

The Inventory List



Inventory tag number 14:

This 1943 Vibroplex Lightning Bug, serial number 125445, is complete and operational.

It has had some parts replaced with original Vibroplex parts.

This bug would sell for around \$100 in 2017.

Catalog your radio gear to make it easier for your loved ones to pass it along once you've joined the ranks of Silent Keys.

Noel Beardsley, K8NB

At some point, each of us will become a Silent Key, and someone will have to deal with our collection of possessions, including our Amateur Radio equipment. Whoever has to sort through and dispose of our equipment may have very little knowledge of what the equipment is, and what it is worth. Personally, I would like to make things as easy for my family as possible after I pass away. I would also like to ensure they get fair value for all of my gear.

Put Together an Inventory

I suggest that you put together a complete inventory of your equipment, with the corresponding current market value for each piece. Though there are many cataloging systems to employ, I decided to use a single page for each item of equipment. I typed pages on my computer and then printed them out and put them in our file cabinet. A separate page for each piece makes it easy to update the inventory if gear is added or removed, and printed sheets allow for easy access. I would suggest also leaving a digital copy of all the inventory sheets on a USB drive. This will make the pictures available if needed for an online auction site or some other use.

A Picture is Worth 1,000 Words

I started with a picture of each piece of equipment. I try to include all the accessories that would go with the equipment in the same picture. For example, if you have an HF transceiver with a matching desk mic, get the mic in the picture. If needed, you can use more than one picture on a page.

These pictures do not have to have great artistic quality; you just want a clear picture that will allow your family to identify the equipment.

By the Numbers

My wife suggested that I also put a small sticker on each piece of equipment with a unique “tag number” on it. That same number should be included on the inventory page. Physically separate accessories that go with the main equipment should have the same number as the main piece of gear. For example, in the case of the HF transceiver with the matching desk mic, if the transceiver’s tag number in your inventory system is 7, then the mic’s tag number should be 7 as well.

Write a Description

The next step will be to write up a concise description of the equipment pictured. Include the manufacturer and model number, an approximate age, and a one-sentence description of what it does. Remember that whoever has to dispose of the contents of your shack may not be familiar with any of the equipment and might not be able to tell the difference between an HF transceiver, a 2-meter radio, or a general-coverage receiver.

Breaking down the description further, make sure to include an honest explanation of the condition, containing details of its functionality, improvements or repairs that have been made, and recurring issues. For example, I have a couple of older TEN-TEC transceivers that need the permeability tuned oscillator (PTO) disassembled, cleaned, and re-lubricated every few years. Notes on the last time this was done are included on its inventory page.

Honesty is the best policy here. The person selling off your gear likely will not know the condition, and you don’t want them to be liable if you don’t include necessary information. People will understand, particularly

with older equipment, that it may not be perfect.

List an Estimated Value

This can be the tough part. You’ll want to figure out what you think would be a reasonable price that someone would pay for each item. Be careful that emotion does not come into play here. For example, I have a Drake TR-4 that was the first new radio my father ever had. I also made my first contact on that radio. To me, that TR-4 is priceless. Once I am gone, it is worth maybe \$200 to someone else, including the power supply and speaker. On the other hand, if you paid a premium price for something and it is still worth it, list that value.

Designating a Recipient

If there are some things you want left to a specific recipient, include that as well, whether you want it to go to a friend or family member or be donated to a local club. In my case, I would like to have the TR-4 that was my father’s first radio offered to my sister, who is also a ham.

Trying to Account for Everything

This is not going to be a 1-day project. Take it one item at a time, and don’t take rarely used or mobile equipment for granted. Additionally, do not forget small items, like telegraph bugs, that may be quite valuable.

You will have to decide on where you draw the line, however. Certainly you won’t inventory every connector, resistor, or old SWR meter that you have. In my case, I set a value of about \$50 and left out everything below that value. I also let my wife know that if an item is not on an inventory sheet, it is of minimal value.

Update the File

When you acquire a new piece of equipment, don’t put off writing up an inventory page for it. You should also

Not Only for Ham Gear

There is no reason that this idea has to be limited to your ham gear. Many other hobbies, like model railroading for instance, include equipment or materials that may be difficult to value for the average person. Inventorying other specialized valuables in the manner described here could save your loved one a lot of work.

update the file every 6 months, in case you find something that you had forgotten to add, or you may have sold something and not remembered to take its sheet out of the file.

When your inventory is complete, take the time to go over it with your family. Show them what has been done and have them look it over. Confirm that everything on the sheets is clear to them, and make sure you show them where the file will be kept.

Conclusion

This is certainly not the only thing you should be doing to make things easier for your family in the event of your passing, but that is well beyond the scope of this article. This is just one thing that you can do to make things a bit easier, and hopefully allow your spouse to get a reasonable value out of your equipment.

Noel Beardsley, K8NB, was first licensed as WD8DON in 1976. Noel has spent the last 40 years in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan working in various communications roles. He is currently employed by a major telephone company. Noel enjoys restoring old radios as well as collecting keys and bugs. He can often be found on CW around the SKCC frequencies, mostly on 40 meters. Noel can be reached at k8nb@arrl.net.

For updates to this article, see the [QST Feedback page at www.arrl.org/feedback](http://www.arrl.org/feedback).





ARRL The National Association for
Amateur Radio®

Name:	Equipment Description Inventory Worksheet Number:	Date:
Call Sign:		Category:

Item Number	Mfr	Model Number	Description	Current Estimated Value	Original Purchase Price	Location

Detailed Item Description (including photo):

Liquidation Preference:

Signature:
Date: