

What is shortwave radio?

From a purely technical point of view, shortwave radio refers to those frequencies between 3 and 30 MHz. Their main characteristic is their ability to "propagate" for long distances, making possible such worldwide communications as international broadcasting and coordination of long-distance shipping.

From a social point of view, shortwave radio is a method of facilitating worldwide dissemination of information and opinion, and a way to find out what the rest of the world thinks is important. Many countries broadcast to the world in English, making it easy to find out what a given country's position is on those things it finds important. Shortwave radio can also provide a way to eavesdrop on the everyday workings of international politics and commerce.

Where can I find broadcasts by Radio Foobar?

The World Radio TV Handbook is the standard reference for this sort of information. The WRTH provides SWLs worldwide with virtually everything they need on frequencies, schedules and addresses. It comes out annually, right about the first of the year, with an optional update magazine throughout the year. It covers virtually every shortwave station in the world, and many of the medium wave (AM), FM, and television stations as well. The body of the book is a listing of stations by country, with a cross-reference in the back by frequency. It's available from any radio store dealing in shortwave.

World Radio TV Handbook
Billboard Publications
1515 Broadway
New York, NY 10036

The past five years have seen competition of a sort for the WRTH, in the form of Passport to World Band Radio. Passport's main section is a graph/table of what's on the air, by frequency. There are few addresses, but the beginning of the book is filled with articles of interest to the beginner. There is also a comprehensive review section of shortwave receivers currently available, one of the few places all this information can be found in one place. The book is more useful for identifying a station you've already tuned in than for searching out a particular transmission; the WRTH is useful at both, however, rendering the purchase of this book not essential. It can still be worthwhile, though, especially for beginners who won't be put off by the "gee whiz, look what we can listen to" tone of some of the articles. The book is unabashedly an advocate of making the hobby of "World Band Radio" accessible to people who wouldn't have participated before the advent of good, cheap portables.

Passport to World Band Radio
International Broadcast Services, Ltd.

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Box 300
Penn's Park, PA 18943

For utility band listeners, there are a couple of books that perform much the same function as the above two books, although due to the nature of point-to-point communication, not with the same sense of definitiveness.

Confidential Frequency List
Published by Gilfer Shortwave
(address elsewhere)

The Shortwave Directory
Published by Grove Enterprises
(address elsewhere)

Where can I find a list of broadcasts in the English language?

The World Radio TV Handbook used to carry this information each year, but this feature seems to have been discontinued with the 1990 edition. Nevertheless, there are still sources for this information.

-Monitoring Times magazine carries a listing every month, one of the best arguments I know of for subscribing (it's what keeps me on their rolls....)

-The North American Shortwave Association (NASWA) periodically publishes a complete listing in their bulletin, The Journal, sent to all members monthly; each month there are updates to the list. NASWA can be reached at:

NASWA
45 Wildflower Road
Levittown, PA 19057
Membership costs: \$23/yr; sample issue \$1

-Tom Sundstrom, sysop of the Pinelands BBS in New Jersey (609-859-1910 modem) offers a subscription service with constantly updated electronic versions of his listing (which are also the source for the NASWA listings). It comes in text form, or formatted for Tom's Shortwave Database program for MS-DOS computers.

-The best source for information of this type is the "SWL Program Guide." This gives not just the times and frequencies of most of the stations audible in North America, but the names of the programs and the days of the week they're on. It's sort of like TV Guide. You can also subscribe to quarterly updates published throughout the year. The mail order address is:

Shortwave Listeners Program Guide
P.O. Box 472

Annandale, VA 22003 USA

What kind of receiver should I get?

That depends largely on what kind of listening you expect to do. There are two or three basic kinds of radios. The first is the travel portable. These usually cost between \$70 and \$250. Their main characteristic is their extremely small size, making them most suitable for the person who spends a lot of time on airplanes. They do an adequate job of receiving the major broadcasters, such as the BBC, the Voice of America, Radio Nederland, etc. They are generally not capable of receiving hams, or utility transmissions, and they do not do a good job on weak stations. Many of them also lack frequency coverage beyond the major international broadcasting bands. As such, they cannot receive the out-of-band channels that often provide clearer reception (due to lessened interference) of such stations as the BBC, Kol Israel, and the Voice of Iran.

