

Frequently Used Key Terms and Their Meanings

Are you sometimes confused with the terms you may read or hear regarding Ham Radio? Let us help you out a bit. Below is a brief listing of Key Terms you will encounter in everyday Ham activities and conversations. There is a detailed listing of Ham Radio Terms on QRZ.com. They also maintain a current database of Ham Call Signs, which you can search.

Below are some Key Terms you should become familiar with:

ARRL	American Radio Relay League
band	A range of frequencies allotted for a particular use
coax	A cable that consists of a center wire surrounded by insulation and a grounded shield
code	refers to Morse code
CW	Continuous Wave, an unmodulated RF wave used with Morse code
dipole	The basic $\frac{1}{2}$ wavelength antenna consisting of a length of wire, open and fed at the center
dummy load	Substitutes for an antenna during tests
DX	A distant station
DXCC	Award for contacting and confirming 100 or more different countries
elmer	A mentor; an experienced operator who tutors newer operators
FCC	Federal Communications Commission
feedline	Wire or cable connecting a radio to an antenna
field day	Amateur activity in June to practice emergency communications
frequency	The rate of oscillation measured in Hertz
GHz	Gigahertz billion (1,000,000,000) hertz
hamfest	Event at which hams meet to buy, sell, and swap equipment
Hertz	The standard unit used to measure frequency
HF	High Frequency 3 MHz to 30 MHz
homebrew	Term for home built radio equipment
keyer	Device for sending Morse Code semi-automatically
kilohertz	One thousand hertz (see "hertz")
LSB	Lower Side Band

megahertz	Million hertz (see Hertz)
mic (mike)	Microphone
microwave	The radio spectrum above 1 gigahertz (GHz)
Ohm	The fundamental unit of resistance
OM	Friendship term, friend, pal or buddy
paddle	Morse code key
PEP	Peak envelope power the average power of a signal at its largest amplitude peak
pileup	Multiple stations calling a DX or contest station
PSK31	A digital transmission mode Phase Shift keying
PTT	Push To Talk
RF	Radio Frequency, emissions in the radio portion of the electromagnetic spectrum
RFI	Radio Frequency Interference
rig	A radio (transmitter, receiver, or transceiver)
RST	"Readability, Signal, and Tone", a three digit report indicating how well an operator's emissions are being received
RTTY	Radio teletype A form of digital communications
shack	Ham station operating area
SK	Silent Key, an amateur term for indicating that a ham has passed away.
SSB	Single Side Band
straight key	A non-electronic Morse code key with one paddle
SWR	Standing Wave Ratio, a measure of how much radio energy sent into an antenna system is being reflected back to the transmitter
SWR meter	A device to determine the Standing Wave Ratio
telegraphy	The transmission of information in Morse code format
telephony	The transmission of information in voice format
transceiver	A radio that both transmits and receives
UHF	Ultra High Frequency 300 - 3000 MHz
UTC	Coordinated Universal Time
VOX	Voice Operated Transmit

WAC	Worked All Continents award, administered by ARRL
WAS	Worked All States award from ARRL
WAZ	Worked All Zones award from CQ magazine
WPM	Words per minute; as in Morse code or typing speed
WWV	National Bureau of Standards radio station (time signals)
WX	Weather
XYL	Ex, Young Lady, wife
Yagi	"beam" directional antenna array