

Getting Started Guide

Your UV-5R Handheld Radio — setup, features, and programming with CHIRP

Welcome! This guide walks you through everything you need to get your new UV-5R radios talking to each other, understand what each feature actually does, and — if you want to go further — program custom channels using free CHIRP software. No radio experience needed.

What's In Your Box

Each set of 4 includes:

- 4 × UV-5R dual-band (VHF/UHF) handheld radios
- 4 × Antennas
- 4 × Rechargeable battery packs
- 4 × Belt clips
- 4 × Earpiece / mic sets
- 4 × Wrist lanyards
- 2 × USB Type-C charging cables

Heads up: the included USB-C cables are for charging only. Programming your radio with a computer (see the CHIRP section later in this guide) requires a separate USB programming cable, which is not included in this set. More on that below.

Meet Your Radio

Before you turn it on, here's what each control does:

- Antenna (top) — screws on; never transmit without it attached, as this can damage the radio.
- PTT (Push-To-Talk) button — the large side button. Hold it down to transmit, release to listen.
- Volume knob / power switch — the top-left dial. Turning it clockwise from off turns the radio on and raises volume.
- Channel selector — the top-right dial, used in Memory mode to step through saved channels.
- A/B button — switches which display (top or bottom frequency) is active.
- MENU / EXIT buttons — navigate the radio's settings menus.
- Keypad — enter frequencies directly, or access shortcut functions (each key has a small secondary label).
- Orange side button (below PTT) — usually programmed as a flashlight or monitor/squelch-off button by default.

Basic Operation

Turning it on and setting volume

Turn the volume knob clockwise until you hear a click and the screen lights up. Continue turning to raise the volume. You'll hear a soft hiss (background static) — that's normal and means the radio is receiving.

Talking to another radio

All 4 radios in your set are already set to matching frequencies, so they can talk to each other right out of the box:

1. Make sure both radios are powered on and set to the same channel/frequency.
2. Press and hold the PTT button on the side.
3. Wait half a second, then speak normally into the front of the radio.
4. Release the PTT button to listen for a reply.

Tip: Always pause briefly after pressing PTT before you start talking — the first fraction of a second can get cut off otherwise.

Switching channels

If you're in Memory (channel) mode, use the channel selector dial on top to step through saved channels. Press the A/B button to switch between the upper and lower frequency display if you want to monitor two channels at once (Dual Watch).

Features Explained (In Plain Language)

128 Memory Channels

Think of these as speed-dial slots. Instead of typing in a frequency every time, you can save up to 128 combinations of frequency + settings and just dial through them with the channel knob.

VOX (Voice-Operated Transmit)

Normally you must hold the PTT button to talk. VOX lets the radio detect your voice and start transmitting automatically — handy when your hands are full or you're wearing gloves. You can turn this on/off and adjust its sensitivity in the menu.

CTCSS / DCS (Sub-Tones)

Many other radios might be using the same frequency as you in a crowded area. CTCSS and DCS are quiet tones sent along with your voice that let your group's radios ignore everyone else's chatter on that frequency, and only unmute for each other. It doesn't encrypt or secure your conversation — anyone can still hear you with the right equipment — it just filters out noise from strangers on the same channel.

Dual Watch

Lets the radio monitor two channels at once, so you don't have to choose between, say, a family channel and a channel your group uses for emergencies.

Key Lock

Locks the keypad so buttons can't be bumped accidentally in a pocket or bag. Usually toggled by holding the # key for a couple seconds.

Alarm Function

Triggers a loud siren tone from the radio, useful as an attention-getter in an emergency.

Battery Saver

Automatically reduces power draw during idle periods to extend battery life between charges.

Programming Your Radio with CHIRP

Your UV-5R comes pre-set with default channels so your group can talk right away. But if you want custom channels — local repeaters, specific frequencies for hunting or job sites, or renaming channels so they're easier to recognize — you'll want to use CHIRP, free software made specifically for programming radios like this one.

What you'll need

- A Windows, Mac, or Linux computer
- CHIRP software (free download — see below)
- A USB programming cable compatible with the Baofeng UV-5R

Important: this programming cable is different from the USB-C charging cables included in your set. The UV-5R uses a separate port for data programming. A compatible USB programming cable is inexpensive and widely available from electronics retailers — just search "Baofeng UV-5R programming cable." If you plan to program your radios, budget for this separately.

Step 1 — Download and install CHIRP

Search “CHIRP software download” and install the latest daily build from the official CHIRP project site. It's free and open-source, maintained by the amateur radio community.

Step 2 — Install the cable driver (Windows only)

Most UV-5R programming cables use a chipset that needs a driver (commonly Prolific or CH340/CH341). If your computer doesn't recognize the cable when plugged in, search the chipset name plus “driver download” to find and install it. Mac and most modern Linux systems typically handle this automatically.

Step 3 — Connect your radio

5. Turn the radio off.
6. Plug the programming cable into the radio's side port and into your computer's USB port.
7. Turn the radio back on.

Step 4 — Read your radio's current settings

8. Open CHIRP.
9. Go to Radio → Download From Radio.
10. Select the correct USB port from the dropdown, and choose “Baofeng UV-5R” (or the closest matching model) from the list.
11. Click OK — CHIRP will read your radio's current channel memory into a table you can edit.

Step 5 — Edit your channels

You'll see a spreadsheet-style table. For each row, you can set:

- Frequency (the channel's transmit/receive frequency)
- Name (a short label shown on the radio's screen, like “CREW1” or “HOME”)
- Tone (CTCSS/DCS sub-tone, if your group wants to filter out other chatter)
- Duplex/Offset (only needed if you're programming a repeater channel)

Step 6 — Upload back to the radio

12. Once your channel list looks right, go to Radio → Upload To Radio.
13. Confirm the port and model again, and click OK.
14. Wait for the upload to finish — don't disconnect the cable or turn off the radio during this step.

Repeat steps 3–6 for each radio in your set, using the same channel list, so all 4 radios stay in sync.

A Quick Note on Frequencies & Licensing

The UV-5R can transmit across a wide range of frequencies, but not all of them are legal to transmit on without the right license, depending on your country and which service (like FRS, GMRS, or Amateur/Ham radio) a given frequency belongs to. Before programming custom frequencies beyond the defaults, it's worth taking a few minutes to look up which bands require a license where you live, so you stay on the right side of local regulations.

Quick Troubleshooting

- No sound / can't hear anything: Check volume knob isn't turned all the way down, and confirm both radios are on the same channel.
- Other radio can't hear you: Make sure you're pausing briefly after pressing PTT before speaking, and that you're holding PTT the whole time you talk.
- Radio won't turn on: Confirm the battery pack is seated and charged — charge fully via the included USB-C cable before first use.
- Computer doesn't detect the radio in CHIRP: Confirm you're using a data-capable programming cable (not just a charging cable) and that any needed driver is installed.

Questions or Issues?

We back every set with free shipping and 30-day returns. If anything isn't working as expected, or you just want a hand getting your radios set up, reach out through foxtrotradio.com and we'll help you sort it out.

foxtrotradio.com