

Where 'Roger That' Really Comes From

You've probably been saying it your whole life without knowing its origins.

BY THE EDITORS OF POPULAR MECHANICS UPDATED: JAN 20, 2021 5:11 PM EST



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The term "Roger that" is a widespread term for confirmation, either between truckers on their CB radios, kids playing back and forth with walkie-talkies, or even face to face. But it's easy to adopt the phrase and understand what it means without ever really knowing where it came from. So here's a (very) brief history for your edification.

→ You love military history. So do we. Let's nerd out over it together.

"Roger" comes from the phonetic alphabet used by military and aviation personnel during WWII, when the use of two-way radios became a main form of communication and operators need crystal clear ways to spell things out with no room for misinterpretation. You may be familiar with the current NATO version of the phonetic alphabet (Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, etc.), where the the word for "R" is Romeo, but before that standard was adopted in 1957, the words were a bit different, and the word for "R" was "Roger."

During WWII, the phonetic alphabet was: Able, Baker, Charlie, Dog, Easy, Fox, George, How, Item, Jig, King, Love, Mike, Nan, Oboe, Peter, Queen, Roger, Sugar, Tare, Uncle, Victor, William, X-ray, Yoke, Zebra.

But the use of "Roger" as a confirmation has roots that go back even further, according to a blog post by Jakub Marian. In the Morse code days, when sending long messages could be arduous, a useful shorthand was to respond with single, meaningful letters.



The Best Radios for Emergencies

TOP PICK

**EDITORS'
CHOICE**



RegeMoudal Emergency Radio

[CHECK PRICE](#)

A battery-powered radio is great to have on hand in the event of a power outage or other emergency, but an even better option is an emergency weather radio. This one uses a solar panel, hand crank, USB cable, and AA batteries to keep its battery charged, along with a bright LED

flashlight that can also be used as an SOS beacon. It features a 2000mAh power bank, providing up to 12 hours of light or 4-6 hours of radio time. It can also power up a small tablet or phone.

BUDGET BUY



Son Sony Portable AM/FM Radio

[CHECK PRICE](#)

Sony's ICFP26 portable AM/FM radio may not changed much over the years, but it's as solid a choice as ever if all you're looking for something is small, dependable and affordable. The classic design is pared down to just the essentials, with the only extras being a headphone jack and a carrying strap.

TWO-WAY RADIO



Motorola Talkabout Radio

[CHECK PRICE](#)

A basic two-way radio is another type of radio worth considering whether you regularly spend time outside the reach of other means of communication or not. Something like Motorola's Talkabout MR350 will let you communicate at distances up to 35 miles and also double as an emergency weather radio, with the ability to pick up NOAA weather channels and receive emergency alerts. Designed for the outdoors, they're also rugged enough to be tossed around a fair bit, and pack a built-in flashlight so you aren't left in the dark.

BEST CHARGING OPTIONS



RunningSnail Emergency Radio

CHECK PRICE

When the power runs out, you need to make sure your devices are able to maintain a charge, which is why we love this RunningSail radio. It can be charged (and charge your phone!) with a USB cable, by solar charging, or by the hand crank. With all of these options, you know you'll always be powered up.

BEST RECEPTION

**AMAZON'S
CHOICE**



Kaito 5-way Emergency Radio

A radio is great, but good reception is key. This Kaito emergency radio has a telescopic antenna that extends up to 14.5" for high sensitivity reception. Built-in speakers deliver loud and crisp sound, so you're never having to guess what's being said.

Responding to a message with the letter "R," for example, simply let the sender know their message had been received. When two-way radio came along, the shorthand continued, but with the word "Roger" instead of "R" itself.

Do you ever use the phrase "Roger that"?

Roger ... uh, yes.

No, I'm not that cool.

Even though Roger has since been replaced with Romeo (and was "Robert" before it was ever Roger), the widespread use of the two-ray radio during the WWII wildly popularized the saying we still use so casually today. Roger that?

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