

Meeting Notes from October 2007 MVARC Meeting 'Getting Started' Section  
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This month's topic, as suggested by a recently licensed ham was, 'How do you break into a QSO (conversation) on the Repeater?' What a great suggestion. I know it can be second nature for some, but for a new ham, this may be quite daunting. If you are nervous, that is OK, we were all that way in the beginning. Experienced Hams will know by your call sign that you are a new ham, and hopefully that should elicit a friendly, helpful response. So here are my thoughts.

Take a look at your equipment. Your HT will need an upgraded antenna to access most of the local repeaters from inside your house. An external antenna would be best. J-pole antennas can be built inexpensively, and my favorite is a roll up J-pole ([http://www.vcars.org/tech/J\\_Pole2M.html](http://www.vcars.org/tech/J_Pole2M.html)) for inside work. Use full power and pick a good location at home where the repeater comes in strong. If the repeater doesn't show a full scale reading on receive, then you probably won't be able to 'hit it' with your HT. A way I use to see if I can 'hit' a repeater, is to use low power and try to key a repeater up, by identifying my call sign. If I can get in on low power, I probably can be heard on high power. Remember, you may be able to key up a repeater, but still be too noisy to get any audio through.

Find a repeater that has a strong receive signal and that is close by. Your best bet for an HT is something on Tiger Mountain, 147.08+(103.5Hz), 146.82-(103.5Hz) and 145.33-(179.9Hz).

A good way to make your first contact on the repeater is on a scheduled Net. These happen weekly (<http://www.mikeandkey.org/nets.htm>) on several of the repeaters and they usually ask for visitor check-ins. Just follow the instructions of net control and when asked for check-ins, give your call sign. They will usually acknowledge it and then will put you down on a list. They'll work down the list in order giving everyone a turn.

So you are now ready to go on a repeater. The first thing to do is *Listen, Listen and Listen!* If a conversation is ongoing, make sure that you will make a comment pertaining to the subject. Then announce your call sign once in between conversations then wait. Someone will have heard you and will acknowledge you, 'the breaking station' and turn it over to you. If not, try again, you may not have been heard. When they turn it over to you, introduce yourself, and make your comment then pass it back to the group. Hopefully the group will put you in the rotation, where each one gets a turn. Just remember the one person who comes after you, by name, don't worry about their call sign. Also remember to wait for the courtesy tone before you key up and also key up a second before you start speaking to allow the machine to catch up.

Another way to get on the repeater is to 'piggy back' at the end of someone else's QSO. When one of the parties signs off and the remaining party is presumably still there, give them a call, using their call sign followed by yours. When they call back, introduce yourself and start up a conversation. Typical topics are your location, where you are going (if mobile) etc.

You can also ask for a 'signal report' on a repeater which is helpful if you are unsure if you have enough power to hit it. Someone will usually come back with a report.

And finally when the repeater is quiet you can announce your call and say you are 'monitoring' which will tell others you are ready for a call. These last two suggestions work the other way too. If you hear these, go ahead and speak up.

Repeaters are just one of the very interesting and useful aspects of this hobby. You'd be surprised out how many new friends you will meet here.

**Jargon:**

“Repeater”: A station that retransmits the signals of other stations to give them greater range. These are typically installed at a good location, like a mountain top. Sometimes called the “machine.”

“Key up”: To cause a transmitter to start transmitting, either by pressing the Push To Talk switch, or in the case of a repeater, to send a signal on the repeater input frequency.

“Hit the repeater”: Sending enough of a signal on the repeater input frequency to cause the repeater to “repeat” your transmission on the output frequency.

“QSO”: Morse code short hand for “A Ham radio conversation.”

“Courtesy Tone” : A short beep or tone on the repeater, indicating that the transmitting station has finished transmitting, and the next station may begin transmitting.

“HT” : A **H**andheld **T**ransceiver.

“Net” : Short for Network, a formal system of operation in order to exchange or manage information flow on a Ham frequency.