



RADIO LINGO REFERENCE GUIDE:

10 Codes, the Phonetic Alphabet, and More



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Introduction

Two-way radio lingo has been around almost as long as radios themselves. From the beginning, users realized that spoken shortcuts, abbreviations and codes were the easiest ways to maximize the technology and work around its limitations.

While radio technology has improved significantly over time, the lingo persists today because of its convenience, contributions to safety and nod to radio history. For longtime radio users, lingo is second nature for communicating, but if you're new to the radio world, you may just be confused. Fortunately, we're here to help.

In this reference guide, you'll learn about:

- 10 Codes, also known as Ten Codes
- Phonetic Alphabet
- Radio Terms for Everyday Use

TOP 100 TEN CODES



Charles “Charlie” Hopper, then communications director for the Illinois State Police, is credited with inventing 10 codes.

Charles “Charlie” Hopper, then communications director for the Illinois State Police, is credited with inventing 10 codes in the 1930s in response to a radio phenomenon: There was a brief delay between the time an officer pressed the button to talk and when the transmission of their voice would begin, meaning operators would miss the beginning of messages.

Hopper added “10” before the codes to give radios time to catch up, ensuring that complete and abbreviated messages got across.

100 Ten Codes *standardized from the Association of Police Communications Officers (APCO):*

Code	Definition	Code	Definition	Code	Definition	Code	Definition
10-0	Use Caution	10-25	Report to _____	10-50	Traffic Accident	10-75	In contact with _____
10-1	Signal Weak	10-26	Detaining Suspect	10-51	Request Tow Truck	10-76	En route to _____
10-2	Signal Good	10-27	Driver's License Information	10-52	Request Ambulance	10-77	Estimated Time of Arrival
10-3	Stop Transmitting	10-28	Vehicle Registration Information	10-53	Roadway Blocked	10-78	Request Assistance
10-4	Message Received	10-29	Check Records For Want	10-54	Livestock on Roadway	10-79	Notify Coroner
10-5	Relay	10-30	Unauthorized Use Of Radio	10-55	Intoxicated Driver	10-80	Pursuit in Progress
10-6	Station is busy	10-31	Crime In Progress	10-56	Intoxicated Pedestrian	10-81	Breathalyzer Report
10-7	Out Of Service	10-32	Person With Gun	10-57	Hit and Run Accident	10-82	Reserved Lodgings
10-8	In Service	10-33	Emergency	10-58	Direct Traffic	10-83	School Crossing Assignment
10-9	Repeat	10-34	Riot	10-59	Escort	10-84	Estimated Time of Arrival
10-10	Fight In Progress	10-35	Major Crime Alert	10-60	Squad In Vicinity	10-85	Arrival Delayed
10-11	Animal Problem	10-36	Correct Time	10-61	Personnel In Vicinity	10-86	Operator On Duty
10-12	Stand By	10-37	Suspicious Vehicle	10-62	Reply To Message	10-87	Pick Up
10-13	Report Conditions	10-38	Stop Suspicious Vehicle	10-63	Prepare to Copy	10-88	Advise Telephone Number
10-14	Prowler Report	10-39	Respond With Siren and Flashers	10-64	Local Message	10-89	Bomb Threat
10-15	Civil Disturbance	10-40	Do not use Siren and Flashers	10-65	Net Message	10-90	Bank Alarm
10-16	Domestic Problem	10-41	Beginning Shift	10-66	Cancel Message	10-91	Pick Up Subject
10-17	Meet Complainant	10-42	End Shift	10-67	Clear For Net Message	10-92	Illegally Parked Vehicle
10-18	Urgent	10-43	Information	10-68	Dispatch Information	10-93	Blockage
10-19	Go To Station	10-44	Permission to Leave	10-69	Message Received	10-94	Drag Racing
10-20	Advise To Location	10-45	Dead Animal	10-70	Fire Alarm	10-95	Subject In Custody
10-21	Phone _____	10-46	Assist Motorist	10-71	Advise Nature Of Alarm	10-96	Detain Subject
10-22	Disregard	10-47	Emergency Road Repair	10-72	Report Progress of Alarm	10-97	Test Signal
10-23	Arrived At Scene	10-48	Traffic Control	10-73	Smoke Report	10-98	Prisoner Escape
10-24	Assignment Complete	10-49	Traffic Signal Out	10-74	Negative	10-99	Wanted Or Stolen

