

BUYING HAM GEAR, WHAT TO LOOK FOR— AN OVERVIEW

1. GENERAL RULES FOR ALL PURCHASES:

- A. DECIDE WHAT YOU CAN AFFORD-- PRICE
- B. DEFINE HOW YOU WILL USE IT—CASUAL VS INTENSE, MULTI-MODE
- C. DECISION-- BUY BASIC NOW VERSUS MORE CAPABILITY/FEATURES
- D. COMPARISON SHOP— HRO, AES, UNIVERSAL, HOUSTON ARS
- E. NEW VERSUS USED— NEW WARRANTY VERSUS PRICE
- F. AES AND HRO HAVE SOME USED GEAR, HAMFESTS, LOCAL CLUBS
- G. GATHER INFO-- CHECK REVIEWS AT ARRL & ON WEB— EHAM, QRZ
- H. MANUFACTURER/MODEL REPUTATION-- REVIEWS
- I. GOOD TO HAVE SOME RECOURSE IF PROBLEM— KNOW SELLER

2. VHF/UHF HANDHELDS:

- A. PRICE
- B. POWER—MANY NEW UNITS-- MAX 5 WATTS— POWER SAVER STEPS
- C. ANTENNA CONNECTOR— CONNECT EXTERNAL ANTENNA?
- D. SINGLE VERSUS DUAL BAND— NEED 440 MHZ?
- E. SINGLE RF DECK VERSUS DUAL
(TRUE DUAL BAND— TWO FREQUENCIES DISPLAYED)
- F. TONE ENCODE AND DECODE
- G. MEMORIES— KEEP YOUR SETTINGS
- H. CASE QUALITY—STURDY?
- I. BATTERY SIZE—GOOD CAPACITY—1100-1400 MAH
- J. ACCESSORIES— 120 VAC & 12 VDC CHARGERS, SPEAKER MICS,
- K. PC PROGRAMABLE— SOFTWARE AVAILABLE
- L. OTHER— WATER RESISTANT, WEATHER CHANNELS, WIDE RECEIVE
- M. SPECIAL MODES— ICOM-- D-STAR, YAESU-- WIRES

3. VHF/UHF MOBILES:

- A. PRICE
- B. POWER
- C. SINGLE VERSUS DUAL BAND, MULTIBAND
- D. SINGLE RF DECK VERSUS DUAL DECK
- E. TONE ENCODE AND DECODE
- F. MEMORIES
- G. REMOVABLE FRONT PANEL— EASE OF INSTALL IN VEHICLES
- H. CROSSBAND REPEAT— USE TO EXTEND RANGE OF HANDHELDS
- I. OTHER— WEATHER CHANNELS, WIDE RECEIVE
- J. PC PROGRAMABLE/INTERFACE TO PC FOR PACKET
- K. SPECIAL MODES— DIGITAL, SSB

4. HF MOBILES:

- A. PRICE

- B. BANDS- 160-10, 6M, 2M
- C. MODES—SSB, CW, FM, AM, DIGITAL
- D. MEMORIES
- E. FILTERS— DSP, BAND PASS, CRYSTAL FILTERS
- F. EASE OF USE— MENUS VERSUS BUTTONS
- G. PROGRAMABLE FROM PC
- H. SPECIAL FEATURES-- TX AUDIO COMPRESSION

5. HF BASE STATIONS:

- A. PRICE
- B. BANDS— 160-10 PLUS, 60, 6, 2
- C. MODES—SSB, CW, DIGITAL, AM , FM
- D. MEMORIES— MULTIPLE IN BAND MEMORIES
- E. FILTERS-- DSP, AUTOMATIC NOTCH FILTER
- F. DUAL VFOs—A & B
- G. SPILT FREQUENCY OPERATION—DX & 40 METER SSB
- H. RECEIVER SPECS— SELECTIVITY, SENSITIVITY, DISTORTION,
ADJACENT CHANNEL OVERLOAD REJECTION, NOISE FLOOR
- I. TRANSMITTER SPECS—ADJUST AUDIO CHARACTERISITICS
- J. BUILT IN CW KEYS
- K. VOICE/CW MEMORY—CONTESTS, DXING
- L. ACCESSORY HOOKUPS— DIGITAL, AMPLIFIER,
- M. BAND SCOPE— SEE SIGNALS
- N. BUILT IN AUTO-TUNER

6. REFERENCE WEB SITES:

- A. ARRL— WWW.ARRL.ORG OPERATING, REVIEWS, NEWSLETTERS,
ARES, NPOTA, LOTW
- B. QRZ— WWW.QRZ.COM CALL SIGN LOOKUP, REVIEWS, DX
- C. EHAM-- WWW.EHAM.COM HAM INFO, EQUIPMENT REVIEWS, DX
- D. AES— AMATEUR ELECTRONIC SUPPLY— WWW.AESHAM.COM NEW
AND USED EQUIPMENT, ACCESSORIES, SUPPLIES
- E. HRO— HAM RADIO OUTLET- WWW.HAMRADIO.COM NEW EQUIPMENT
ACCESSORIES, SUPPLIES, CONSIGNMENTS
- F. UNIVERSAL-- WWW.UNIVERSAL-RADIO.COM NEW EQUIPMENT,
ACCESSORIES, SUPPLIES
- G. HOUSTON-- WWW.HARSRADIO.COM NEW EQUIPMENT, CONSIGNMENT
- H. RFSTUFF— WWW.RFSTUFF.COM RADIO ACCESSORIES & SUPPLIES,
GOOD PRICES
- I. QTH.COM— WWW.QTH.COM HAM INFO, EQUIPMENT FOR SALE,
READ SAFE BUYING TIPS
- J. TEXAS TOWERS— WWW.TEXASTOWERS.COM TOWERS, ANTENNAS
COAX, ACCESSORIES
- K. MFJ— WWW.MFJENTERPRISES.COM ACCESSORIES, SUPPLIES

Recommendations for Purchasing Ham Radio Gear— By Jerry K5JLW

1) buy new equipment unless you can purchase what you need from someone you personally know, trust, know where they live **and** a 2nd person that you know and trust also recommends the purchase **and** you are given ample opportunity to use (fully test) the equipment before the sale is final;

2) do not purchase Ham Radio Equipment until you have a specific need for it (get a dictionary and learn the difference between the words need and want);

3) never purchase new "bottom of the line" Ham Radio Equipment with the intention to later "upgrade" - wait until you can afford what you really need - do not base your equipment needs on how much it costs;

4) do not pay for "bells and whistles" related to Ham Radio Equipment without understanding their purpose **and** your need for them (reread definition of need vs want and add the meaning of the word "purpose" to your vocabulary);

5) before making purchases at a Hamfest, off the Internet, or from any other source- make a *prioritized* shopping list complete with prices, consult or take a "knowledgeable" friend with you, and **NEVER** make a major purchase for any item **not** on your *prioritized* shopping list;

6) always set a budget limit on how much to spend prior to every shopping "spree" and *never* spend more; and

7) reread item 5 & 6 above, 6 more times. If you need something and it isn't on your *prioritized* shopping list - you don't need it - you just **want** it. Don't let price determine your need. Whatever you **want** will still be available the next time you go shopping and you have a 50-50 chance that it will be cheaper!

Corollary (1) to Item 7 above: Shop long and hard for what you need as long as possible. Often, shopping for, but postponing a purchase will lead to a better price.

Corollary (2) to Item 7 above: Ham gear, not on sale, is rarely a good deal.