The second category overlaps with the first, and consists of slightly larger portables. Common among this category are radios like the Sangean ATS-803A, a fine starter radio with many capabilities for the inexpensive price of \$200. These radios often have digital readout, making it easier to know which frequency you are tuned to, and such features as dual conversion (which decreases the possibility of your radio receiving spurious signals from other frequencies), audio filters (which allow you to decrease interference from stations on adjacent frequencies) and beat frequency oscillators (which allow you to decode morse code and single sideband (SSB) transmissions on the ham and utility bands). The top range of this kind of radio includes technically sophisticated radios like the Sony ICF-2010 and Grundig Satellit 500, which contain innovative circuitry to lock on to a given signal and allow you to choose the portion of the signal you want to listen to, depending on which part gets the least interference. If you follow the newsgroup for any amount of time, you're bound to notice some discussion of the relative merit of these features versus their cost (about double that of the Sangean radio.) Many of these radios can be and have been used to receive distant and weak stations from a number of countries; they're also suitable for listening to programs from the major broadcasters.

The third category of receivers is the tabletop receiver. These receivers cost from \$600 upward, with a concentration of radios around \$1000. These radios naturally contain many more features than the portables, and are used by serious hobbyists who specialize in rare and weak stations. Current radios in this group include the ICOM R-71A, the Kenwood R-5000, and the Japan Radio Corporation NRD-525. These radios can be very complex to operate, and are generally not recommended for the beginner. Radios from the first two categories can give a beginner a very good idea of what's on the air and where their interests lie, at which point one of these radios may be an appropriate acquisition.

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There are many sources for detailed information on specific radios, most of it provided by two groups. Larry Magne, who publishes the Passport to World Band Radio, includes a review of virtually all shortwave radios currently available in that publication. For more extensive reviews of selected receivers, he offers detailed "white papers", which run between ten and twenty pages or so. Magne also contributes a monthly review column to Monitoring Times, and also appears on Radio Canada International's "SWL Digest" program monthly with equipment reviews.

The other main source for equipment reviews is a group centered around Radio Nederland and the WRTH in Holland. The WRTH, as mentioned above, has a review section covering mainly new receivers, but also contains a table with ratings of most currently available radios. Radio Nederland also offers a free booklet with receiver reviews.

There are also two books published by Gilfer Shortwave in New Jersey that cover the subject of receivers, called *Radio Receivers, Chance or Choice*, and *More Radio Receivers, Chance or Choice*.

Here are some addresses for sources for more information and receivers mentioned above:

RDI White Papers
same address as Passport to World Band Radio

Radio Nederland Receiver Guide
Engineering Department
PO Box 222
1200 JG Hilversum
The Netherlands

Radio Receivers, Chance or Choice
More Radio Receivers, Chance or Choice
Published by Gilfer Shortwave
(address in next section)

Where can I get a shortwave radio?

Many stereo stores and discount chains carry the Sony and Panasonic lines of receivers; the people there, however, generally don't know much about shortwave, and you're not likely to find many accessories there. Mail order stereo sources like J&R Music or 47th Street Photo in New York generally give the cheapest prices, but have the same problem. More knowledgeable, and falling roughly between the two in price, are the mail order houses that specialize in ham and/or shortwave radio. Many of them offer catalogs that

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contain useful tips for the beginner. Listing all of the houses is beyond the scope of this posting, but here are addresses for some of the better-known and respected businesses:

Electronic Equipment Bank
137 Church St. N.W.
Vienna, VA 22180
(800) 368 3270 (orders)
(703) 938-3350 (local and
technical information)
(703) 938-6911 (FAX)
Free catalog

Gilfer Shortwave
52 Park Ave
Park Ridge, NJ 07656
(800) GILFER-1 (445-3371) (orders)
(201) 391-7887 (New Jersey, business
and technical)
Free Catalog

Grove Enterprises
P.O. Box 98
Brasstown, NC 28902
(704) 837-9200
Free Catalog

Radio West
850 Anns Way Drive
Vista, CA 92083
(619) 726-3910
Price list: \$1

Universal Radio
1280 Aida Drive
Reynoldsburg, Ohio 43068
(800) 431-3939
(614) 866-4267
SWL Catalog: \$1.00

Could you explain the frequencies used? What's the 40 meter band? etc.

As you tune around, you'll notice certain kinds of signals tend to be concentrated together. Different services are allocated different frequency ranges. International broadcasters, for instance, are assigned to ten frequency bands up and down the dial. These are:

3900-4000 kHz (75 meter band)	13600-13800 kHz (22 meter band)
5950-6200 kHz (49 meter band)	15100-15600 kHz (19 meter band)
7100-7300 kHz (41 meter band)	17550-17900 kHz (16 meter band)
9500-9900 kHz (31 meter band)	21450-21850 kHz (13 meter band)
11650-12050 kHz (25 meter band)	25600-26100 kHz (11 meter band)

In general, lower frequencies (below 10000 kHz) are better received at night and for a few hours surrounding dawn and dusk, and higher frequencies (15000 kHz and up) are better received during the day. The frequencies in between are transitional, with reception being possible most times. In practice, these guidelines are not absolute, with reception on high frequencies being possible at night, and lower frequencies can provide decent medium-distance reception during the day.

