CONTESTING: FROM BEGINNER TO RADIO SPORT CHAMPION

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N5KWD
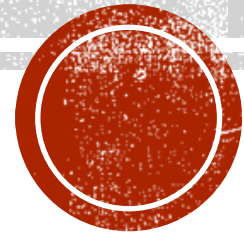
CONTESTING

1. What is it?

2. How do I do it?

3. How do I do it well?

CONTESTING IS

- A competition, with a set of objectives, rules, and a system of scoring, resulting in a ranking of entrants

- A marathon, in most cases, a contest occurs over many hours or days

- An exercise that builds radio operating skills

- A way to make many contacts across various bands and geographical entities

ARRL November Sweepstakes

Objective: To support amateur self-training in radiocommunications, including improving amateur operating skills, conducting technical investigations, and intercommunicating with other amateurs. Stations in the United States and Canada (including territories and possessions) exchange information with as many other US and Canadian stations as possible on the 160, 80, 40, 20, 15 and 10 meter bands.

IARU HF WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

Objective: To support amateur self-training in radiocommunications including improving amateur operating skills, conducting technical investigations, and intercommunicating with other amateurs around the world, especially IARU member society headquarters stations, using the 160, 80, 40, 20, 15 and 10-meter bands.

CQ WORLD WIDE DX CONTEST

The CQ World Wide DX Contest (CQWW) offers 48 hours of nonstop DX-chasing fun with activity taking place from virtually every part of the world! Whether you are competing for awards, looking for a few new band-countries, or simply filling up your logbook, the CQWW offers something for everyone.

WINTER FIELD DAY

Purpose: To foster Ham camaraderie, field operation, emergency operating preparedness, and just plain on the air, outdoor fun in the midst of winter for American, Canadian, and DX Hams. Don't let those winter doldrums keep you locked up in the house… get out and play some radio!!

SO HOW DO I DO IT?

- Key a mike and make a call

- Tap your key and form words with dits and dahs

- For FT8 users, whatever it is you do…

START WITH A CALENDAR

FEB **

13-14	CQ WW RTTY WPX **CLUB	// 45.45 Baud, 170 Hz
15-16	ARRL International DX - CW **ARRL CLUB	//
26-28	CQ 160 – SSB **CLUB	// Fri 1700 - Sun 1700

MAR **

7-8	*ARRL International DX - Phone **ARRL CLUB*	*// Fri 1800 - Sun 1800*
14	[DST Start]	//
27-28	*CQ WPX - SSB **CLUB*	*// Fri 1700 - Sun 1700*

APR **

17-18	*Texas State Parks on the Air **CLUB*	*// Sat: 0900 - 2100; Sun: 0900 - 1500*
19	ARRL Rookie Roundup - Phone	//

March 2021

Contest	Date/Time
K1USN Slow Speed Test	0000Z-0100Z, Mar 1
OK1WC Memorial	1630Z-1729Z, Mar 1
RSGB 80m Club Championship, Data	2000Z-2130Z, Mar 1
Worldwide Sideband Activity Contest	0100Z-0159Z, Mar 2
ARS Spartan Sprint	0200Z-0400Z, Mar 2
RTTYOPS Weeksprint	1700Z-1900Z, Mar 2
AGCW YL-CW Party	1900Z-2100Z, Mar 2
QRP Fox Hunt	0200Z-0330Z, Mar 3
Phone Weekly Test - Fray	0230Z-0300Z, Mar 3
CWops Mini-CWT Test	1300Z-1400Z, Mar 3
VHF-UHF FT8 Activity Contest	1700Z-2000Z, Mar 3
CWops Mini-CWT Test	1900Z-2000Z, Mar 3
UKEICC 80m Contest	2000Z-2100Z, Mar 3
CWops Mini-CWT Test	0300Z-0400Z, Mar 4
RTTYOPS Weeksprint	1700Z-1900Z, Mar 4
NRAU 10m Activity Contest	1800Z-1900Z, Mar 4 (CW) and 1900Z-2000Z, Mar 4 (SSB) and 2000Z-2100Z, Mar 4 (FM) and 2100Z-2200Z, Mar 4 (Dig)
SKCC Sprint Europe	2000Z-2200Z, Mar 4
NCCC RTTY Sprint	0145Z-0215Z, Mar 5
QRP Fox Hunt	0200Z-0330Z, Mar 5
NCCC Sprint	0230Z-0300Z, Mar 5
K1USN Slow Speed Test	2000Z-2100Z, Mar 5
Novice Rig Roundup	0000Z, Mar 6 to 2359Z, Mar 14
ARRL Inter. DX Contest, SSB	0000Z, Mar 6 to 2400Z, Mar 7
Wake-Up! QRP Sprint	0600Z-0629Z, Mar 6 and 0630Z-0659Z, Mar 6 and 0700Z-0729Z, Mar 6 and 0730Z-0800Z, Mar 6

PRACTICE GOOD OPERATING

- Contests

- Work DX, WAS, Counties, Grids, etc. << Log Building

- ARES Simulated Emergency Tests (SETs) and other EmComm drills

- National Traffic system (NTS)

- Net Control Operator

- Public Service Events

LEARN

- Propagation
- Review Past Contests
- Field Day
- Youtube University
- ARRL Contest Letter (Email)
- ARRL Propagation Bulletin (Online and email)
- National Contest Journal (NCJ) – now free online
- Watch and listen

PREPARE

- Inspect equipment

- Replace / upgrade equipment

- Implement improvements in your process

- Review your own performance or have it critiqued by a group

PARTICIPATE

- Set aside time to compete

- Commit to complete an entire contest

- Get active with a contesting group

OPERATING TACTICS

- Hunt and pounce
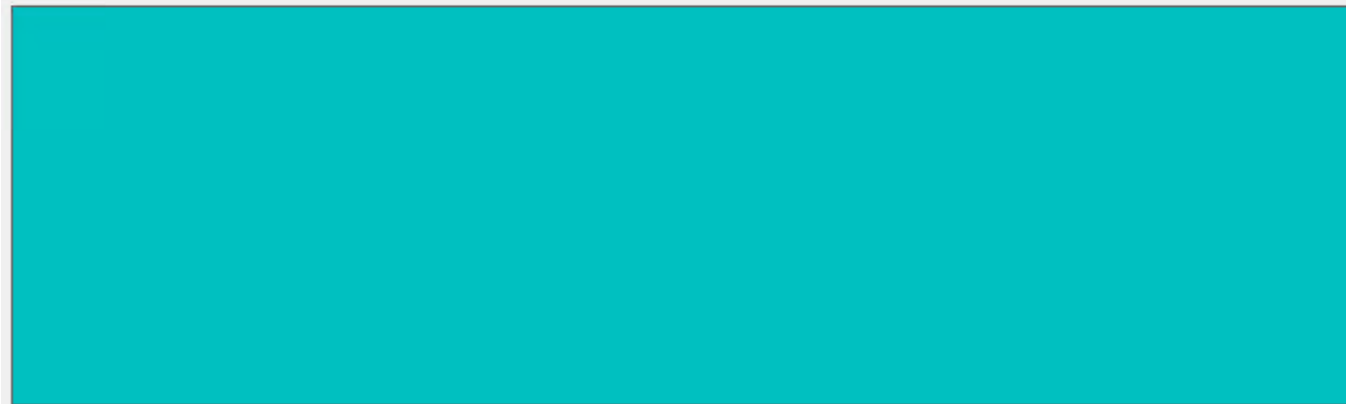
- Running a frequency

- Sprint-mode

CONTEST EXCHANGE (VARIES)

