

# QSK 11c TP-1 Touch Paddle

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As much as I enjoy using mechanical iambic paddles for sending CW, electronic touch paddles have always intrigued me. Touch-sensitive switches have been available for decades, with capacitance switches being the most common type. They rely on the capacitive effect of a human body part — most often a finger — in proximity to a metal surface.

When it comes to CW paddles, the touch switch advantage is the lack of moving parts. The fixed paddles never require cleaning or adjustment, and they are utterly silent. The disadvantage, of course, is that touch paddles require a power source.

## The TP-1

QSK 11c is a relatively new player in the Amateur Radio market. Even so, their TP-1 touch paddle has already attracted substantial attention from the CW community.

The TP-1 circuitry is housed in a  $2 \times 1\frac{3}{4}$  inch black metal enclosure, which is attached to a thin, 9-inch-long padded platform with rubber feet beneath. Between the weight of your hand and the grip of the rubber feet, the entire assembly is stable on any smooth surface.

The actual paddles are each  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length and  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inches wide. They are extensions of the individual circuit boards



with their surface-mount components. The board material is about  $\frac{1}{16}$  inch thick and exhibited little, if any, bending.

At the rear of the TP-1 (Figure 4) there is a coaxial dc power jack and a  $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch three-conductor jack for the keying cable (provided with the TP-1). The keying output is optically isolated.

The TP-1 draws a mere 40 mA at 12 V. It is capable of operating with a supply voltage ranging from 8 to 24 Vdc. While you can power the TP-1 from a battery or your

## Bottom Line

The TP-1 touch paddle is well made and easy to use, offering an alternative to traditional mechanical paddles.

station power supply, it arrives with its own ac “wall wart” supply.

## Test Driving the TP-1

When I connected the dc power cable to the TP-1, green LEDs glowed on each paddle to indicate the key was up and running. According to the instructions, it actually takes about 200 milliseconds for the TP-1 to calibrate itself when power is applied. With that in mind, they advise you to avoid touching the paddles when you energize the TP-1 initially.

The TP-1 is shipped for right hand operation, but this can be easily changed by shifting the position of the enclosure. The individual paddles are dedicated to generating “dits” and “dahs,” with “dits” on the left paddle and “dahs” on the right. Once again, this can also be easily changed by swapping the positions of the paddles.

Being a right-handed operator, I was completely comfortable with the default configuration. Within just a few minutes after extracting the TP-1 from its shipping box, I was banging out Morse code with my transceiver keyer in practice mode. The instructions caution that sending with a touch paddle may seem odd at first, and may require some practice, but I didn’t find this to be the case. The TP-1 felt surprisingly “natural,” closer to a mechanical paddle than I would have imagined possible.

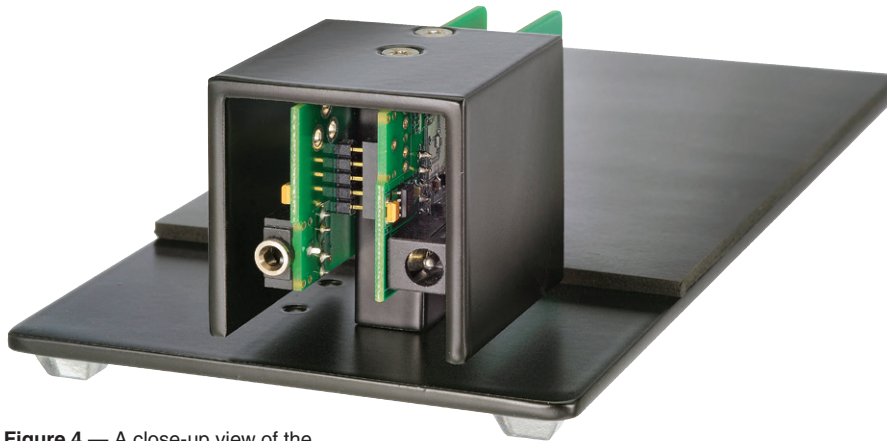
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It didn't take long before I decided that practice was over and it was time to take to the airwaves. I enjoyed several conversations at various speeds and found the TP-1 to be a pleasure to use. It provided consistently smooth operation with little fatigue.

### **Conclusion**

The performance of the TP-1 seems to rival the well-crafted mechanical paddles that I have tried. That's important to keep in mind when you consider the TP-1's price tag. At \$149 the TP-1 may seem expensive, until you realize that you'd have to pay the same or substantially more to achieve the same performance with a mechanical paddle.

*Manufacturer:* QSK llc, 14639 South Hawthorne Court North, Homer Glen, IL 60491; [www.qskllc.com](http://www.qskllc.com). Price: \$149.



**Figure 4** — A close-up view of the TP-1 showing the coaxial power jack and 1/8 inch stereo phone jack for the keyer cable.