

*How do I?*

*An occasional series*

*This week: Computers and Radio - sometimes it's all about the cable!*

Amateur Radio today sometimes feels as if it is all about the computer. In a world where computers and ham radios were not always designed to play well together, it can be very frustrating. Many ham radios were designed before the Universal Serial Bus (USB) became the standard for connecting peripherals. Historically, computers used serial ports and cables for communications (e.g. modems, mice) and parallel ports and cables for printers. The USB interface in some ways made life easy, but not all USB cables are made to the same standards.

A "cheap" USB cable may not be RF shielded and could introduce issues. RF Interference issues can be hard to diagnose but a few RF ferrites usually cures the problem. We have found the Tripp-Lite U023-003 USB A/B double shielded cable works well and comes with ferrites pre-installed.

Serial-to-USB adapters can be very finicky. The Tripp-Lite Keyspan USA-19HS works reliably connecting radios and computers for CAT control. The USB-to-Serial adapter sold by RT Systems - Model RTS-03 - is manufacturer-recommended for connecting their older cables to a modern PC for radio programming.

I once tried a cheap, no-name adapter I had on hand and it simply would not play well. The genuine RT Systems adapter works well. But oddly enough, I have had times when for connecting CAT cables, the Tripp-Lite works and the RTS adapter seems finicky. Very odd, and I cannot explain that, as I suspect they are very similar.

*Throughout these articles, we may feature a particular radio or product. This does not imply endorsement or recommendation, but sometimes it is most helpful to demonstrate a particular item instead of referring to a generic radio.*



Picture 1 Tripp Lite  
USB to Serial Adapter  
and USB A to USB B cable



Picture 2 RT Systems  
Model RTS-03  
USB to Serial Adapter

See elsewhere in this ***How Do I...*** series at <https://www.radioclub-carc.com/resources/> for articles on **digital modes, computer assisted transceiver (CAT) control, and sound cards.**

Catch 'ya on the air!