

# Contesting Resources

How To Get Started In Amateur Radio Contesting  
Peter West VE3HG

# Contest Logging Programs

- Contesting software makes contesting easy
- Most (if not all) contests are included
- Each contest has specific requirements
- The software automatically creates a Cabrillo file

# What's a Cabrillo File?

- Cabrillo files are now the contesting standard
- It allows contest managers to check and score logs automatically
- It is basically a simple text file
- Easily emailed
- [Here's a link](#)

# Which Contests?

- 12–24 hour state/prov/country QSO parties
- NAQP 12 hour CW, SSB or RTTY
- The big contests:
  - CQ WW DX – CW, SSB, RTTY
  - ARRL DX – CW
  - ARRL Sweepstakes
  - ARRL RTTY Roundup

# Best Software?

- N1MM

- Free and fully functioning
- Has CW, Voice Memories and Digital Modes
- Networkable and Telenet
- Bandmaps, multiplier and check windows
- Greyline maps, summaries, stats

# What Else?

- Writelog
  - \$30 US plus upgrades
  - CW, Phone, RTTY and Digital modes
  - In function and features similar to N1MM
  - Exceptionally stable and SDR friendly

# Contesting Software

- Announced DX (and contest) operations
- DX Atlas - prefixes, zones, grid squares, maps, greyline and more
- CW Skimmer - copy all CW at once
- DX Bulletin Reader - Get DX info

# Hardware

- Headphones - buy best you can afford
- Foot switch - manually control rig and amp
- USB interface - connects rig to computer
- CW keyer - external memory keyer
- Voice keyer - save your voice
- CW filters - 250/500Hz and audio filter

# More Software

- Morse Runner - Contest simulator
- Pileup Runner - Pretend you're the DX
- Cyber CW - Online contest simulator
- SM3CER - Online contesting website
- NG3K - Contest calendar and more

# Contest Quality Rigs

- Yaseu FTdx-1200 or better
- Icom 756 Pro or better
- Kenwood TS-590s or better
- Elecraft KX3 or K3
- FlexRadio 3000 or better

# Best rigs

- Sherwood Engineering Receiver Data
  - FlexRadio 6700 (\$7,500)
  - Hilberling PT-8000A (\$18,000 Cdn)
  - Elecraft KX3 (\$900)
  - FlexRadio 5000 (used \$2,500)
  - Kenwood TS-590s (\$2,000)

# QRO Contesting

- QRO power (1,500 KW) allows for "running"
- QRO very competitive category
- QRO requires additional care and knowledge
- QRO generally means you work anyone you can hear and they will hear you!
- Requires robust antenna installations

# Low Power Contesting

- Usually defined as 100 watts
- Very competitive category
- Easy introduction to serious contesting
- Essential to add narrow CW and SSB filters
- Works with just about any antenna

# QRP Contesting

- Usually not so competitive a category
- Any 100-watt rig can go QRP
- Requires resonant antennas to be effective
- Surprisingly effective (see next slide)
- Helps build aggressive operating skills
- QRP rigs can be competitive (and cheap)

# Why QRP?

- You are much louder than you think
- 1500 watts = 15db over S9
- 100 watts = S9
- 5 watts = S7
- Pretend you're QRO and break pileups
- Never say you're QRP
- S&P from top of band to bottom

# Basic Contest Antennas

- Three-element 20-15-10 beam at 50'
- 40-meter full-size dipole as high as possible
- 80-meter full-size dipole as high as possible
- 80-10 vertical ground mounted with radials
- consider single-band categories using a dipole

# Pete's Personal Tips

- Change nothing 24 hours prior to your test
- Keep your station mechanics simple
- Drink lots of water
- Take breaks at regular intervals
- Set realistic goals
- Book contest time off with family (essential)

# More Info

- [VE3HG](#) or [VE3HB](#) blogs
- [Contest Club Ontario](#)
- [Contesting.com](#)
- [ARRL Contesting Calendar](#)
- [ARRL Field Day](#)
- [EI8IC Ham Radio Resources](#)

CQ Test CQ Test CQ

