

# Why I Chose The Icom 7610 Over The Flex 6400M

When the price of the [Icom 7610](#) was announced in the US, many reservation holders started looking at the Flex 6400M as an alternative. The Icom 7610 is priced at \$3,899.95. The Flex 6400M is \$2,999.00 (add \$300 for the auto tuner). That's a pretty big difference and they are comparable SDR transceivers. The Flex 6400M has knobs too!

Why did I choose the Icom 7610 over the Flex 6400M? When I saw the price and researched the Flex 6400M, I almost persuaded myself to go with the [Flex](#).



## Features I Like About The Flex 6400M

- The [Flex 6400M](#) has a few knobs and I love the touchscreen. It is hands-down the best touchscreen on any HF rig. It's an 8" IPS touchscreen with a resolution of 1920 x 1200 and there is a HDMI output on the rear. The IPS touchscreen alone almost got me. See the Icom 7610 info below.

- I wouldn't have bought the auto tuner, so it would have been about \$900 less than the Icom 7610 (not really a feature).
- Two VFO knobs on the front. The Icom has just one, but you can add the [RC-28 remote control USB encoder](#).
- Flex 6400M remote operation with Smartlink looks like it's a breeze. Use an iPad or PC without any hassles!
- Full Duplex (with stipulations) The Icom doesn't have it.
- 7 MHz panadapter bandwidth. I would love to see that much of the bands on a 30" monitor. It may be too much for me to handle □ The Icom 7610 has 1 MHz.

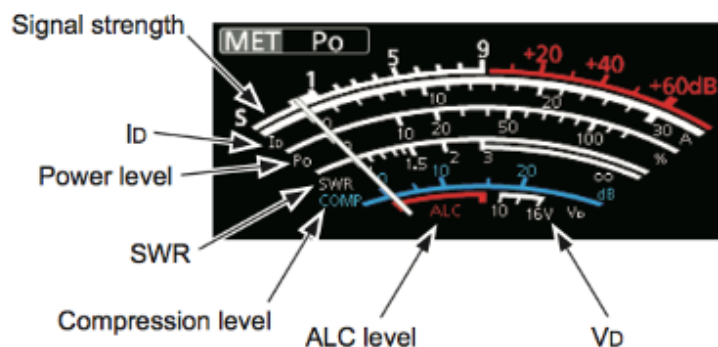


## Features I Like About The Icom 7610

- Dual RF Direct Sampling Receivers. Independent receivers, separate antennas. The Flex 6400M shares the same antenna with the receivers.
- I/Q signal output from the USB connector (provided in future firmware). Both radios have I/Q output.
- RTTY (FSK). The Icom 7300 spoiled me and I enjoy FSK. The filtering is superb. The Flex 6400M doesn't offer FSK.
- The [Icom 7610](#) has a RS-BA1 server onboard. No PC required at the rig for remote access. Similar in both

radios.

- (2) USB ports on the front for either a USB stick, keyboard or mouse. There is an SD card slot on the front too. (2) USB ports on the rear, one is USB 3.0. The Flex 6400M has (2) USB 2.0 ports on the rear.
- A and B external speaker jacks on the rear. Flex has one.
- Microphone, phones and key jack on the front. The Flex has 3.5mm jacks on the rear.
- Dual clock displays on the front. Convenient!
- The Icom 7610 has a 7" touchscreen that is 800 x 480 resolution. It's much better than the IC-7300 and better than the IC-7600. I like the layout and Multi Function Meter display better than the Flex 6400M. There's also a DVI-D video output on the rear of the IC-7610.



Just one of many display options.

## Icom IC-7610 vs Flex 6400M

There is a lot more, and I mean A LOT MORE, to these radios than the few things I threw out there. As far as specs and features go, they look pretty equal.

After considering everything, this is what decided it for me:

1. I enjoy using FSK with N1MM and MMTTY in RTTY contests. The twin peak filter is very effective in RTTY mode.
2. My familiarity with Icom and the Icom 7300 is a big

- advantage. There's not much of a learning curve for me.
3. The IC-7300 really delivered and I'm confident the IC-7610 will too.
  4. My LDG AT-600ProII external auto tuner connects to this rig just like it does on the IC-7300.
  5. NR and NB are proven to be effective. I need this.
  6. The Icom 7610 front is not as software (menu) driven as the Flex Radio. Operating without a PC will be better with the IC-7610.
  7. The Icom IC-7610 just flat out looks better than the Flex, IMO.



That is what tipped the scales in favor of the Icom 7610. It was close between the two and I am sure I'll have a Flex someday. They make great SDR transceivers in my opinion.

