [on our website](#). We'll hold our annual elections that night, plus have announcements and door prizes, but no presentations or long speeches.

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## 2027 Winter Field Day : *we need your help!*

As summer temperatures start to dip below 100°F, we need to start thinking about Winter Field Day. If all goes as planned, we'll hold Winter Field Day at **where** from noon Saturday 23 January through noon Sunday 24 January. We're asking for three volunteers to set up their RVs at the park starting about 8 am Saturday morning. If you're willing to contribute your RV for one night, please contact James KK7AVS ([kk7avs@gmail.com](mailto:kk7avs@gmail.com)) or Noji KNØJI (801-368-1865).

# For your information

## Save that date

Fall Potluck Dinner : 6:30 pm 10 September 2026

Homebrew Night : 7:30 pm 08 October 2026

Christmas Dinner : 6:30 pm 10 December 2026

Winter Field Day : noon 23 January through noon  
24 January 2027

Spring Potluck Dinner : 6:30 pm 11 March 2027

ARRL Field Day : noon 26 June through noon 27  
June 2027



## License courses

### Salt Lake:

**Technician** : Tuesdays

**General** : Tuesdays 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm  
147.160+ MHz (127.3 Hz tone)

### Orem:

**Technician** : Saturday 19 Sep, 8:00 to 2:00 pm

Email [nv7vham@gmail.com](mailto:nv7vham@gmail.com) to register

**Provo Fire Station #2**

**Technician** : Tuesdays 22, 29, 6, 13 Sep, 6:00 to  
8:00 pm

Email [nv7vham@gmail.com](mailto:nv7vham@gmail.com) to register

**Provo Fire Station #2**

### Eagle Mountain:

**Technician** : 5 Thursdays, 7 to 9 pm

13 Aug, 20 Aug, 27 Aug, 10 Sep, 17 Sep

Email [ki6oss6365@gmail.com](mailto:ki6oss6365@gmail.com) to register (\$0)

**Eagle Mountain City Hall**

## Exam sessions

### Salt Lake County:

- Email Garth Wiscombe W7PS [w7ps@arrl.net](mailto:w7ps@arrl.net)  
31 Aug, 28 Sep, 26 Oct, 30 Nov, 25 Jan

### Utah County:

- Sat 19 Sep 10:00 am : **Eagle Mtn** : [signup](#)
- Sat 26 Sep 10:00 am : **Spanish Fork** : [signup](#)
- Wed 16 Sep 7:00 pm : **Provo** : [signup](#)
- Sat 19 Sep 2:30 pm : **Provo** : [signup](#)

## Club repeaters

**Farnsworth Peak** : 146.620– MHz (no tone)

**Scott Hill** : 146.620– MHz (no tone)

**Lake Mountain** : 146.760– MHz (no tone)

## SDRs and beacons

Northern Utah WebSDR : [sdrutah.org](http://sdrutah.org)

KK7AVS SDR : [k7xrd.club](http://k7xrd.club)

N7RIX SDR : [sdr.n7rix.com](http://sdr.n7rix.com)

K7JL beacon 28.2493 MHz

## HF remote and club transceiver stations

If you'd like to learn how to get started using the remote stations, visit the [HF Remotes link](#) on [the club website](#):

<https://user.xmission.com/~uarc/HFRemote.html>

## How you can help!

Email [uarc@xmission.com](mailto:uarc@xmission.com) to reach the club leadership. Email [editor@utaharc.org](mailto:editor@utaharc.org) to suggest content.

## Spotlight – Jerry Bergosh KK7OXD

Jerry first became interested in amateur radio when he was in junior high, but other interests left him little time for study or licensing, so he left radio on the shelf. He also had an interest in rocks, so after graduating from high school, Jerry attended Penn State where he pursued his interest in geology. After graduation, he landed a job in Alaska, working for an oil company.

One day, Jerry received a call about openings with an oil company in Salt Lake City that interested him, so he moved here in 1978 to take the job. Because the job called for a week in the office for every three spent in the field, Jerry felt that it was the perfect move, since he loves the deserts, mountains, and skiing.



Jerry retired several years ago with several things on his bucket list that he wanted to pursue. One of his interests involved emergency preparedness. He signed up with the local CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) class and became certified. One of Jerry's CERT instructors was an amateur radio operator, and from him Jerry learned the importance of good communication in emergencies, and decided to get licensed. He received his Technician license in 2023 and obtained his General ticket in 2024.

