

Ham 11 – More First Radio
Dr. Marc & Rosemary © 220404

1. For dependable, emergency communications, you will need a VHF/UHF mobile-base transceiver with power supply and antenna, capable of operating Simplex. We usually end up with more than one radio for different purposes.
2. First the disclaimer. Baofeng radios by definition are cheap. They do not compare to the high-end units like Icom or Yaesu. We cannot compare the two in performance or price.
3. The cheap price has made the Baofeng by far the most popular hand-held HT ham radio for VHF/UHF use. The cheapy Baofeng UV-5R is \$28. It works ok as a carry. It is what I use as a ‘don’t care if it gets damaged’ unit when in the woods or other harsh environments.
4. If you want a little more power and a step up, Baofeng BF-F8HP has a theoretical 8-watts. Actual power measure is a little less. This model has interchangeable parts with the UV-5R. Cost is about \$70.
5. For more power they have UV-9R. But now you are approaching the price of lower end, higher quality Icom and Yaesu.
6. Like Tim Allen said, “mo’ power is better.”
7. One thing that is very helpful is a better, longer antenna. Replace the stubby rubber duck antenna with a longer, better radiator like Comet or Shengda. We have tested antennas and the highly touted Nagoya NA-771 just does not stand-up. Even better is a short coax to a mobile or base antenna.
8. You will need a programming cable if you fiddle much with configuring channels. Use only the FTDI chipset programming cable. Several Elmers have a cable, so purchase is not necessary now. They will likely help you get setup. We will have a separate memo on programming.
9. Only buy Baofeng from the BTech store on Amazon. They are the official US distributor who provides product support. Unfortunately, on Amazon, some of the other Baofeng sellers are knockoffs.
10. If your credit card has room, Icom and Yaesu make some tremendous units with super features. Although I have several other rigs, my personal all-around favorite is the *Icom 2730*, for effectiveness, ease of use, and mounting flexibility.
11. When you decide on which radio and receive it, we can get together to make it work for you.
12. Remember, ham radio is about people. Virtually everyone will be happy to be an Elmer to you. Before you invest big bucks, talk to two or three Elmers. We are an opinionated lot, and our set-in-ways may be different from your needs. Seldom do two of us agree on equipment or mode of communications, but we are still hams.
13. If you are looking to purchase a higher quality radio, I have had good results with these sellers: Main Trading Company in Paris, TX is a small personal store with lots of stuff. Ham Radio Outlet with numerous stores is the big league. Universal Radio is a little eclectic. GigaParts is a broader category amateur and computer group.
14. Where you buy becomes even more crucial for components. I seldom buy components from Amazon because of knock-offs. On things like coax and connectors, it is hard to tell if they are worthless. Besides these distribution companies, the following provide quality component support: DX Engineering, Palomar Engineers, and LDG.
15. The big gorilla in equipment is MFJ Enterprises. I would like to like them even better than I do. Although they ‘make’ one of about everything, and they are a U.S. company, often their performance is a small notch below the competition. But there is a large marketplace for their equipment and I still buy from them. Always the trade-off for higher performance is greater cost. Their advertised prices in magazines are seldom what vendors have in stock.
16. All the vendors noted have websites, with all transactions done on-line. Most of these I have talked to a real live person, who speaks English as a first language, when I had a question. At my hearing level, that is crucial.
17. I am a firm believer Amateur Radio needs lobbyists and an advocate in D.C. Although not perfect, the biggest, oldest, most influential ham group is ARRL. Join them. They have a number of different magazine choices, one just for new hams. There are other excellent groups, and I have former students who are editors, like CQ.
18. You do not need everything or the best today. As experimenters we are always looking for better.
19. Life is good. Enjoy.

