

Getting Started in Amateur Radio Contesting

Bill Mitchell, AEØEE

Stillwater Amateur Radio Association

September 14, 2019

Outline

- 1 Why Contest?
- 2 How Contests Work
- 3 Preparation
- 4 The Contest
- 5 After the Contest
- 6 Resources

Why Contest?

- Lots of activity
- Easy to make contacts
- Enjoy limited operating time
- Test station limits
- Public service training



Keys to Success

- Turn the radio on
- Call CQ
- Practice
- Learn
- Experiment



Outline

- 1 Why Contest?
- 2 How Contests Work**
- 3 Preparation
- 4 The Contest
- 5 After the Contest
- 6 Resources

Anatomy of a Contest

- Contest sponsor
- Bands, modes
- Entry categories
- Exchange
- Contacts
- Scoring
- Log submission



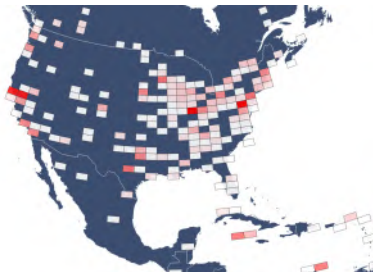
VHF+ vs HF

- VHF contests
 - Easy to participate
 - Mixed modes
 - Rovers
- HF contests
 - Often single-mode
 - High rates
 - More activity
 - International contacts



Contest Jargon

- Grid
- Multiplier
- Running
- Search and pounce (S&P)
- Rate
- Assisted
- Spotting
- HP/LP/QRP
- Cabrillo format
- ADIF
- SO2R



Outline

- 1 Why Contest?
- 2 How Contests Work
- 3 Preparation**
- 4 The Contest
- 5 After the Contest
- 6 Resources

Station Considerations

- VHF+
 - Basic: handheld/mobile radio
 - Better: all-mode radio
 - Better: directional antenna
 - Better: 6 m capability
 - Better: computer interface
- HF
 - Basic: Radio, antenna
 - Better: computer interface
 - Better: more bands

No radio?

Club station or multi-op!



Station Considerations

- *Any* station with capability on at least one of the bands/modes for the contest can be a contest station.
- Crummy antennas and 5 W on HF works.
- You'd be surprised how forgiving good propagation can be.



Licensing

- VHF+: Technician license
- HF: Technician (10 m or 80/40/15 cw)
- HF: General license
- HF: Multi-op with a control operator



Additional Preparation

- Know your phonetics!
 - Not just familiar
 - License plates
- Logging software (e.g. N1MM+)
- Computer interface
- Set goals
 - Number of contacts
 - Operating time
 - Trying [thing]
- Assemble station, if needed
- Check FM focus times (VHF+)



Outline

- 1 Why Contest?
- 2 How Contests Work
- 3 Preparation
- 4 The Contest**
- 5 After the Contest
- 6 Resources

The Contest

- Get on the air
- Rate
- Efficiency
- Short CQ calls
- Rhythm is key
- CQ response: call ONCE



Messages

- CQ [callsign] contest
- [Exchange]
- Thank you, [callsign]
- [Their call]
- [Callsign]
- Again?
- Sorry, not in log



VHF Contests

- Higher antennas are better
- Polarization
 - FM: vertical
 - Other: horizontal
- 146.550 MHz FM simplex
- 446.000 MHz FM simplex
- 50.125 MHz USB, and up
- 144.200 MHz USB, and up
- Digital Modes
 - FT8
 - MSK-144 (best around sunrise)



HF Contests

- Listen to the rhythm
- May only hear one side of the contact
 - Hear the running station?
 - What is their exchange?
- Send exchange only when you are sure of theirs
- Use your bandmap!



Sample VHF Contact

- AEØEE: CQ alpha echo zero echo echo
- WØGHZ: whiskey zero golf hotel zulu
- AEØEE: whiskey zero golf hotel zulu, echo november three four
- WØGHZ: roger, echo november three four
- AEØEE: thank you, alpha echo zero echo echo, contest



Sample HF Contact (serial number)

- LZ9W: Lima zulu nine whiskey, contest
- AEØEE: alpha echo zero echo echo
- LZ9W: alpha echo zero echo echo, five nine, four eight six
- AEØEE: five nine, three six
- LZ9W: thank you, lima zulu nine whiskey



Outline

- 1 Why Contest?
- 2 How Contests Work
- 3 Preparation
- 4 The Contest
- 5 After the Contest**
- 6 Resources

After the Contest

It's not over until the paperwork is in!

- Enter any paper-logged contacts
- Export Cabrillo log
- Cabrillo to sponsor
- ADIF to Logbook of the World
- Score summary to 3830scores.com
- Forward 3830 summary to club



Post-contest Debrief

- What worked?
- What didn't work?
- Anything need fixing?
- Did you meet your goals?
- What did you learn?
- Discuss with your contest buddy!
- Read some of the summaries on 3830scores.com



Outline

- 1 Why Contest?
- 2 How Contests Work
- 3 Preparation
- 4 The Contest
- 5 After the Contest
- 6 Resources**

Additional Resources

- Clubs
 - Northern Lights Radio Society (VHF+)
 - Minnesota Wireless Assn
 - HF Contests
 - Meeting 9/24
- BARA Resources Page
- WA7BNM Contest calendar
- WSJT-X
- N1MM+
- Morse Runner



Upcoming Contests

- Major

VHF+ ARRL Sept. VHF 9/14–15

HF RTTY CQ Worldwide RTTY 9/28–29

HF CA QSO Party 10/5–6

HF SSB CQ Worldwide SSB 10/26–27

- Minor

HF SSB Phone Fray (Tuesdays)

HF RTTY NS RTTY Sprint (Thursdays)

HF CW SKCC Weekend Sprintathon
9/14–15



Shameless Plug

- Bloomington Hidden Transmitter Practice
 - 1:00 PM Saturday, 9/21
 - Tarnhill Park, Bloomington
 - Demonstration and practice
 - More info on mhamradio.com

Getting Started in Amateur Radio Contesting

Bill Mitchell, AEØEE

Stillwater Amateur Radio Association

September 14, 2019