

## Conversational D-Star

I like a good conversation. If talking with other hams and learning about new things is something that you enjoy too, then you'll like D-Star. It may just be the best of all the transmission "modes" at the art of conversation.

Consider, for a moment, what often happens when you decide to talk to somebody on the radio. Unless it's drive time or you have a scheduled QSO, it's sort of a random event. You fire up your VHF or UHF FM radio and call CQ on a local repeater. Maybe you get lucky and find somebody there. More often though, you just find dead air. So after a few minutes, you switch to another repeater ... just as the one other guy in town who also wanted to talk switches from that machine to some other for the same reason

Ah, but we have IRLP you say. So you punch up your favorite node and now you have dead air on repeaters in two cities.

O.K., let's go to plan C – crank up the HF gear. No doubt, you'll find somebody ... if you're on the right band at the right time. You might find somebody who wants to chat or you might find somebody who just wants to record another contact. And then the band conditions change.

Or you could use D-Star.

It starts out the same. You key up and call CQ or announce your call sign. Then you either get lucky and somebody responds or you hear silence. Plan B, is to connect to another repeater or reflector just like with FM and IRLP. The results are likely to be the same ... until you remember [www.dstarusers.org](http://www.dstarusers.org).

That's where you can see who's on what repeater or reflector. Then all you have to do is link the local repeater (or your DV-Dongle) to the remote repeater or reflector where you know there are other hams listening or already involved in a QSO.

It's so cool, it's almost magic. Even if you're the only ham in town who wants to talk now, if there's somebody else almost anywhere on the planet, you can find them!

If you enjoy talking to people in other places and hearing different perspectives on things, you can easily do that with D-Star. If, for example, you just want to talk to somebody in Alaska or Manhattan or London or Perth, you're more likely to be able to zero right in on another ham in one of those places and be able to contact him with D-Star than with any other mode.

With about 10,000 users world-wide, there are not as many D-Star hams as there are in some of the other niches of ham radio, but with the capability it provides, that's well above "critical mass". D-Star is here to stay.

Have a look at <http://www.dstarusers.org> and think about the possibilities. It's a tremendous tool. See what's out there.

It's true that there's only one manufacturer selling radios in the U.S. It's kind of expensive to get started, but it's a much lower investment than HF and you can do incredible things with D-Star.

If you have any questions about D-Star, post them on the ARC yahoo group or send them directly to me at [KE4FOV@Bruner.us](mailto:KE4FOV@Bruner.us).

In an upcoming column, I tell you more about D-Star specific groups and ways to get information and meet other D-Star hams.

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