

# Umpiring Advice: Radios

## Radios

Website: [http://www.umpiretalk.com/umpire\\_radios.html](http://www.umpiretalk.com/umpire_radios.html)

Given the increasing prevalence of assistive technology throughout the sport, England Hockey umpiring associations are promoting the use of radios all the way from National League through to county level.

**UmpireTalk** sells high quality 2-way 'open mic' radios which can be purchased inclusive of charger units, protective cases (with a belt loop) and a boom microphone earpiece. To place an order, visit the above website.



## Charging

The battery life of UmpireTalk radios is relatively good, sufficient at least for two full length hockey matches when fully charged. You can use the associated cable to charge the radio by plugging the mini-USB end into the side of the unit and the other into either a USB port or standard plug; the green light on top will switch on when successfully connected. Be aware that the mini-USB end which plugs into the radio itself may not be a very 'snug' fit meaning the cable could fall out under its own weight and stop charging.

## Pairing

1. Turn both units on (red-light illuminates)
2. Hold them in relatively close proximity to each other
3. Press and hold the "Code" button on one unit until red light flashes rapidly
4. Release the "Code" button and then repeat steps 3 and 4 on the second unit
5. Once done, the red lights on both units should flash 3 additional times (more slowly however)
6. The radios should now be successfully paired

The radios will remain paired even when switched off which is useful if, for example, you need to conserve the battery life at half time or between games. To connect to a different radio, simply just repeat this process. If the above process does not work, you can try performing step 3 on both radios simultaneously.

## Communication

It is worth briefly discussing how you like to use the radios prior to the game with your colleague: some umpires may only want your input if requested; others may be happy for you to talk through all incidents you see for confirmation etc. Below are suggestions for what the radios should and should not be used for:

<b>DOs</b>	<b>DON'Ts</b>
✓ Give clear and concise responses (e.g. "blue foot, short corner")	✗ Be ambiguous or long-winded (e.g. "um, might be a foot there, maybe in the middle?")
✓ Be supportive, encourage, give praise	✗ Argue, discourage, undermine, sigh at decisions
✓ Still stop time / meet up to consult regarding big decisions or to diffuse a situation	✗ Forget to 'arena umpire', i.e. thumbs up, 2 mins left, communicate with players / coaches etc.
✓ Decide when to tighten up, when to issue cards and to which team / player	✗ Become dependent on your colleague
	✗ Go to the toilet without turning off the radio ...!

## Wearing

- **Attach the radio to your belt antenna down on your right hip**

This has a number of advantages: the audio jacks point upward from the radio so you have easy access in case there are any communication issues; the volume controls face forward so are easily accessible with your thumb; you no longer risk poking your side or bending the antenna if you lean.

- **Wrapping the cable once around your belt**

When tugged, this avoids the cable bending / straining and the audio jacks being pulled out of the radio.

- **Thread the cable underneath your shirt**

This looks more professional and prevents the cable potentially getting caught and pulled by either yourself or a nearby player.

- **Earpiece in your right ear**

This is suggested so that your left ear is free in case coaches or players on the bench want to call and draw your attention to an injury / incident on the field or keeper change etc.

- **Windsocks**

Placing a windsock on the end of a boom microphone can help reduce ambient interference of both crowd and wind noise so voice communication between the umpires is not impeded.

- **Securing your earpiece**

If you find your earpiece is liable to fall out whilst running, consider buying some easy-tear transpore surgical tape to secure it in place.



## FAQs

### Are there any alternative radio sets?

Website: <http://www.mci2.co.uk/index.html>

Yes, although these MCI<sup>2</sup> interphone units are not recommended – this is due to UmpireTalk being the radio of choice for almost all HUAs, notably including National and Regional league associations, meaning you are highly unlikely to officiate with an umpire who has any other type [thus requiring you have a complete set of any other style].



### Are there any alternative earpieces?

Website: <http://www.mci2.co.uk/spares>

Yes, particularly as many people find the standard earpiece / boom microphone that is supplied with UmpireTalk radios both cumbersome and uncomfortable. Although the radio units from the listed website are NOT recommended, the MCI<sup>2</sup> supplier does provide excellent quality acoustic air tube 'CIA-style' earpieces – note, do make sure you specify whether you are buying an earpiece to be compatible with an UmpireTalk radio as you will need the included audio jack adapter cable. Another alternative is a Jabra Wave earpiece although this may only be purchased second hand as manufacturing has been discontinued.



### Would a phone call work instead?

Absolutely – and a phone doesn't necessarily require a particular earpiece / microphone as any hands-free piece would work. It is obviously advised that the umpire who calls their colleague has a lot (or preferably unlimited) talking minutes and requires sufficient charge in both phones. You may also consider bringing a second set of earphones in case your colleague doesn't have one.

### I don't need a radio for this level?

Radios are useful additions at ANY level and will almost certainly improve the overall accuracy of both you and your colleague's decisions; players appreciate those umpires who use them more than those who don't. Often, and more commonly in lower level games, the engaged umpire may be unsighted (as play is typically scrappier / more clumped together) so being able to verbally communicate with your colleague without needing to look up and away from play is invaluable. If you don't have your own and are offered the opportunity to use a colleague's pair, it is highly recommended that you take advantage of it!

### What if my radio dies mid-game?

Since players will otherwise be under the impression you are still able to communicate, you should let them know that is no longer the case. But don't panic! Simply stop time briefly at the next break in play, take your ear-pieces out and announce to the players / coaches that your radio communication is not working.

### What audio jacks are compatible?

The UmpireTalk radios have three audio jack sockets:

1. Left 3.5 mm for microphone only
2. Right 3.5 mm for sound only
3. Middle 2.5 mm for both microphone and sound

If you are using an earpiece with twin audio jacks (i.e. one for microphone, one for sound, such as the default from UmpireTalk), you must ensure each jack is inserted into the correct socket which are demarcated by relevant symbols. The middle socket is a narrower diameter (2.5 mm) so if your earpiece has a single combined jack (i.e. for microphone AND sound), you may need an appropriate connecting adapter cable.



When turning on / off, if using the protective case it's advised that you remove the audio jack(s) from the device as pulling up the basal Velcro flap can bend and fatigue the wires (NB, the volume will also reset to minimum). UmpireTalk also recommends that you slide the on / off switch with the flat of your thumb instead of a fingernail.