- Call sign

- Location - State, County, Grid, ARRL Section, ITU Zone, CQ Zone, Special Id*

- "Contest" Signal Report

- Serial

- Precedence

- Check

Call	Rec	Pwr	Snt	Count	New!
KP3	59	1000	59	Puerto Rico	

Clear	Spot Last

Possible Duplicates   ☑ Any Portion

Bearing: 108   **Miles: 1,973**   **Cont: NA**

Start tracking op time   00:00:00

Band: 20   **Mode:** PH

N5KWD	RS(T)	TX

3:40:00 PM
21:40:00 UTC

Call	#	Pre	Ck	Section
AB5KM	107	A	12	STX
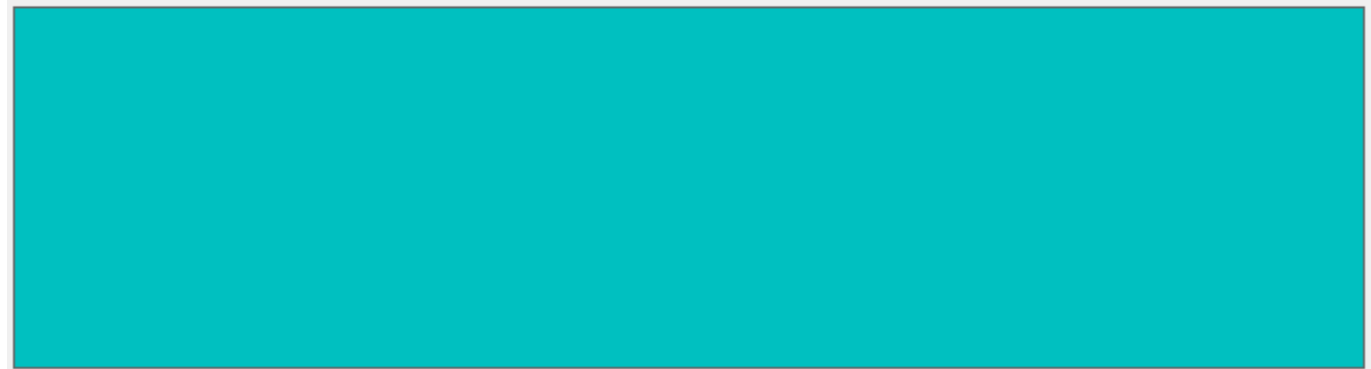
Clear	Spot Last

Possible Duplicates ☑ Any Portion

Bearing: 200

Start tracking op time

24:29:37

Miles: 139

Band: 40

PH

1
CT	RI
EMA	VT
ME	WMA
NH	

2
ENY	NNY
NLI	SNJ
NNJ	WNY

3
DE	MDC
EPA	WPA

4
AL	SC
GA	SFL
KY	TN
NC	VA
NFL	VI
PR	WCF

5
AR	NTX
LA	OK
MS	STX
NM	WTX

6
EB	SCV
LAX	SDG
ORG	SF
PAC	SJV
SB	SV

7
AK	NV
AZ	OR
EWA	UT
ID	WWA
MT	WY

8
MI	WV
OH	

9
IL	WI
IN	

0
CO	MO
IA	ND
KS	NE
MN	SD

Canada
AB	NT
BC	ONE
GTA	ONN
MAR	ONS
MB	PE
NL	QC
	SK

266	B	N5KWD	15	STX

3:44:44 PM
21:44:44 UTC

RUNNING TIMES

- Straight Through

- 36 of 48 , 30 of 36, etc.

- Two Day with a night off

BANDS

- All "standard bands" are open for contests – 160m*, 80m, 40m, 20m, 15m, 10m, 6m*

- Meaning non-WARC bands (30m, 17m, 12m) or 60m

- Some contests lop off something, like 6m or 160m

- Special single band contests for 160m, 10m, 6m, or VHF and up

MODES

- Single mode - phone, CW, or digital
- Mixed mode – ARRL Field Day, Winter Field Day

PRECEDENCE

- Field Days differentiate power mode / field
    - Class A - Club / non-club portable
    - Class B – One or two person portable
    - Class F – Emergency Operations Center

- Other contests
    - Single Op, Low Power
    - Single Op, High Power
    - Single Op, Unlimited
    - Multi Op, Single Transmitter
    - Multi, Multi

LOGGING

- Anything you choose, including
  - Paper
  - Your regular permanent log software: Ham Radio Deluxe, ACL, etc.
  - Contest software: N3FJP, N1MM, etc

- Post Contest
  - \>> cabrillo format – Universal Log Submission Format (K5LO), "N5KWD.log"
  - \>> adif – Amateur Data Interchange Format, "N5KWD.adi"
  - \>> Upload: LotW, QRZ, and ClubLog

- Log submission deadlines have tightened drastically (3 to 10 days!!)

GENERAL CONTEST PREPARATION

- Configure radio controls, change from rag chew to contest settings

- Download, *print*, and read contest rules

- Presets for your manual tuner, other presets

- Make 2 gallons of ice tea

- Get a handful of sub sandwiches, microwave breakfast bowls, etc.

- Warn your neighbors

SPECIFIC CONTEST PREPARATION

- Download and install your latest contest software (and test it!)

- Download and print the aids you might want and need for the contest