Jerry checks in with some of his neighbors for a weekly simplex net. His equipment includes a Yaesu FT-991A and another radio for 2 meters / 70 cm. He is considering the purchase of a Yaesu HT as well. Jerry still enjoys going to the deserts and mountains, where he finds comfort in taking a radio along for safety. He also enjoys satellite communication and meeting new people on the radio.

Jerry's other interests include rescuing and training bloodhounds for emergency rescue, long-distance running, skiing and bicycle racing.

Jerry is currently the secretary-treasurer of the Salt Lake Crossroads Amateur Radio Club, helping James Bennett KK7AVS with the club repeaters. He is also a member of MARC (Murray Amateur Radio Club), the ARRL, and the Utah VHF Society.

Jerry, we wish you all the best!

– 73 de Linda Reeder, N7HVF



## Tech Corner – RF detector



Time for a little fun. I just thought it might be neat to show everybody how to build a simple RF detector, that is, a device that can display the presence of a relatively strong radio wave. Since our greatest bands of interest seem to be dictated by our HTs (handheld transceivers), let's create one that will detect a 2 meter signal and another for a 70-cm signal.

The entire construction is for a simple resonant dipole and a detector circuit between the elements. Each element of the 2-meter dipole is calculated as  $234 \div 146 \text{ MHz} = 1.6 \text{ feet}$ , or 19.23 inches. Multiply by the velocity factor of copper and get  $19.23 \text{ inches} \times 0.951 = 18.3 \text{ inches}$ . By the same calculation, each element of the 70-cm dipole is  $234 \div 446 \text{ MHz} = 0.525 \text{ feet}$ , or 6.3 inches. Multiply by the velocity factor of copper to get  $6.3 \text{ inches} \times 0.951 = 6.0 \text{ inches}$ .

The detector circuit is nothing more than a low-voltage (1.8 V to 2.0 V) LED in parallel with a Schottky barrier diode in reverse polarity. The LED is a diode in its own right, but turns on and off so slowly that for each cycle of the signal, by the time the voltage begins rising, the cycle starts reversing, and so the LED never becomes forward-biased with a high enough voltage to display light. The Schottky barrier diode turns on and off very quickly, allowing the voltage in the signal sufficient time to rise above the LED threshold, sending the pulsating DC to the LED, lighting it.

### Parts List

Two [1SS86 Schottky barrier diodes](#)

Two [color 5 mm 1.8 V 20 mA LEDs](#)

Two 18.3" [12 AWG solid copper wires](#)

Two 6.0" [12 AWG solid copper wires](#)

One [2-meter / 70-cm HT \(handheld transceiver\)](#)

Optional : [36" foam poster board](#)

Optional : [clear packaging tape](#)

### Construction

The longer leg of each LED is the anode, which you'll need to mark or otherwise keep track. Bend the legs of each LED flat-ways 180° away from each other. Wrap the cathode (marked with a stripe) lead of the 1SS86 diode around the LED anode (longer) leg, such that the diode is mounted directly under the LED.

Cut each 12 AWG wire to length, straighten each, then bare about ¼" from one end of each. Place each identical pair of wires end-to-end, the bare ends about ¼" from each other. Wrap each diode leg-lead pair around a bared end of one of the 12 AWG wires, then solder each of the three conductors together.

Use some clear packaging tape to mount the two dipoles on the poster board in parallel with each other and about four inches apart. The project is finished...it was that simple!

### Testing the RF detector

With both dipoles constructed and mounted parallel to each other, it's easy to see which RF signal is being detected. While holding the HT a few inches away from the poster board and equidistant from the dipoles, tune to 146.520 MHz and key up (don't forget to transmit your call sign!) The LED of the longer dipole should light brightly while the LED of the other dipole should not light at all. Repeat this test using 446.000 MHz, and the LED of the shorter dipole will light instead.