PHONETIC ALPHABET

The phonetic alphabet is one of the most universally recognized elements of two-way radio lingo, and if you've ever had to spell anything out over a radio – then spell it again to get it right because so many letters sound the same – you can understand why.

The 26 codes represent the letters of the English alphabet and offer much less ambiguity when spoken than the letters themselves.

Also known as the NATO phonetic alphabet, the codes are internationally recognized and used. They've been edited over time with input from non-English speakers, and some countries also have variations based on their linguistic needs.



THE FULL PHONETIC ALPHABET IS:

Alpha	November
Bravo	Oscar
Charlie	Papa
Delta	Quebec
Echo	Romeo
Foxtrot	Sierra
Golf	Tango
Hotel	Uniform
India	Victor
Juliet	Whiskey
Kilo	X-ray
Lima	Yankee
Mike	Zulu

RADIO TERMS FOR EVERYDAY USE

Radio terms, like 10 codes and the phonetic alphabet, represent lingo that was developed for speed and clarity. Even if you're a new radio user, many of the terms are likely familiar to you because of the prevalence in popular culture.

Some of the most common radio terms are:

“Mayday”: Derived from the French word *m'aidez*, which means, “come help me,” this first one is an internationally recognized distress signal that you ideally won't have to use every day – or ever.

“Roger That”: I understand you.

“Over”: I'm done speaking.

“Out”: I'm signing off.

“Over and Out”: I'm done speaking, and I'm signing off.

“Read/Copy”: Do you understand what I just said?

“Wilco”: “I will comply.”

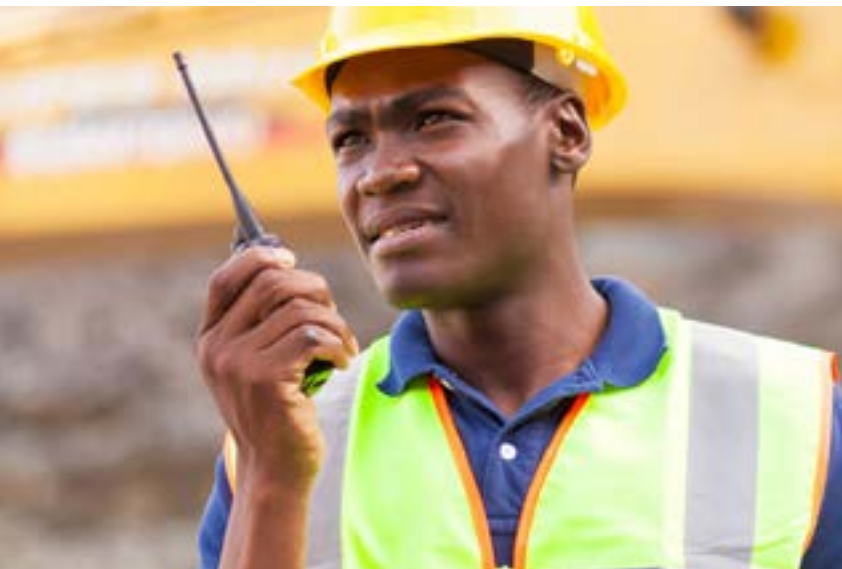


RADIO TERMS
were developed
for SPEED AND
CLARITY.

CONCLUSION

Once you understand two-way radio lingo's codes and abbreviations, you'll wonder how you ever did without them. Communications will be quicker and clearer as you learn to say more with less.

To ensure the rest of your radio communications are just as efficient, contact [Chicago Communications](#) for a custom solution to fit your needs.



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