# Best Ham Radios To Buy When Starting Out

I just finished watching this video that I saw on QRZ Now and it gives some very good advice for hams who are just starting out with the hobby. Unfortunately, the video is very slow... It's over an hour and a half long and the intro itself is 10 minutes long.




I watched it at double speed and here's a summary of the good bits with a Time stamp at the beginning of each section. Before we dive in, a warning:



This is not a complete list of what's out there. There are many other fine radios on the new and used market. Before making a decision on any radio, it's important to be as clear as possible about your interests and needs:

- What will the radio be used for?
- Do you need high end features or not?
- What can you afford to spend?

Also, used radios are like used cars. They can be great to buy (or not!) depending on condition and price. Seek the advice of experienced amateurs but remember that everyone will offer you their unique perspective. Ford, Chrystler, and Chevrolet are still in business, so are Yeasu, Icom, Kenwood, Flex, Alinco, and Elecraft.

## VHF/UHF Handy Talkies (HT)

**Editor's note**:

- HTs are fine if you happen to live near the local repeater you plan on using, but their range is

very limited and a lot of people end up disappointed with them.

- The best thing you can do to increase your range is to improve your antenna (quality and height). A $1000 radio with a bad antenna will be worse than a $50 radio with a very good antenna.
- That being said...

## Baofengs

13:42

- Baofeng radios are fine, but you get what you pay for. Think of them as disposable radios. They might work fine for years, or months.
- There's a lot of different models, but they're all pretty similar.
- DMR Baofeng radios are not great.
- Even as a scanner, Baofengs are really slow.

## Next Step Up

16:52

- Yaesu FT4x and derivatives
- Wouxun KG-UV8D, KG-UV9D (full duplex)

## Better Analog HTs

19:28

- Yaesu FT-60
- Alinco DJ-VX50T (IP67 rated)

Used:

- Yaesu VX-3
- Yaesu XV-8R
- Kenwood TH-F6

## Digital HTs

21:25

- DRM
    - Anytone 878
- Yaesu System Fusion/WIRES-X
    - FT-70

    - FT3DR
- D-STAR
    - ICOM ID-52 (coming out soon)

Used:

- ICOM ID-51

### Satellite

28:55

For satellite work you need a radio capable of talking on one band and listening on the other at the same time (full duplex).

- Kenwood D-72
- Wouxun KG-UV9D

## Mobile Radios

31:05

> **Editor's note**:
>
> - On the disposable side, I would personally recommend a QYT KT8900. Think of it as the mobile equivalent of a Baofeng radio. It'll perform better than a HT because of the external antenna and the higher power output, but it's still a cheap radio.
> - That being said, it's much better than a HT, and much better than no radio at all! I personally have three of these that I use as secondary radios (one in the shop, one in the car, and one in the work truck). My main radio is a good quality ICOM ID-5100.
> - As for antennas, these are very good VHF/UHF antennas: GP3, GP6, GP9

Good starter radios:

- ICOM IC-2730
- Kenwood TM-V71A
- TYT 9700 (Yaesu 8900 Clone)

Used:

- Yaesu FTM-100

# VHF/UHF Base Station

36:00

Most people use a mobile radio as a VHF/UHF base station, but if you want to be able to use SSB in addition to FM, then you are entering a more niche space and the options are limited (and more expensive):

- ICOM IC-9700 (VHF/UHF for between $2200 and $2500)
- ICOM IC-7100 (HF/VHF/UHF for between $1300 and $1500)
- Yaesu 991A (HF/VHF/UHF for between $1750 and $1900)

Used:

- ICOM IC-7000
- ICOM IC-746MKIIG

# HF

39:25

Things to consider when comparing radios:

- Power: Don't start with a QRP (low power) radio. Your first HF radio should be the standard 100 W.
- Internal tuner or not: for HF, you need some sort of antenna tuner. Most internal radio tuners are capable of tuning up to a 3:1 SWR mis-match, which is fine if you're using a well tuned antenna. And most external antenna tuners are capable of tuning up to a 10:1 SWR mis-match. Some radio include an internal tuner, others don't.

## The list

- ICOM IC-7300
    - Hands down the best bang for the buck.
    - Simple to use but also has some very complex settings for experienced users.
    - Very easy to hook up to a computer for digital work.
    - Internal tuner.
    - Very popular: which means you'll find a lot of people to help you with it and share tricks.

Alternatives:

- Yaesu FT-991A
    - Also does VHF/UHF
    - Internal tuner
    - Not as good as 7300 for HF
- Yaesu FT-891
    - Good for mobile/portable use

    - Complicated menu system
    - No internal tuner
- ICOM IC-7100
    - Also does VHF/UHF
    - No internal tuner
- ICOM IC-718
    - Cheapest HF radio
    - No internal tuner
- Alinco DX-SR8T
    - Bare bones
- Xiegu G90
    - Only 20 W
    - Cheap(er)
    - 10:1 tuner

## QRP (Low Power)

54:40

QRP is fun but not as a first radio. It's an added constraint for people who like to challenge themselves (like hike up a mountain, set up a portable radio, and see how far you can talk).

> **Editor's note**: The video goes into specific models which I didn't include here since they're not really for beginner hams. Check the video if you're interested.

## Used HF Radios

59:15

- ICOM IC-7200
- ICOM IC-7000
- ICOM IC-706MKIIG
- Yaesu FT-450
- Yaesu FT-897
- Yaesu FTDX-1200

## Radio Sites

1:07:30

- Universal Radio Discontinued VHF/UHF List

- Universal Radio Discontinued HF List
- Ham and Hi-Fi eBay store

**Editor's note**:

- I skipped a few links of US stores, but see this list for popular sites.
- Also, for reviews, google the model of the radio with the term: `eham.net`. For example: `IC 7200 eham.net` will lead you here.