

BUYING HAM GEAR, WHAT TO LOOK FOR— AN OVERVIEW

1. **GENERAL RULES FOR ALL PURCHASES:** (See also last page for Jerry's ideas)
 - 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 LOWER PRICE
 - F. AES AND HRO HAVE SOME USED GEAR, HAMFESTS, LOCAL CLUBS
SWAP NETS-- <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/TexasTradersNet/info>
 - 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—** CAN YOU CONNECT EXTERNAL ANTENNA?
 - D. SINGLE VERSUS DUAL BAND— DO YOU 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, STRONG BATTERY LATCHES?
 - I. **BATTERY SIZE—**GOOD CAPACITY—1100-1400 MAH OR MORE
 - 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. **SPLIT FREQUENCY OPERATION**—DX & 40 METER SSB
- H. **RECEIVER SPECS**— SELECTIVITY, SENSITIVITY, DISTORTION, **ADJACENT CHANNEL OVERLOAD REJECTION**, NOISE FLOOR
- I. TRANSMITTER SPECS—ADJUST AUDIO, **COMPRESSION**
- 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 INFO
- 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.