

Ham 106 – Baofeng Issues and Better Handi

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1. Baofeng: love them or hate them? The Baofeng VHF/UHF handi-talkies are by far the most common ham radio.
2. At a recent ham-fest one of the grizzled old codgers was wearing a t-shirt emblazoned with contempt. “No! I will not program your Baofeng.”
3. I have three, because they are cheap, they work in most situations, and if it is dropped or lost, it is no big event.
4. To better determine experience, we did a survey of users. These are summarized. Several show multiple experiences.
 - a. Changed antennas on both Baofengs and they work great. Replicated.
 - b. Drilled out the mic hole to improve the audio. Replicated.
 - c. Unlike most radios, the Baofeng has a COS signal making it usable with AllStar, a huge plus.
 - d. The UV5 works great for an AllStar node, but the UV82 does not work. Replicated.
 - e. Added a ‘tiger-tail’ to the antenna for better coverage. This makes the antenna a dipole. Replicated.
 - f. The power ratings are simply marketing fluff. Verified.
 - g. Measured power varied widely between different radios of the same model.
 - h. In side-by-side comparison a 4-Watt UV5 contacted the repeater and received better than an 8-Watt UV-82P.
 - i. IF circuitry causes interference to other nearby radios, keeping them from receiving. Replicated.
 - j. Adding a very good antenna, which increases signal substantially, overloads the receiver and it will shut off. Replicated.
5. Nevertheless, with prudent operation, the little radios are still good bang for the buck. We do program them.
6. Three options exist for considerably better analog handi-talkies with decent design, performance, and quality.
 - a. Icom, Yaesu, and Alinco are Japanese companies. However, only Icom still makes their radios in Japan.
 - b. Icom IC-T10 is a fine radio, but the cost is about \$200. Exceptional quality has a price.
7. Alinco DJ-VX50T is an excellent radio with a less than \$100 tag, when on sale.
 - a. The Alinco is traditional operation having a volume knob with on-off switch and a channel knob.
 - b. It also has conventional up/down arrows, making it very intuitive to operate.
 - c. It includes FM broadcast, NOAA weather, and aviation receive.
 - d. The selectable color display is good for helping to see in different light conditions.
 - e. Two-line display provides more info.
 - f. A negative is Scan uses all channels, not a small group.
 - g. Menu is easy to use. Menu requires [Function + 8 set menu + arrows + main dial + Function].
 - h. Rated IP67, it is dust and water proof, when the covers are over the holes.
8. Yaesu FT-65R is also a good radio with a similar price.
 - a. Yaesu operations are not nearly as intuitive. There are so many features, they are difficult to use.
 - b. Other sister models (FT-70) have no up/down arrows.
 - c. Keys have multiple purposes and the main dial channel knob is used for changes, including volume.
 - d. Yaesu uses channel groups and priority channels, which is handy. It also has NOAA weather.
 - e. The learning curve is steeper, making it more tedious to remember setting changes.
 - f. Its Chirp programming is finicky and incompatible with other radios.
9. One is excellent, one is decent. Both are 5W also with lower power settings.
 - a. Other cost competitive analog radios are primarily China knock-offs like Baofeng.
10. This is my current inventory of handi-talkies with analysis of each.
 - a. Baofeng UV-5R is excellent for AllStar radio.
 - b. Another Baofeng UV-5R is used for throw in bag. Price less than \$20. Who cares what happens?
 - c. Baofeng UV-82 for more power. Save your money. Not recommended. Not even good boat anchor.
 - d. Yaesu FT-70D is a good radio with quirks. The digital is not very useful for normal ops.
 - e. Yaesu FT-65 is also a good radio with quirks. Purchased for grandson. Would buy Alinco today.
 - f. *Alinco DJ-VX50T wins as the preferred choice, hands down.*
11. Remember, all handi-talkies are a serious compromise.
 - a. Handis have limited power, limited antenna, and limited grounding.
 - b. They work about as far as you can throw them.
 - c. Get a base/mobile and real antenna for serious, dependable communications.
 - d. See other articles for base/mobile set-up. The Icom 2730 is the best performance, ease of use, and cost trade-off.
12. Life is good. Enjoy!

