GET GOING GUIDE

HFConverse **Packet**

Robust Packet and 300 Bd packet on HF, keyboard to keyboard

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Packet is a connected mode, like PACTOR: you make a link to one station and every line arrives error-free. Unlike PACTOR there's no changeover, so both of you can type at any time, and each line goes as soon as you press Enter. On HF the mode to use is **Robust Packet** (RPR); classic **300 Bd** packet is there too on the PTC-IIusb / IIIusb.

> **Golden rule:** if anything seems stuck, press the red **Stop** button. It breaks the link at once, whatever HFC thinks is going on.

Before you start

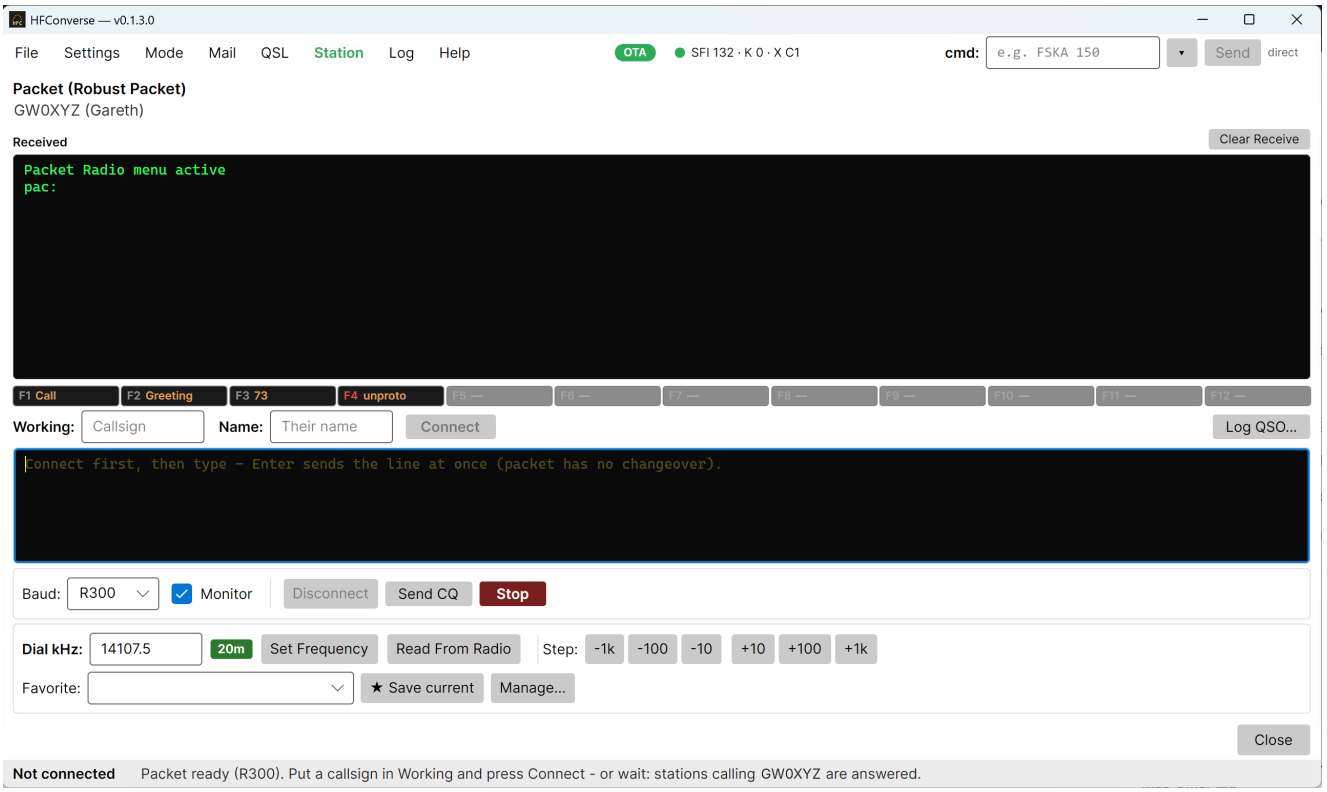
Get these right once and every mode just works.

1. **Your callsign is set.** Settings ▸ Station. Without it, Send CQ stays greyed out.
2. **HFC is connected to the modem.** The Terminal shows the modem's `cmd:` prompt. The Mode menu only works while you're connected.
3. **Radio control works, if you have it.** Type a frequency and press **Set Frequency**: the radio should move. No CAT? Set the frequency on the radio by hand.
4. **The radio is in USB or USB-Data** (DIGU), with the audio level that already works for your modem.
5. **Open the screen from the Mode menu: Mode ▸ Packet**, with no PACTOR or AMTOR link up.

For Packet also check:

- **Your modem does packet.** The PTC-IIusb and PTC-IIIusb (Robust Packet needs firmware 3.6 or later on the PTC-IIusb), the P4 Dragon (DR-7400 / DR-7800, with its Packet and RPR firmware) and the DR-9400. On other modems **Mode ▸ Packet** is greyed out.
- **A radio set up for PACTOR is set up for Robust Packet.** HFC uses the radio mode chosen for PACTOR, and the transmit level is the PSK output level (300 Bd uses the FSK level). On a P4 Dragon, Robust Packet has a level of its own; HFC sets it to your PSK output level when the Packet screen opens.

