

5 best marine vhf radios 2018 fixed and handheld

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Navigating the Best Budget VHF Radio for Boats

When it comes to selecting a VHF radio for your boat, consider the following options:

Budget-Friendly VHF Radios for Boats

- **Standard Horizon GX1300S:** Provides an affordable handheld option with essential features.
- **Icom IC-M24:** A waterproof and floating handheld VHF with long battery life.
- **Uniden UM380:** A compact and portable handheld VHF that's easy to use.

Fixed or Handheld VHF Radios

- **Fixed VHF Radios:** Permanently installed on the boat, providing a reliable and durable communication option.
- **Handheld VHF Radios:** Portable and convenient, allowing for communication anywhere on the vessel.

Choosing the Best Stationary VHF Radio

- **Standard Horizon GX6500S:** A feature-rich fixed VHF with DSC functionality, GPS, and NMEA 2000 connectivity.
- **Icom IC-M510:** A compact and waterproof fixed VHF with excellent audio clarity.

- **Uniden Atlantis GHS2000:** A high-power fixed VHF with an integrated GPS and AIS receiver.

Commonly Used Marine VHF Channels

- **Channel 16:** The international distress, safety, and calling channel.
- **Channel 9:** Used for boat-to-boat communications, often referred to as the "boater's channel."
- **Channel 70:** A dedicated channel for DSC (Digital Selective Calling).

VHF Frequencies Used by the US Navy

- **190-230.975 MHz:** Band of frequencies used by the US Navy for ship-to-ship and ship-to-shore communications.

Factors to Consider When Selecting a Marine VHF Radio

- **Waterproof Rating:** Ensure the radio can withstand harsh marine conditions.
- **Floatability:** Consider a radio that can float if dropped overboard.
- **Battery Life:** Look for a handheld VHF with long battery life for extended communication.
- **Output Power:** Higher output power will increase the range and reliability of the radio.
- **DSC Functionality:** Digital Selective Calling allows for automated distress and safety messages.

Range of Handheld VHF Radios

- **Line-of-Sight Range:** Typically 5-8 miles depending on the height of the antenna.
- **Over-the-Horizon Range:** Possible with a large external antenna, but subject to factors such as atmospheric conditions.

Disadvantages of VHF Radio

- **Limited Range:** VHF signals are line-of-sight, limiting their range.
- **Susceptible to Interference:** VHF signals can be affected by other electronic devices or weather conditions.

Military Use of VHF/UHF

- **VHF:** Used for short-range ship-to-ship and ship-to-shore communications.
- **UHF:** Used for longer-range communications, particularly in mountainous or urban areas.

Best VHF Frequency for Long Range

- **156.8 MHz:** The highest frequency in the marine VHF band, providing the best over-the-horizon range.

Uniden and Icom VHF Radios

- **Uniden VHF Radios:** Affordable and reliable options for basic marine communication needs.
- **Icom VHF Radios:** Known for their high quality and durability, offering advanced features such as DSC and GPS.

VHF Channel for Cruise Ships

- **Channel 8:** Designated for cruise ship operations and communication between cruise ships.

Channel to Avoid as a Working Channel

- **Channel 5:** Should be avoided for working conversations as it's reserved for vessel traffic services.

VHF Channel for Fishermen

- **Channel 16:** Used for marine emergencies and may also be used by fishermen for safety and communication.

Boat Size and VHF Radio Requirement

- **Boats over 65 feet:** Required to have a fixed VHF radio with DSC functionality.

Longest Range of VHF Radio

- **Over-the-Horizon Range:** Up to 100 miles with a large external antenna and favorable atmospheric conditions.

VHF Radio vs. Marine Radio

- **VHF Radio:** A type of marine radio operating in the Very High Frequency range.
- **Marine Radio:** A general term for all radios used for marine communication, including VHF, UHF, and satellite radios.

Best Frequency for VHF

- **156.525 MHz:** The international distress frequency, which should be monitored at all times when operating a VHF radio.

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