

My First Radio

Mark - AD6TG – January 2023

Perhaps You're interested in getting your Technician Class Amateur Radio license or maybe you have just completed a course and now have your license. The common question for new amateurs or those interested in the hobby is what radio should I buy? This document will focus on those radios that a new ham will most likely be interested in and some of the pros and cons.

Almost universally a new amateur's first radio will be what's called a handheld. These are portable, battery operated, and come from a variety of manufacturers They offer a variety of band or frequency support, features, and price points. The most common handheld will support both VHF and UHF bands and are called dual band. There are models out there that support only one band but for your first radio the dual band model makes the most sense.

**Baofeng --**

[https://www.baofengradio.com/?gclid=Cj0KCQiAlKmeBhCkARIsAHy7WVsMQFimqm6UJf2ykBoZxFp\\_R9OxJyLG-cKAddU-7LR\\_ADaXc7ITJlsaAmq2EALw\\_wcB](https://www.baofengradio.com/?gclid=Cj0KCQiAlKmeBhCkARIsAHy7WVsMQFimqm6UJf2ykBoZxFp_R9OxJyLG-cKAddU-7LR_ADaXc7ITJlsaAmq2EALw_wcB)

The most common and least expensive is the Baofeng UV5R. This radio is probably the best example of the flood of Chinese radios that have hit the amateur market in recent years. You can buy this radio on Amazon and amazingly it starts at about \$20. For your first radio or as backup radio these are hard to beat. Most of these radios come with everything you need including a drop in charger. Accessories include additional batteries, different antennas, and speaker / mic. You can program these radios from the radio or use PC software called Chirp to aid in programming them. Chirp is pretty easy to use and is shareware.

The display on these radios is a little on the small side and programming and operations can sometimes be less than intuitive. But in the end, the value is hard to beat. Other Chinese brands for handhelds include Anytone, Radioddity, and TYT. Keep in mind that Chinese radios often come with their own programming software that can be daunting to use. Do your research or be prepared for a learning curve.

[https://www.amazon.com/Baofeng-UV-5R-136-174-400-480Mhz-1800mAh/dp/B074XPB313/ref=sr\\_1\\_3?crid=7HUDE0GWDB3R&keywords=baofeng&qid=1674247486&sr=8-3&th=1](https://www.amazon.com/Baofeng-UV-5R-136-174-400-480Mhz-1800mAh/dp/B074XPB313/ref=sr_1_3?crid=7HUDE0GWDB3R&keywords=baofeng&qid=1674247486&sr=8-3&th=1)

**Anytone --** <https://www.anytone.net/>

Of the Chinese radios this is what I would consider if you have the budget. The Anytone D878 covers not only the usual VHF and UHF bands it supports both analog and DRM digital. Street price is about \$220 and widely available including on Amazon. This radio comes with its own programming software as well

as a beautiful color screen. Learning to use the programming software is a challenge but with a little focus and time the reward is a very nice radio. This radio will allow you to get started with our local repeaters but then you can investigate the DMR mode. I own one of these and they are really well built and have a large community of users.

[https://www.amazon.com/AnyTone-AT-D878UVII-Plus-Handheld-Radio/dp/B08ZYXHZWW/ref=sr\\_1\\_3?crd=340UFEAZ2S4PT&keywords=anytone+878&qid=1674251891&sprefix=anytone+878%2Caps%2C153&sr=8-3&ufe=app\\_do%3Aamzn1.fos.c3015c4a-46bb-44b9-81a4-dc28e6d374b3](https://www.amazon.com/AnyTone-AT-D878UVII-Plus-Handheld-Radio/dp/B08ZYXHZWW/ref=sr_1_3?crd=340UFEAZ2S4PT&keywords=anytone+878&qid=1674251891&sprefix=anytone+878%2Caps%2C153&sr=8-3&ufe=app_do%3Aamzn1.fos.c3015c4a-46bb-44b9-81a4-dc28e6d374b3)

For those of us who have been in the hobby for a while we are familiar with the Japanese brands for handhelds. These include Yaesu, Kenwood, and Icom.