Using this detector, affirm the idea of the [inverse-square law](#) by pressing the PTT, then moving the radio antenna closer and farther from the detector. The LED should brighten and dim as the square of the distance, and not linearly, which might be difficult to see precisely because of the voltage threshold sensitivity of the

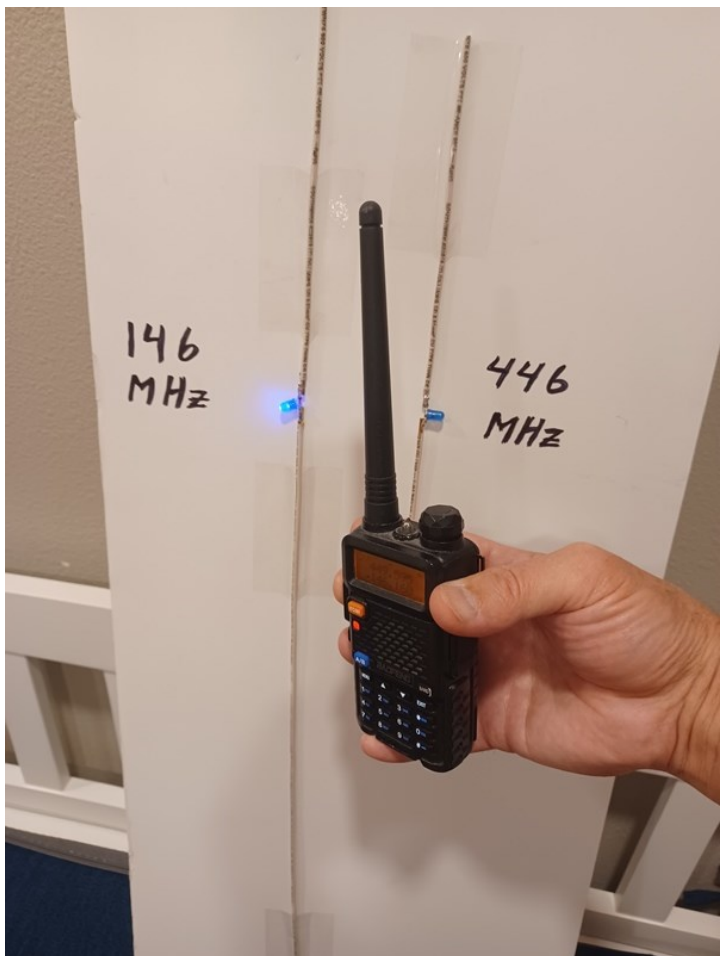
## RF detector, cont'd

LEDs. But fun anyway. What else can you discover with your detector?

Ever wonder what difference it makes whether you keep your HT antenna pointed upwards or turned sideways? Demonstrate the effect of signal mis-polarization, by pressing the PTT, then rotating the antenna in a plane perpendicular to the detector dipole orientation and back again. How about if you point your HT antenna right at the detector? I'll leave that as an exercise for *you*.

### Extracurricular

Well, this fun little experiment brings up a few questions, like how selective the detector is. If it can detect 2-meter and 70-cm signals, how about 220 MHz signals, or even 6-meter signals? Why not. Just run through the calculations and cut the wires and demo the result.



How about multiple detectors within the same band? For example, can you have one dipole for 144 MHz, another for 145 MHz, another for 146 MHz, and so forth? To be honest, I haven't tested the selectivity of the Schottky diode to that extent, so again I leave that experiment as your exercise, and you can educate *me*!

Noji Ratzlaff KNØJI

## Silent key – Dan Bishop WV7V



On Thursday 11 June 2026 Dan Bishop WV7V passed away at his home in Orem. One of the great original mentors in Utah Valley, especially Orem and Provo, numerous hams can trace their knowledgebase and operating habits to Dan's teaching and elmering.

After graduating from BYU, Dan served as a firefighter and paramedic for over 23 years. Eventually in 2007 he got into amateur radio as KE7OGH.



We bid a fond farewell to Dan; he'll be missed by many.

You can read [Dan's obituary here](#).



## Strays – Gut feel

Ever get that feeling you forgot something on your way out of town for a family trip, only to remember you left the baby at home? I hope not, yet it seems that our subconscious is often attempting to assist us by producing some sort of *discontented feeling* in the event that we should have done something we had originally planned. We often refer to that physiological reaction a *gut feeling*, an instinctive emotional intuition.

Contrast that to another western English idiom that exhibits a subtle but practical difference from the previous phrase. A *gut feel* is also an instinctive emotional reaction, but is thought to be the result of past performance rather than a forgotten pre-planned task. At first glance, gut feel seems to be the result of *guesswork*, which is a semi-random act of producing a conclusion or action without the benefit of concrete data. It turns out that gut feel is much more than a guess, and has practical value.