The screen



From top to bottom:

Part	What it is
Received	The other station's text, and other stations' traffic when **Monitor** is on (shown dimmer).
Working line	Their callsign (**Working**), **Name**, **Connect** and **Log QSO…**.
Compose	Where you type. **Enter** sends the line at once; **Shift+Enter** starts a new line without sending.
Packet row	**My call**, **Baud**, **Monitor**, **Disconnect**, **Send CQ** and the red **Stop**.
Radio box	The **dial** frequency, **Set Frequency**, **Read From Radio**, the **Step** buttons and Packet's own **Favorites**.
Status bar	*Packet ready*, *Connecting to …*, *Connected to …*.

Setting up

1. Open **Mode ▸ Packet**. HFC puts the modem into its Packet menu and sets your callsign, the Baud and Monitor. The status bar says **Packet ready**: from now on, stations that call you are answered.
2. **Baud: R300** to start with. **R600** is faster on a good path; inside a link both adapt between 200 and 600 bit/s by themselves. **300** is classic 300 Bd packet - PTC-IIusb / IIIusb only; the Dragons don't have it. Both stations must use the same, and it can't be changed during a link.
3. Set the frequency. The screen shows the **dial** frequency, as Robust Packet frequency lists give it; the signal sits 1.5 kHz above it. Check a current Robust Packet frequency list for your band.

4. Tick **Monitor** to see what's going on before you call.
5. **My call** is the callsign packet uses - your callsign to start with. To add an SSID (G4QRS-10), type it and press **Enter**; it's kept in the list for next time, and the × beside one removes it. Your PACTOR callsign doesn't change.

While the Packet screen is open, the command box at the top right reads **pac:**: what you type there goes to the modem's Packet menu.

★ **Save current** keeps the frequency in Packet's own Favorites list.

Calling a station

1. Put their callsign in **Working**. A portable callsign is connected as its base callsign (packet callsigns can't hold a `/`); an SSID such as `-3` is fine.
2. Press **Connect**. The status bar shows *Connecting to …*, then *Connected to …*.
3. Type and press **Enter**. Each line goes as soon as you press it.

Calling CQ

1. Press **Send CQ**. HFC sends your CQ macro as packet frames to `CQ`, one frame per line.
2. Wait. A station that sees it simply connects to you, and HFC answers by itself.

R300 carries furthest for a CQ: CQ frames don't adapt the way a link does.

The conversation

- Both stations can type at any time. There's no over and no changeover.
- **Enter** sends the line; **Shift+Enter** adds a new line in Compose without sending.
- F-key macros work as on the other screens.
- During a link every command goes to the modem with ESC first, so nothing meant for the modem goes out as text by mistake.

Ending and logging

1. Send your 73.
2. Press **Disconnect**. It ends the link in order: anything still waiting goes out first. Pressed again while it says **Disconnect now**, it breaks the link at once.
3. The **Worked Station** window comes up with the contact filled in, as after a PACTOR link. Press **Log QSO**. Packet is logged as **PKT**.
4. **Close** (or another mode) returns the modem to its `cmd:` prompt. With a link up it asks first and disconnects.

APRS beacon

The modem can send an APRS beacon - your position, for APRS maps - while the Packet screen is open. A PTC forgets its APRS settings when it's switched off, so HFC keeps them in **Settings ▸ Packet** and sends them every time the Packet screen opens. A P4 Dragon would keep beaconing from any screen, so HFC switches its beacon off when the Packet screen closes.

1. **Beacon: On - fixed position**. (**Leave as the modem has it**, as delivered, sends nothing; **Off** switches it off; **On - GPS position** needs a GPS receiver on the modem.)
2. **From locator** fills in **Position** from your locator - fine-tune it if you like.

3. **Every (minutes)**: 15 or more keeps the channel free on HF. Add a short **Comment** if you like.
4. **Save**. Next time you open the Packet screen, the line under the station says *APRS beacon: fixed position …, every 15 min*.

The beacon goes out with your **My call**, SSID and all - the modems have no separate callsign for it.

I want to…	Do this
Get ready	**Mode ▸ Packet**, **Baud: R300**
See what's on	Tick **Monitor**
Call a station	Callsign in **Working**, then **Connect**
Call CQ	**Send CQ**
Send a line	Type it, then **Enter**
End the link	**Disconnect** (twice to break it at once)
Stop at once	**Stop**
Log it	**Log QSO…** (comes up by itself when the link ends)
Finish	**Close**
Beacon my position on APRS	**Settings ▸ Packet**, Beacon **On - fixed position**

When things go wrong

What you see	Try this
Mode ▸ Packet greyed out	Your modem doesn't do packet: see *Before you start*.
No answer to Connect	Same **Baud** both ends? Right dial frequency (the signal is 1.5 kHz above it)? Try **R300**.
Can't change Baud	Not during a link, or while a CQ is going out.
The status bar doesn't follow the link	Press **Stop**, then report it with Help ▸ Report a problem: the session is in the log `packet-wire-debug.log`.
Set Frequency does nothing (Modem drives the radio)	Not during a link: HFC has to leave the Packet menu for a moment to set the radio.
The modem won't leave Packet	The screen stays open and the status line says what to do.

Issue history

Issue	Date	Changes
1	November 2026	First issue.
2	November 2026	APRS beacon.
3	November 2026	My call (SSID for packet and the beacon), pac: at the top right.
4	November 2026	P4 Dragon / DR-9400: no 300 Bd; P4 Dragon: Robust Packet level from the PSK level, beacon only while the Packet screen is open.

More detail on every screen and setting is in the HFConverse User Manual. mw0gbq.hamserve.uk · HFConverse is not affiliated with SCS.