**Yaesu** -- <https://www.yaesu.com/?cmd=DisplayProducts&DivisionID=65&ProdCatID=111>

Yaesu has the largest line of handhelds from any of the Japanese companies with currently six in their lineup. It's worth looking at their website so you can see the differences. I've owned Yaesu handhelds, and they are well built and reliable. Like all the Japanese brands, you will find that often, only the basics are included with the radio. For anything extra, you will have to purchase them separately. The least expensive is the FT-65R with a street price of about \$100. This radio does come with a drop in charger and suspiciously looks like a rebadged Chinese radio. But that is a guess on my part. The prices of Yaesu radios go up along with the features and on the more expensive models you will find they support both analog and digital modes.

**Kenwood** -- <https://www.kenwood.com/usa/com/amateur/>

Kenwood has a pretty small line of handheld radios currently. One of their flagship models went end of life due to supply chain issues. Or so I read. They do have a VHF only handheld, but the price difference does not warrant limiting yourself in this way. Perhaps in time they may get back into the Amateur handheld business but for now, not much there.

**Icom** -- <https://www.icomamerica.com/en/products/amateur/handheld/705/default.aspx>

Icom has only two dual band radios currently and the least expensive is the IC-T10 at \$239. The bigger brother is the ID-52 which is a staggering \$650. However, like my ID-51, it is one the easiest radios to run with menu system that makes total sense. At lease to me. Like all the Japanese brands that I've owned, they are well built and reliable.

## Reviews

Don't forget to check out specific radio reviews on QRZ.com or look for YouTube videos where you will often find a variety of reviews and help videos.

## Where to purchase

If you have just received your license, check out Gigaparts at the following link. They offer a limited time deal after you get your license to purchase a radio at a discount.

<https://www.gigaparts.com/qrzjumpstart>

### Amazon

For the Baofeng or Anytone radio it's hard to beat Amazon. I ordered one once and it arrived the next day.

[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

### Gigaparts

A relative newcomer to selling amateur radios they do have a store in Las Vegas. if you are ever there you can drop in and look at some radios in person.

[www.gigaparts.com](http://www.gigaparts.com)

### DX Engineering

A very impressive company that caters to the full breadth of amateur radio needs. I find their prices can sometimes be a little high, but they know their stuff and are reliable. They have a catalog so get on their mailing list.

<https://www.dxengineering.com/>

### Ham Radio Outlet

HRO as it's called use to have a store in Burbank but now the closest store is in Anaheim. It can be worth the trip as they usually have a variety of radios in stock and they can be very helpful. They have a catalog as well so it's useful to get on their mailing list.

<https://www.hamradio.com/>

### Main Trading Company

A smallish reseller in Texas. They don't carry all models but will often have the best price.

<https://www.mtcradio.com/>

## R&L Electronics

I've found that when others are out of stock these folks have it. Good prices too. I've ordered from them, and they were helpful and reliable.

[http://www.randl.com/shop/catalog/product\\_info.php?products\\_id=72862&gclid=Cj0KCQiAlKmeBhCkARIsAHy7WVtn0KGT1MBXIGKzPCLbtDrKwJ2wSwFeV-pa0N6DeiHfOFUei6QuYuUaAv4DEALw\\_wcB](http://www.randl.com/shop/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=72862&gclid=Cj0KCQiAlKmeBhCkARIsAHy7WVtn0KGT1MBXIGKzPCLbtDrKwJ2wSwFeV-pa0N6DeiHfOFUei6QuYuUaAv4DEALw_wcB)

## Radioddity

<https://www.radioddity.com/>

This company specializes in Chinese made radios and has quite a few to look at including Baofeng. I've purchased one radio from them and it was delivered without issue.