

# The Eton S350DL

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The Eton S350DL is a “Deluxe” version of the S350, an AM/FM/SW portable covering AM 530–1710 kHz, FM 88–108 MHz, and SW 3–28 MHz. The shortwave range is broken down into three separate bands: 3–8 MHz, 8–17 MHz, and 17–28 MHz.

According to Eton, four features distinguish the S350DL from the S350: FM-stereo via supplied headphones, an AM/SW Frequency Lock, operation with AA or D cells, and the ability to set the clock/alarm while the radio is in use.

### ❖ Ergonomics

At about 13” W x 7” H x 4” D, the S350DL is a little larger than most portables these days. With the industry trend toward smaller and smaller designs, Eton has chosen a larger and more military look.

Available in either red or black, half of the front panel is occupied by the speaker-grille, and the other half populated by the display and controls.

The display window is about 1” H x 3” W, providing ample space for showing signal strength, battery status, mode, and the 1/4” W x 1/2” H frequency numerals.

### ❖ Tuning

Here’s where things get even more atypical from today’s portables: the S350DL combines analog tuning with a digital frequency readout. Yes, you read that right, you get the advantages of analog tuning – no “chuffing” and less “system” induced noise – while enjoying the convenience of a digital frequency readout. Frequency resolution on SW and AM is in whole kHz, sorry, no tenths.

A word of caution, though; don’t expect the smooth, predictable, and relatively “rock-solid” tuning that comes from digital radios. With two concentric tuning knobs, the outer for Fast, and the inner for Slow, “fine-tuning” the radio requires a little more finesse than most of today’s listeners are used to. However, proficiency can be achieved after just a short period of practice. During my “practice,” I found the “Fast” tuning knob had a rough feel during parts of its rotation, and the

“Slow” tuning to be about twice as fast as I would like; like most things, you get used to it after a while.

I also found that changing the settings of some controls changed the frequency readout, not by much, but enough to notice.

### ❖ Audio

With a 4-inch speaker behind the grill, the S350DL has nice sound. Separate Bass and Treble controls allow the listener to tailor the sound to their liking. And, if that’s not enough, there is a set of RCA-sockets carrying stereo line-level audio output for those with external amplifiers or audio recorders.

As stated earlier, a set of earphones is provided as part of the package. They’re not top-of-the-line, but they are very comfortable and have very good sound quality, certainly well suited for the radio.

### ❖ Antennas

The S350DL has the usual ferrite bar for AM and whip for FM/SW. The telescoping whip that Eton chose is better than most, in my opinion. Its smallest section won’t bend if you look at it cross-eyed, and it just simply feels “beefier” than the norm.

If you would prefer an external antenna, there is a connector on the rear-panel for FM, as well as spring terminals for SW.

### ❖ Power

As noted by Eton, new for the S350DL is the ability to run the radio on either four AA or four D cells; I really like that feature. The

only downside I saw with this feature was the flap provided in the battery compartment to hold the AAs in place, which seemed to keep popping open, causing the cells to break contact, shutting off the radio.

Although Eton doesn’t include the AAs or Ds, it does provide a wall adapter that plugs into the 6 Vdc input connector on the rear panel. If you plan on plugging in your own power source, the S350DL requires less than 500 mA and uses negative-tip polarity.

### ❖ Auto-Backlight

Whenever the listener changes a control that has an associated display indicator, the display’s backlight automatically turns on. The backlight remains on for about 5 seconds after the last one of those controls is changed; once again, another feature I like.

### ❖ How Does It Play?

I took the S350DL to the bedside one evening and tuned around a little before going to sleep. Running on batteries and using the whip antenna, I found the radio to perform quite satisfactorily. While tuning the busy AM broadcast-band, and also on shortwave, the Narrow filter really worked well to reduce adjacent channel interference while leaving the audio very readable. There were plenty of shortwave stations to choose from, with many that were full-scale and full quieting. That was a pleasant surprise, as I don’t normally experience that quality of reception with portables operated in my house.

### ❖ Final Thoughts

A friend of mine uses a term I’d like to borrow to describe the S350DL: “a gutless wonder.” But I mean that in a complimentary way! How else do you describe a single-conversion, analog tuned, digital-readout, portable radio that actually hears well and sounds good, too?

The Eton S350DL a great radio for a beginner in the shortwave radio hobby or as an AM/FM/SW backup, and it can be found from various sources at an average price of \$150. For more information on the S350DL, visit Eton’s website at [www.etoncorp.com](http://www.etoncorp.com).