For example, as a manager you've narrowed the list of job candidates to two people that seem equally qualified. Candidate A has an impressive resume, perfect technical scores, and gave polished, rehearsed answers. Candidate B has slightly less direct experience, but solid skills and good interview scores. Both candidates passed the skills test easily, yet on paper Candidate A appears to be the safer, stronger choice.

During the second round of interviews, you feel a sudden wave of ease and warmth while interviewing Candidate B. While interviewing Candidate A, however, you feel a subtle tightness in your chest, and noticed the conversation felt stiff and guarded. Why did you feel this way about each? It's possible that you sensed Candidate A might hide mistakes to appear infallible, while you sensed that Candidate B was deeply honest, adaptable, and would own up to a mistake without hesitation.

In each case, a gut feel is an *unspoken, rapid emotional and physical reaction triggered as your brain processes past experiences without you actively thinking about them*. In other words, gut feel can be another term for *experience*, and is much more useful and quantifiable than guesswork. You've seen this in action while watching an experienced person rely on past occurrences to draw conclusions about specific actions to take moving forward.



### Relevance to ham radio

While operating a net on your mobile VHF radio in your shack, you hear an unusual slight squeal that's not coming from the speaker. Within a couple of seconds, the squeal starts going higher in pitch, and instinctively you power off your radio. You have no immediate idea what's wrong, or whether anything is wrong at all. But now that you have twenty seconds to think about it, you seem to recall a similar but forgotten sound from more than thirty years back, and it had originated from a final power transistor announcing its earthly departure.

Now that the power is off, you wonder what you should check next, since you fear that restoring the power to the mobile radio could spell the end of its life. Then the thought comes to you that you should probably check the coax to start with. Sure enough, it turns out that your coax just got chewed through by a squirrel, leaving you to transmit into an open circuit. After replacing the damaged coax, you power up your mobile, and all is well once again.

Did pure guesswork or a mysterious force from the unseen world spare your radio? Maybe, but its salvation was more likely due to your experience, your *gut feel*.

### Conclusion

Gut feel is the intuitive integration of experience, environmental awareness, and subtle sensory cues. While amateur radio relies on science, math, and technical specifications, seasoned operators use this intuition to make rapid decisions when conditions change unpredictably. So, the next time your "gut" gnaws at you, it might be telling you something more important than a desire for pizza; it might just pay to listen to your gut.

**Microvolt** is the official publication of the Utah Amateur Radio Club, Inc. (UARC), 3815 S 1915 E, Salt Lake City, UT 84106, and is published monthly. Copying is permitted with proper credits to *Microvolt*, UARC, and authors. Online repository located at <https://user.xmission.com/~uarc/Microvolt>

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The **Utah Amateur Radio Club** was organized under its present name in 1927, with its beginnings dating back as early as 1909, then becoming affiliated with the **American Radio Relay League** in 1928. UARC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and holds a club station license with the call sign **W7SP**, a memorial to Leonard "Zim" Zimmerman, amateur radio pioneer in the Salt Lake City area.

The club meets each month except July and August. The meetings are usually held on the second Thursday of the month at 7:30 PM in the University of Utah **Warnock Engineering Building**, Room 2230, unless otherwise posted.

**Club membership** is open to anybody interested in amateur radio; a current license is not required. Dues are \$20 per year. Send dues to club secretary James Bennett, 4960 W 5400 S, Kearns, Utah 84118. Send address changes to [kk7avs@gmail.com](mailto:kk7avs@gmail.com)

**Tax-deductible monetary contributions** are gladly accepted. Send directly to club treasurer Shawn Evans, 1338 S Foothill Dr, #265, Salt Lake City, Utah 84108-2321. For in-kind contributions, please contact [uarc@xmission.com](mailto:uarc@xmission.com) to make arrangements.

**UARC maintains** the 146.620– and 146.760– repeaters, which are administered by the **UARC Repeater Committee**. Direct comments and questions to any committee member. The 146.760– repeater is on IRLP node 3352.

Call the **UARC Ham Hotline** at **801-583-3002** for amateur radio information, including club, testing, meeting, and membership information. Leave a message, and we'll make an effort to return your call.

## UARC 2026 Board

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Exec. Vice President: [Jeri Brummett](#), WJ3RI  
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**For-late breaking news** listen to the UARC Information Net, Sundays at 8:30 pm on 146.620– or visit the [announcement page](#).

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