

## Etiquette for the W5SI Repeaters

This information is meant to help you be a better "repeater citizen". A lot of the information here is common sense, a lot of it is common to almost every repeater. Most of what's written here is just what the title says: Repeater Etiquette, as opposed to "laws" or regulations.

### The 3 Most Important Tips

- Listen
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- All kidding aside, especially if you're relatively new to the hobby, or to our repeaters, you will learn an awful lot by just listening to the folks who've been around for a while.

### Signal Reports

- When you are looking for a signal report, the right way to do it is to say something like "KE5XYZ looking for a signal report", not "KE5XYZ listening". Saying "listening" or "monitoring" implies that you're listening to the repeater and would like to chat with someone. Often, there will be others "lurking" who might be willing to jump onto the radio to give out a signal report, but won't answer a general "listening" call because they might not want to get involved in an extended conversation.
- Unless you have actually made some changes to your station, you may find that folks will tire of responding to you if you ask for a report day after day (or more often).
- If you're responding to a signal report request, make sure you're giving accurate information. If you can't hear the repeater itself well, it will be difficult to report back accurate information to the other station. Remember that the information that's useful is how the other station sounds coming into the repeater, not how the repeater itself sounds. Since the repeater itself should be more or less constant to you, you're just helping the other station figure out how well they are making it to the repeater.

### Directions or Other Assistance

- Similar to looking for a signal report, if you need directions or some other assistance, be sure to ask for that. As mentioned above in the Signal Report section, just dropping your call might not get an answer, but asking specifically for help will usually will.

### Your Own Signal Quality Into The Repeater

- Sometimes, for any number of reasons, you might not have a good signal into the repeater. It might be a temporary condition (you're mobile and too far from the repeater; that 5 watt HT with a rubber ducky inside the car just isn't making it from 60 miles away) or it might be a longer term problem. In any case, if you realize that you don't have a good signal into the repeater, it's good amateur practice to stop transmitting until you're able to have a better signal.
- If you need assistance with your problems, a fellow member may be able to assist you, but you need to ask. The ability to read minds is not included with a ham license.

### "Dropping Your Call" (or how to let folks know you're out there)

- When you want to chat with anybody who might be around on the repeater, typically you'll do what folks call "dropping your call". That means that you'll key up the repeater

and just announce your callsign, sometimes followed by "monitoring" or "listening" or perhaps "mobile", if appropriate. If there's a conversation already in progress, wait for the courtesy tone after someone finishes their transmission, and just say your callsign. (No need to say "listening", since obviously folks know you're out there.)

- If the machine isn't active, and you've dropped your call but nobody has responded, wait a few minutes (3 or 5 minutes) and try again. If nobody comes back, it could just be that there's nobody around, or at least nobody around who is interested in having a casual conversation. You can keep trying every few minutes, but there are times when there just isn't anyone around who can chat.
- Please don't drop your call over and over and over if nobody answers, especially not without waiting a few minutes. As mentioned, there are sometimes folks out there, but they just aren't able to chat, and hearing someone "pleading" over and over gets tiresome.

#### Use of Jargon & Q-signals

- One very easy habit to fall into is the use of jargon. Instead of saying "I've arrived at my destination" you'll hear folks say things like "We're destined". (It seems to be a very common practice to use "we" when what you really mean is "I". This seems to be one of the hardest habits to break. Anyone out there with a sociology degree care to comment?) A good practice is to just say, in plain English, what you mean. If someone doesn't understand, they'll ask you.
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#### Use of phonetics

- Generally speaking, because most signals are relatively strong into (and hopefully, out of) the repeaters, you don't normally need to use phonetics when you are identifying (or calling another station). On FM repeaters, good operating practice is to simply identify using standard English, so that I'd simply say "KE5XYZ". If another station asks for clarification because they couldn't make out what you were saying, at that point, it's probably OK to use phonetics to help the other station understand your callsign.

#### Over/under ID'ing

- According to the FCC rules ([Part 97.119](#)), a station is required to identify "at the end of each communication, and at least every ten minutes during a communication". It's certainly important to make sure that you comply with this rule. The 10 minute part is pretty obvious, but the "end of each communication" rule can be something of a grey area, particularly if you're in a large roundtable conversation and one party leaves. Does that mean the communication is over?
- To make sure that you're in compliance with the rules, you should certainly ID at least every 10 minutes (many folks use the repeater ID as a cue to ID themselves).
- Just to be on the safe side, many of us also ID whenever someone leaves a rotation. (Maybe someday someone will figure out, definitively, if that's necessary, but it's better to be overly cautious.) Of course, before you leave the air, as part of your final transmission you must ID.
- It is not necessary to ID or "clear" if you've merely dropped your call and not spoken with any other stations. In other words, if I come on the air and say "KE5DDD, listening" and nobody answers my call, when I decide to stop listening (or turn off my radio, get out of the car, etc.), I do not have to "KE5DDD, clear" since I satisfied the part 97.119 requirements simply by putting out my call.
- On our repeaters, it is not necessary to use any callsign other than your own when identifying.

