

What kind of a ham are you?

Rag chewer – Usually can be found on the same HF frequency every day talking to the same group of friends, sometimes for hours; sometimes off-and-on all day and night! Polite enough to keep the long-winded conversations off of public repeaters.

Public service – Considers themselves a ham, but uses ham radio as a tactical communications tool while doing public service work such as ARES, RACES, CERT or the Red Cross. Carries a HT or go-kit to drills and incidents, and may use a HF rig at home to check in to emergency communications public service nets.

Club president – Civic minded ham, usually a well-rounded “jack-of-all-trades,” who is committed to promoting the ham radio club through meetings, programs, trainings, guest speakers, field day and through the club newsletter and web site. Not necessarily the actual president of the club, but maybe a past president or a person that would make a good club president. Usually these people are good hams, but spend more time on club activities than ham activities.

Collector – This person’s name and call sign are familiar because you have seen them on eBay and on QRZ and eHam classified. This person attends all the hamfests and comes back with a lot of treasures. More often than not, the collector has the skills to restore a swap meet find to working condition, but goes on to the next “find” before he has a chance to use any one rig for long.

Know-it-all – Always has an answer for anything ham radio related, even sometimes when there is no question! There are some of these know-it-alls out there who will give you the answer even if they do not know the answer, so take their advice cautiously. The true know-it-alls tend to be humble and even though they have good answers to your questions, you have to pry it out of them. The kind to be aware of are the ones that wait to pounce on unsuspecting hams who are willing to listen to all of the knowledge this person has to offer. Often, much of this knowledge is opinionated, however, to be fair, it can sometimes be helpful.

Cell phone user – This person uses a ham radio when they should be using a cell phone. You can usually identify this type of person because their conversation seems very personal, as if nobody else is listening.

Hermit – Never seen in public, but is a popular voice on the ham radio. Does not belong to any clubs or organizations, but might have in the past. Nobody would recognize this ham unless they know him from the days before he became a hermit. Probably has his radio on all day, and will answer when you call.

CB'er – Got their start on the 11 meter band, and decided it would be a “step up” to get a ham license. Once the ham license is issued, this person continues to operate on the ham bands just like they did on the CB channels – slang, lingo, ten-codes, rudeness,

vulgarity, immaturity and a lot of radio testing, often including whistling into the microphone or repeating the word “au-di-o” loudly and repeatedly.

Brass pounder – The this person, the only real ham radio is CW. This person works the world with dits and dashes, and is by all other respects, a good ham. Every once in a while you might even hear his voice on sideband!

Old timer – Talks a lot with his friends on both HF and repeaters, mainly about the way ham radio used to be in the good old days, or about ailments or medications. Many of these old timers have good knowledge of ham radio, but some of them look at you as if you are personally responsible for ruining the hobby. The old timers tend to stay to themselves, and if you try to break into their conversations, they may ignore you – not always, but often enough for me to notice this happening.

Test taker – Got their technician license and is studying for the general class license. Shows up every month to take the general exam, but never manages to pass. When questioned, will mutter something about the study material being hard.

The loner – Does everything a ham radio operator does, and does it correctly and with style, but just doesn't tell anyone about it! Friends, coworkers and neighbors don't know that this person is a ham, often uses a stealth antenna, and is even secretive with the other hams he talks to on the radio! Doesn't belong to a club or any of the public service organizations.

The big gun – This person has a cloud over their house on a clear day because of all the heat rising from their linear power amplifiers. Another indication are the towers that rival your local radio or television station, with many large antennas such as beams and quads.

The little pistol – There are two kinds of little pistols – the ones who are one by choice, and those who are one out of need. The little pistol “by choice” is more appropriately known as a “QRP operator.” They take pride in making a lot of DX contacts with only 5 or 10 watts. They would normally own a quality QRP transceiver and a very good antenna system, plus a knowledge of propagation and other skills that allow them to make these seemingly impossible contacts. The little pistol “by need” is a DXer who attempts to make a lot of DX contacts, but although he can hear them calling, they cannot hear him respond. In order to talk to everyone you can hear, you often need to add more power or improve your antenna system, or both. Until this can happen, the little pistol must be content with the contacts he is able to make and not feel bad about “the one that got away!”

Thanks for reading this work-in-progress. I hope to someday be able to whip this into an article that would make interesting reading in one of the ham radio magazines. You can help by sending your comments to aa6ts@arrl.net and let me know what you think about the article. If you disagree about any of this, that is OK, but please share what it is that you disagree with. If you see yourself mentioned here, please let me know. If you

would like to add some categories that I missed, I would welcome your contributions.
Thanks again for taking the time to read this.

[Tom, AA6TS, Dulzura, CA USA]