



HF Radios: Buy Smart, Stay On the Air

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Why This Matters

- HF radios are a major investment.
- The market is full of options: new, used, cheap, expensive.
- Some older used rigs can't be repaired.
- Making the right choice means more time on the air and less time frustrated.

What Do You Want to Do with HF?

Portable or emergency use

Ragchewing (casual conversations)

Contesting

DXing (long-distance contacts)

Digital modes (FT8, PSK31, etc.)

Portable Radios QRP

- Examples: Icom IC-705, Yaesu FT-818ND, Elecraft KX3, Xiegu G90
- Ultra-portable, lightweight, ideal for backpacking and field use
- Typically 5-10 watts output
- Very battery-friendly
- Trade-offs: Limited power, more menu-driven controls, basic filtering
- \$/\$\$: \$250 to \$1500

Portable Radios QRO

- Examples: Yaesu FT-891, Yaesu FT-857, Yaesu FT-710, Kenwood TS-480
- Compact radios with full 100W output
- Great for portable or mobile operations where more power is needed
- Requires larger battery packs or power supplies
- Trade-offs: Heavier power needs, more menu-based control, modest filtering
- \$\$: \$500 to \$1000

General Use / Ragchewing

- Examples: Icom IC-7300, Yaesu FTdx10, Yaesu 991A, Kenwood TS-590SG
- Balanced performance and ease of use
- Solid filtering, more front-panel controls
- \$\$: \$800 to 1500

Contesting / High-End Use

- Examples: Yaesu FTdx101MP, Elecraft K4S, Icom IC-7851, Icom IC-7760
- Exceptional filtering, rapid access to controls, built for performance
- \$\$\$: typically \$5000 and up

Digital Modes

- Look for built-in sound cards (e.g., IC-7300, FT-991A)
- No built-in? You can still operate digital modes with external interfaces
- Consider USB connectivity and software support

How to Evaluate Your Needs

- What is your planned use for the radio?
- Must-have features:
 - Internal antenna tuner?
 - Internal sound card?
 - Output power: QRP (5W), Standard (100W), or more?
- Check Sherwood Engineering receiver tests for insight into performance

New vs. Used

New Radios

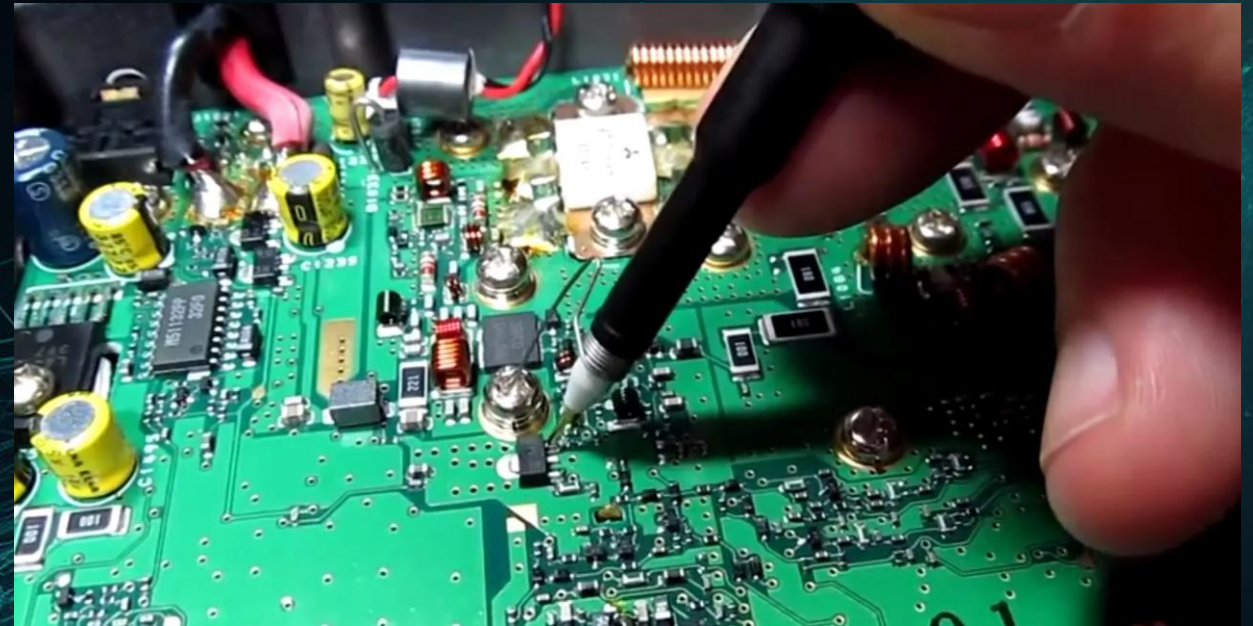
- Peace of mind: warranty, support
- No wear and tear, latest features

Used Radios

- Lower cost, especially for older models
- Risks:
 - Hidden defects
 - Discontinued parts
 - Homebrew mods

The Risk of Unrepairable Radios

- Some older radios use proprietary chips that are no longer made
- Factory support may no longer be available
- Repairs can be expensive or impossible
- Always check part availability and service documentation before buying



Tips for Buying Used

- Buy from trusted sources (clubs, QRZ, eBay)
- Test the radio if possible
- Ask about:
 - Service history
 - Known issues
 - Modifications
- Be cautious of deals that seem too good to be true

Budgeting Beyond the Radio

Power supply

Antenna and feedline

Tuner (if not internal)

Accessories for digital modes

K8ERS Recommended Buys

- General Use
 - Yaesu FT-DX10
- Portable QRP
 - Don't have one
- Portable
 - Yaesu FT 891
- Portable/General Use
 - Yaesu FT-710
- Yaesu FT-991
- High End
 - Yaesu FT-DX101
 - Icom 7760



Final Thoughts

- Match your rig to your operating goals
- New offers peace of mind, used can save money with more risk
- Not all used radios are serviceable
- When in doubt, ask

The background is a dark blue gradient with a complex network of thin, glowing teal lines and small, bright teal dots. These elements form a web-like structure that flows from the bottom left towards the right side of the frame, creating a sense of movement and connectivity. The overall aesthetic is high-tech and digital.

Q&A

Let's talk radios!



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