

## Choosing a CB Radio

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The most important thing to understand when choosing a radio is that all CBs, regardless of their price, are limited to 4 watts of transmission power by the FCC. This means that a \$50 bare-bones CB radio and a \$200 chrome plated CB radio with every feature imaginable will have exactly the same transmission power. While a radio can be “peaked and tuned”, a process that increase a CB’s performance, all CB radios will have the same transmission power out of the box.

What primarily differentiates CB radios from each other is their features, not their output strength. CB radios come with a number of features, the most popular of which are outlined below:

**Squelch Control** - This control sets the break-point at which a CB radio outputs a signal. In effect, it keeps the operator from constantly having to listen to static and only activates the speaker when a transmission is received. This is a standard feature and is included with nearly every CB radio sold.

**RF Gain** - Allows the operator to filter the type of transmission a CB radio receives based on signal strength. It’s useful to block out faint transmissions to eliminate background noise when talking with someone with a strong signal. This feature can also be used to pull-in and better hear weak signals.

**PA Capability** - Allows use of the CB radio and microphone as a transmitter for a public address system. This requires a PA horn (usually not included) that can be mounted under the hood or on top of the vehicle.

**Automatic Noise Limited (ANL)** - Filters out static, engine noise and other interference from the reception signal to improve reception sound quality.

**Weather Capabilities** - CB radios with this feature have the ability to access local NOAA radio stations for real-time weather reports and updates.

**Instant Channel 9 & 19** - The ability to quickly jump to two of the most popular channels: Channel 9 (Emergency) and Channel 19 (Highway / Truckers).

**Nightwatch and/or Backlit Displays** - A number of higher priced models include a backlit radio display for convenient operation at night. This is an invaluable feature if a radio will be used extensively at night or in dark conditions.

When choosing a CB radio and its corresponding features, it's important to focus on how and where the CB will be used. Specific vehicle owners tend to want different features in a CB radio:

**Tractor Trailers & Large Trucks:** Professional drivers tend to want full-featured CB radios as they are a crucial communication tool on the road. As such, a good after-market radio "peak and tune" to boost performance is often important. The Cobra 29 LTD series is one of the most popular CB radios among professional drivers.

**Jeeps & 4x4s:** Off-road drivers usually have smaller vehicle cabs and tend to choose compact CB radios due to space constraints. The Uniden 510XL and Cobra 75 WX ST are both popular choice with off-road drivers due to their compact size.

**RVs:** RV owners traditionally have ample cab space that can accommodate large CB radios. Popular features with RV owners include weather channel capabilities as well as front-mounted speakers for convenient in-dash installation. The Cobra 18 WX ST II and Uniden Bearcat 538W are both popular with RV owners.

There are a wide range of features available for CB radios and only the individual can best determine which feature set best suits their needs.

As all radios are limited to 4 watts of output, the biggest factor determining radio performance is the antenna. A cheap CB radio and correctly installed quality CB antenna will perform infinitely better than an expensive radio and a poor antenna setup. Before selecting an antenna, we recommend reading our article titled *Choosing a CB Antenna* which can be found online at [www.RightChannelRadios.com](http://www.RightChannelRadios.com).

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