

## I want to learn to fly RC, what should I buy?

There are many transmitters (radios) and airplanes available today to choose from! From the basic simple stuff to advanced extraordinarily capable. There are even radios that will “talk” to you.

Often a person new to the hobby will ask, or later regret not asking, about what radio to purchase when beginning in the hobby. The Des Moines Modelaires has a training program available as well as instructors who would be willing to make a specific recommendation to a budding pilot

There are many very capable 72 MHz or “FM” radios available and still in use, these radios require the sole use of their specific channel. Current technology uses various protocols on the 2.4 GHz band where sole use of a channel is not required.

**Recommendation:** Don’t be sorry later. Go with a 2.4 GHz system as this is the latest technology. Stay away from purchasing a 72 MHz or “FM” radio.

Some low cost airplanes and helicopters are often sold with a simple 2.4 GHz radio that can be used with that specific aircraft only, and cannot be linked to other aircraft. These are really more “toy” than RC Hobby level radios, and are often a challenge to fly and impossible to repair. Even to “just try out flying”, these throw away transmitters are not a good choice and could cause you much frustration.

There is a long list of hobby grade radios used by experienced RC pilots. These include Flysky, Tactic, Spektrum, Futaba, Hitec, Graupner, JR, and others. **The radios in greatest use by Modelaire members are Spektrum and Futaba.** As a new pilot you can get the most help and training (with your radio as a “buddy box”) if you choose one of these two systems. Unless you have a specific reason to purchase a “Mode 1” radio you should purchase a “Mode 2” radio. A “Mode 2” radio is the most prevalent radio type in the United States.



One excellent low cost option is a simple radio without a computer system, such as a Spektrum DX5e. This is a full range 2.4 GHz transmitter that is often included with a RTF or “Ready to Fly” aircraft system. They are inexpensive but very capable. While they can be bound to more than one receiver, they cannot store settings for multiple aircraft. To fly multiple aircraft with this radio you need to manually adjust trims each time you change planes. It is easiest to use them as a dedicated radio for one aircraft and/or as a buddy box.

The next level of choice is a computerized radio, generally starting with six channels. Even with having a computer processor and memory storage, these 6 channel radios can be purchased for less than \$200. Often as pilots develop their skills, they usually want features found on these more advanced and radios.

The Spektrum DX6i or DX6 can store or “remember” setting and trims for multiple aircraft. Newer radios like the Spektrum DX6 can store settings for up to 250 aircraft systems and “talk” to you for

about \$200. As a beginner, a computerized 6 channel (minimum) radio from Spektrum or Futaba is an excellent choice. Futaba has two protocols, neither of which is compatible with the Spektrum protocol. You really can't go wrong with a Spectrum radio system!

One last consideration is the convenience and quality of BNF or "Bind N Fly" aircraft that work with Spektrum radios. These aircraft are sold with receivers which are easily bound (or linked) to a Spektrum transmitter. While many modelers still build aircraft or assemble aircraft, these foam aircraft from Parkzone, E-flite, Hobbyzone are a great way to get started in the hobby. They come just about ready to fly out of the box with minimal construction needed. However as a beginner, consult your instructor or talk with the folks at Hobby Heaven as many BNF aircraft are high performance and not suitable for a beginner. Many BNF aircraft are carried by Hobby Haven, or can be ordered by Hobby Haven or on-line.

**As a beginner just learning to fly, one of the best choices you could make would for an airplane and transmitter would be the E-flite Apprentice® S 15e BNF and Spektrum DX6 6-Channel DSMX® Transmitter. The DX5e is a lower cost non computer transmitter that would work as well.**

No doubt you will have many questions.....continue the discussion with your instructor or an experienced pilot.

**Submitted by Dave Beecher**