- It is almost never necessary to ID at the end of every single transmission. The primary exception to this is during a controlled net where you know you will be making a single transmission and might not have another chance to ID before the 10-minute rule would apply. The other exception to this rule is if you're in a fairly large rotation and there's a chance that you might have to leave the air before you have a chance to give a final ID.

#### Turning over to the next station

- One of the reasons why we have a courtesy beep that sounds after your unkey your radio is to let other stations know that you have finished your transmission.
- In a rotation, or even in just a conversation between two stations, it's not a bad idea to indicate which station should be the next to speak. For instance, just before unkeying, you might say "over to you Chuck" as a reminder to everyone in the group that it's his turn.
- If someone new has just joined the rotation, it's a good idea to let that person know who "gets it next".

#### How To Call Another Station

- If you wish to call another specific station (instead of just dropping your call), you should always give the callsign of the station that you are calling first, followed by your call. For example, if Pat (KE5XXX) wanted to call Bill (KE5YYY), the correct way to do that would be to say "KE5YYY, this is KE5XXX" not the other way around.
- If the repeater is active and you wish to call another station, wait for a break between stations, and say "Call Please", including your callsign if possible. The next station speaking should recognize you (they'll typically say something like "calling station go ahead"). At that point, you'd make your call (as above). If after one or two calls the other party isn't available, simply say "Nothing heard, thanks" and give your callsign. On the other hand, if your party is available, unless the folks who are already using the repeater are willing to turn if over to you, it's common courtesy to keep your conversation short and, if possible, move off to another frequency (or join in with the group).
- Remember that the repeater is a shared resource; if you do need to contact someone and the repeater is already in use, please be considerate and keep your conversation brief.

#### W5SI is an open, friendly repeater but.....

- If two or more folks are in the process of trying to get directions, or there is an emergency or a net in progress, dropping your call just to chat is not appropriate.
- If one station calls another specifically (when the machine is otherwise unoccupied), the two stations probably just want to talk to each other. If the two stations are discussing something specific, common courtesy is to just let them talk without jumping in, but of course, use common sense; if they seem like they're open to a general chat with others, of course it's OK to "c'mon in".
- Also, if one station calls another, and there is no answer, don't be insulted if the calling station doesn't respond if you "drop your call". They may have been looking for someone specific and really aren't interested in a general chat, or they may have moved to another frequency.
- On the flip side of the above: If you are using the repeater with just one other person, try to keep your conversation to a reasonable length. There may be others who are trying to avoid interrupting you, and if you talk for a long time, you're keeping them from using the repeater.

There are no private conversations on the repeater

- Remember that there is almost always someone listening to the repeater. Sometimes it's a fellow ham, sometimes it's a prospective ham listening to a scanner. If for any reason you feel that you have something to say to someone that you might not want someone to say to you over the air, don't say it on the radio. Instead, find a private communications channel (telephone, email, meeting in person) and work things out that way.

Incidental Music

- Don't forget that the FCC prohibits the transmission or retransmission of music (and almost anything else that is received over the airwaves; for specifics, see [FCC Part 97.113](#)). If you have a radio turned on (this is especially common for many mobile stations), make sure that it's turned down before you transmit.

"Mobile" vs. "Portable"

- Quick rule of thumb: If you're operating a radio from inside a vehicle (or perhaps while sitting on a bicycle), you are a mobile station, even if you're sitting still. If you're walking around carrying your radio, then the common usage of the term "portable" would apply.
- If you're operating a mobile radio from a fixed location (your home or office, for example), even if you're operating off battery power or another emergency source of power, you are still considered to be a fixed (or base) station.
- Stations are no longer required by FCC rules to indicate if they are operating mobile or portable. However, many stations will identify as mobile just so that others will know that they are out "on the road".

The 3-minute timeout

- Our repeaters normally have a 3 minute "timeout" setting. The 3 minute length is meant as a **maximum** length, not a suggested length.
- It's considered good etiquette to keep your transmission length shorter than this, especially if there are a lot of people in the conversation, or during busy times on the repeater.
- If you exceed the 3 minute limit, the repeater controller will cut off your transmission, and when you unkey, you'll hear a message from the controller letting you know that you have timed out the repeater.
- The controller timer resets at the end of the courtesy tone, so "jumping" the tone will mean that the length of your transmission is added on to the length of the previous transmission. In other words, if the person just previous to you speaks for 2 minutes and 45 seconds, at 16 seconds into your transmission you'll get cut off. This is to encourage users to leave a gap between transmissions.
- Note that when you drop your carrier and the machine transmits its identification string in Morse Code or voice, the courtesy tone does not transmit until after the ID, meaning that the timeout timer does not reset until that point. So, if you transmit "on top of" the ID, you may cause a timeout as described in the previous item.