Surprisingly, I got a free Heil mic from [HRO](#) with the purchase of the IC-7610. It should be in my shack early December.

I'm keeping the Icom 7300. There is still more to do with it.

What do you think about these SDR transceivers? Did you decide on the Flex 6400M? Getting the Icom 7610?

Please comment below.

73's Rich, K0PIR

Sources:

[Icom America – Icom 7610](#)

[Flex Radio – Flex 6400M](#)

[IC-7610 Yahoo Group](#)

[Icom IC-7610 Facebook Group](#)

[Flex Radio Yahoo Group](#)

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# Flex 1500 Non Technical Review With Videos



As in the title this is a Flex 1500 non technical review. Simply put, it is a list of things I like and don't like about the Flex 1500. And let me tell you right away, there's not much I don't like. This is a nice little QRP SDR transceiver.

I purchased the Flex 1500 a few months ago off of ebay. Unlike others have found I think it's pretty easy to setup, especially if you know a little about comm ports. I had it operating in about 30 minutes. The most difficult part was locating the two small programs (utilities) that it uses for virtual audio cables. Don't let the "virtual audio cables" intimidate you. The great thing is I only use one USB cable to do everything! It's so much better than having two or three cables going from the radio to the computer.

The utilities we use are [Virtual Audio Cable](#) (choose self support when buying and it's only \$25.20) and [Virtual Serial Port Manager](#) (free for Hams). I saw a few videos on YouTube that helped me set these up and the Flexradio forum was helpful too. It was a little intimidating at first, but everything came together and it works great. I never needed to go back and redo anything. Set it up once and you're done.

If you're unfamiliar with all of this what I can suggest is to make a note of these virtual audio cables and comm ports to refer back to. Write down the numbering and whether they are line in or line out. You can even draw a block diagram to make sense of it all. This comes in handy when configuring software programs like JT65-HF, N3FJP, N1MM or HRD.

## **Flex 1500**

Now for the radio. The Flex 1500 has an excellent receiver. It is ranked #17 in the Sherwood Receiver Test Data, but it is really a great little receiver in my opinion. I am using [Bose](#) powered speakers and the audio is beautiful. Combined with the receive equalizer it is unbelievable sound for a radio this inexpensive. Of course the [Bose](#) cost \$100, but it's worth it in my opinion. At first I had some cheap powered speakers and they just don't compare to the [Bose Companion 2](#). Huge difference!

I have found using the preamp for weak signals really does work well. Combined with adjusting the AF and AGC-T (RF Gain) I can usually pull out the weak signal and make it copyable. There are multiple settings for the preamp and I find those very useful.

In the Flex 1500 and PowerSDR the NB is excellent as is the NR and ANF, but what really impresses me is the TNF (Tunable Notch Filter). It knocks out interfering signals within the passband and it really does work. See the video! This all comes from the PowerSDR software. At this time the latest version is 2.7.2.

I haven't had any complaints about the transmit audio. People tell me it sounds real good and some say it is excellent. It punches through the QRM. I use a Heil BM-10 with HC5 element and I also use a Audio-Technica ATR 30 mic. There are so many ways to adjust the transmit audio I gave up and just use a couple of profiles. They work good for me and I can break through a pileup with only 5 watts. I've worked DX SSB with this rig numerous times.

When the radio first came out some people complained about CW sending and using an iambic key. They complained of a delay at 30wpm. I believe it was cleared up with a fix in PowerSDR. I experienced what I thought was a lag, but it ended up being a problem with my setup and not the Flex 1500.

I used the radio in a cw contest with N1MM Logger+ and it performed very well. I was surprised at how many contacts I made and I didn't have trouble using it with the contest software. Search and pounce was awesome! It works great with HRD and N3FJP software too.

As far as digital work goes I've used it with PSK31 and JT65. It performs flawlessly and with only 5 watts it's really amazing. The best thing is I don't have audio cables to hide or that get in the way. It's a very clean setup!

To wrap things up, if you are looking to try a SDR, this is a great choice. I can't think of anything I don't like about it. It's only \$700 new. That's hard to beat. Every once in a while it doesn't want to start for me, but I think that's only

because I shut it down improperly. The solution is to log off and back on to my laptop. No big deal. My only real complaint is that it doesn't have vox and that would be nice to have. I just don't know how well it would work so maybe that's why they didn't make it part of PowerSDR.

It's only 5 watts, but I drive an Ameritron amp with it and get approximately 80 watts out. I even use this little radio with my amp to call a net two hours each week on 75 meters. It is reliable, has a great receiver with filters and I really enjoy just listening to it. I've been very happy using it and I think most Hams would too.

I hope you find this review helpful. Best of luck to you, 73 and good DX. – Rich, K0PIR