

PHONETIC ALPHABET

Sound these out slowly and clearly

- A Alpha
- B Bravo
- C Charlie
- D Delta
- E Echo
- F Foxtrot
- G Golf
- H Hotel
- I India
- J Juliet
- K Kilo
- L Lima
- M Mike
- N November
- O Oscar
- P Papa
- Q Quebec
- R Romeo
- S Sierra
- T Tango
- U Uniform
- V Victor
- W Whiskey
- X X-ray
- Y Yankee
- Z Zulu

NUMBERS

Pronounce numbers slowly and clearly.

- 0 Zero
- 1 One
- 2 Two
- 3 Tree
- 4 Fo-wer
- 5 Fife
- 6 Six
- 7 Seven
- 8 Eight
- 9 Niner

When transmitting numbers, say each digit separately, eg "one-six" instead of "sixteen." For a decimal point, as in a lat/long figure, say "decimal" not "point." "Four eight decimal three two north," etc.

USING THE JARGON

Over: means you have finished talking and expect a reply.

Out: means you have terminated your transmission and don't expect a reply. Do not say "Over and Out."

Roger: means "I understand."

Wilco: means "will comply." You don't need to say "Roger" as well.

Affirmative/Negative: you can use these instead of Yes and No.

Say Again: use this when you need a word or phrase repeated.

I Spell: use before spelling out a word phonetically.

Figures: use before saying numbers, e.g "figures one one zero."

WHAT'S MY RANGE?

Because a VHF signal travels in a straight line, antenna height is the determining factor in its range. Two sailboats, each with an antenna at its masthead, might be able to converse with each other at 20 to 25 miles apart before the earth's curvature blocks the signal.

Another factor in determining range is transmitter power. Whether handheld or fixed-mount, VHF's have two power settings—usually 1 watt and 5 watts for handhelds, and 1w/25w for fixed sets.

While a handheld at its 1w low power setting won't be heard much more than a mile or two away, selecting high power will get you a range of up to five miles. A fixed set with a masthead antenna will have a low-power range of up to 10 miles. Transmitting at the low power setting allows other boats to use the same channel.

VHF CHANNELS & THEIR USE

There are 88 channels, of which most are reserved for specific commercial and operations purposes.

Channel 16 is reserved for initial ship-to-ship or ship-to-coast contact, and for distress calling. All vessels are required to monitor it.

Channel 06 is reserved for safety messages and operations.

Channel 09 is a general calling channel. You can use this for radio checks.

Channel 13 is a ship-to-ship working and calling channel. It's also used to communicate with bridge and lock keepers. It's important to select low power when using this channel.

Channel 22A is reserved for Coast Guard communications. DO NOT call for radio checks on this channel.

Channel 70 is reserved for DSC safety calling.

Channels 68, 69, 71, 72 are for general communications between all types of vessel.

USING YOUR VHF RADIO

Select your calling channel—9 or 16. Wait 20 seconds to ensure it is not already in use. Key the microphone and, slowly and clearly, say the name of the boat you're calling three times, followed by your boat's name, also three times, followed by the channel you want to switch to: "*Peligroso, Peligroso, Peligroso, this is Liability, Liability, Liability, channel six-eight, over.*"

Release the mic and wait 20 or 30 seconds for *Peligroso* to acknowledge before repeating your transmission. If you don't get a reply after the third try, wait a few minutes before trying again. When *Peligroso* replies, switch to the working channel you've chosen.

Having established contact and switched channels, now you can shorten things up. "*Peligroso, this is Liability, over.*" Or even "*Peligroso, Liability, over.*"

Always say the other boat's name before your own. At the end of the conversation, simply say "*Liability out.*" Never over and out, or farewell, or see ya later.

EMERGENCY CALLS ON CHANNEL 16

MAYDAY Only use this when vessel and/or crew is in grave danger (collision, fire, flooding, severe grounding, injury to crew, etc.). "MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY. This is Boatname, Boatname, Boatname. My position is (lat/long from GPS)." Then explain nature of distress clearly and concisely, e.g. "We are sinking." If no acknowledgement, repeat at intervals.

PAN-PAN PAN stands for Possible Assistance Needed, pronounced "pahn-pahn." Use for an emergency that isn't life-threatening. "PAN-PAN, PAN-PAN, PAN-PAN. This is Boatname, Boatname, Boatname." Explain nature of emergency as in Mayday call, and why you may be in need of assistance.

SECURITE Pronounced "say-cure-it-ay," this means important safety or navigational information follows. "SECURITE, SECURITE, SECURITE; all stations, all stations." Then describe the nature of the information you want to convey: for example, to alert other traffic that you are becalmed and engineless in a shipping lane. Same procedure as for Mayday and PAN-PAN calls.

*Before sending a distress or emergency call, make sure you are transmitting on high power (25w).