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Hams (who have their own newsgroup, rec.ham-radio) and point-to-point, or utility communications, fill most of the rest of the frequencies. The Confidential Frequency List and The Shortwave Guide mentioned above can provide more information on what can be heard in these areas, as can utility loggings in magazines like Monitoring Times and Popular Communications, and in club bulletins.

Why can't I receive all of the broadcasts listed in Monitoring Times/WRTH/Passport/etc.?

This is a fact of life on shortwave. Because of propagation, antenna headings, the kind of radio you have, your local environment, etc., you're never going to be able to hear all the things you find in a list. The lists in Monitoring Times, etc., aren't lists of what's being heard in a general location. They're lists of everything that you could possibly hear, from a daily powerhouse like the BBC to a once or twice a year rarity like Bhutan. They're listed because you *might* hear them, depending on where you are and the given circumstances, not because they're necessarily being heard outside of their immediate target area.

If you want lists of what is actually being heard in something roughly analogous to "your area", the best source for these are the logging sections of the bulletins of the SWL/DX clubs. You might want to sample a few club bulletins to see if they'll help. The bulletins also offer articles from experts on many facets of the hobby.

What are some books or other resources that can help me get started?

There are a number of books dealing with the basics of the hobby. One of the best is **Shortwave Listening with the Experts**, edited by Gerry Dexter, with contributions from many of the most experienced people in the hobby. The book makes an excellent introduction to a wide variety of aspects of the hobby, from basics like how to set up your shack, to in-depth articles on DXing the Andes.

There will soon be another posting available listing many other worthwhile books for the hobbyist.

Where can I find further information?

There are a number of hobby publications available. Two glossy magazines which cover the hobby are Monitoring Times and Popular Communications. They both cover a number of aspects of the hobby, including international broadcasts, scanning, pirate radio, QSLing, and Utility broadcasting. Monitoring Times also contains listings of broadcasts and programs in English, which gives it a slight edge. PopComm, however, is the one you're more likely to find on your

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local newsstand.

Monitoring Times
published by Grove Enterprises (address elsewhere)

Popular Communications
76 North Broadway
Hicksville, NY 11801

There are many clubs catering to the hobbyist, many of which publish bulletins. The umbrella organization for many of these clubs in North America is ANARC, or the Association of North American Radio Clubs. ANARC's executive secretary, Robert Horvitz, is active on this newsgroup, and posts the ANARC Club Scan on a bimonthly basis. The Club Scan contains a complete listing of ANARC associated clubs and their interests, gives an idea of what they're up to currently, and lists where you can contact them, membership fees, how much a sample costs, etc. ANARC also hosts yearly conventions for hobbyists. The next one will be September 15-16, 1990 in Virginia Beach (for more details send a SASE to ANARCON-90, P.O. Box 9645, Norfolk, VA 23505-0645). You can also subscribe to the bimonthly ANARC Newsletter (\$8/year to US addresses, US\$8.50/year to Canada/Mexico, US\$13/year elsewhere). It's a forum for discussing issues of concern and interest to monitors of all parts of the spectrum.

ANARC Publications,
1218 Huntington Road,
San Marcos, CA 92069 USA.

ANARC has counterpart organizations in Europe and the south Pacific. The European organization is the European DX Council (EDXC). More information on their constituent clubs is available for 2 International Reply Coupons from P.O. Box 4, St. Ives, Huntingdon, PE17 4FE, England. In the south Pacific, the organization is the South Pacific Association of Radio Clubs, or SPARC. They offer information from P.O. Box 1313, Invercargill, New Zealand.

And, naturally, listening to the radio can provide you with excellent information on radio. There are a number of excellent "DX" programs on the air for the radio hobbyist. The WRTH contains a comprehensive list of such shows; Tom Sundstrom also has a list as part of his Shortwave Database subscription service, and Al Quaglieri of SPEEDX freely distributes a list of some of the better programs electronically. Different shows have different strengths. DX Party Line on Ecuador's HCJB is directed toward the beginner. Sweden Calling DXers on Radio Sweden is a compendium of news about shortwave and satellites, including frequency changes, station reactivations and deactivations, and such. Radio Nederland's Media Network is a slickly produced general-coverage program. Radio Canada International's SWL Digest is another strong entry along these lines.

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Work flows toward the competent until they are submerged.