



Operating Practices

Meaning and Use of Abbreviations

CQ	General Call To All Stations	
DE	From (This Is)	
DX	Long Distance	<i>Very subjective - normally assume any place outside of my continent</i>
R	Received	
RST	Readability, Signal Strength, Tone	.
SIG	Signal	
UR	Your	
WX	Weather	

SIGNAL REPORTING - RST format

READABILITY

1	Unreadable
2	Barely Readable, occasional word distinguishable
3	Readable with Considerable difficulty
4	Readable with practically no difficulty
5	Perfectly Readable

SIGNAL

1	Faint, Signals barely Perceptible
2	Very Weak Signals
3	Weak Signals
4	Fair Signals
5	Fairly good signals
6	Good Signals
7	Moderately Strong Signals
8	Strong Signals
9	Extremely Strong Signals

TONE

1	Extremely Rough Hissing Noise
2	Very Rough AC Note No Trace of Musicality
3	Rough, low-pitched ac note, slightly musical
4	Rather Rough ac note, moderately musical
5	Musically modulated note
6	Modulated note, slight trace of whistle
7	Near dc note smooth ripple
8	Good dc note, just a trace of ripple
9	Purest dc note



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OPERATIONAL ADVANTAGES OF TRANSMISSION MODES

In OPERATING terms only

CW (Continuous wave) [usually Morse]. CW mode has a narrow bandwidth and greater range for a given transmitter power. Because of the narrow bandwidth on the receiver a lot of the noise and interference can be cut out allowing the weak signal to be clearly heard. CW will in 99% of time make a contact in poor conditions when other modes fail.

SSB (Single Side Band) Good for voice transmission over long distance. Ensure that on the receiver that the bandwidth is optimise for reception 2.4 kHz or 2.0 kHz filter.

FM. (Frequency Modulation). Has the shortest range and maximum (Wide) bandwidth. For the shorter range transmission offers high quality speech.

OTHER OPERATING MODES

Packet, PSK31, SSTV, FSTV, RTTY are all transmission modes that are available to increase your interest in the hobby. Most are easy to generate these days using a PC fitted with a soundcard however this is not the only way as if you have an I/O port you can use a separate modem, such as a TNC Terminal Node Controller for packet and a terminal unit for RTTY. The mechanical equipment to generate these modes can still be found in some shacks. Remember on RTTY to end a line with a carriage return, line feed as you may just be sending to one of these stations.

PSK31 is a narrow band transmission mode suitable for either data or text on HF; similar modes are PACTOR, AMTOR, and RTTY. Look for these modes around .070 to .100 on the 14 or 21 MHz bands.

SSTV, slow scan television, is like facsimile and can transmit pictures over a HF or VHF voice channel, with a 2.4kHz Bandwidth. The pictures are generated either by computer or video camera. Look for these around 14.230 and 144.500 MHz, and the repeater on 144.700MHz.

FSTV, FastScan TV needs a wide bandwidth and is therefore only suitable for UHF or Microwaves. The UK has an increasing number of FastScan TV repeaters on the 1.3, 2.3 and 10GHz bands.



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QTH and QSL information

To find information on a particular callsign information is available in several sources. The starting point for UK stations is the RSGB callbook which lists most UK calls. Countries prefixes can be found in the callbook or the useful prefix guide published by the RSGB. Overseas callsign information can be found either on QRZ.com, or Buckmaster, which are Internet sites in the USA. There is a very good CD, 'The Flying Horse Call Book' which is available from the USA. Also on this CD is some station QSL managers information. If you connect to the Packet DX Cluster then you can normally find QSL information by using the correct commands. It may take some time, but on the Essex packet system is an access to QRZ.

Sending and Receiving QSL cards

QSL cards used to be known as the final courtesy of a QSO. Most stations like to send and receive cards, and if you become interested in awards then most require you to be in possession of the cards confirming the contacts. Note that e-QSLs are not accepted for most awards.

Two routes are available to exchange cards - via a QSL bureau (*explain operation*), or direct to the station. Remember to include an IRC or green stamp for the return postage.

Common Prefixes

Country prefixes were allocated by the international conference in 1923. There may be more than one prefix per country.

EI	Eire
F	France
I	Italy
JA	Japan
PA	Netherlands
VE	Canada
VK	Australia
W/K	USA
ZL	New Zealand

Contests and Awards

Love them or loathe them Contests are here to stay. Always look up contest rules for scoring and operational reports. HINT - use contests to help with awards.

Awards; DXCC is the top award followed by IOTA. DXCC basic is 100 countries confirmed by receipt of QSL card, ARRL needs to view them.

IOTA (Island On The Air) award programme is administered by the RSGB. IOTA was created over 30 years ago by Geoff Watts a leading English SWL and taken over by the RSGB in 1985, IOTA is an amateur radio award programme designed to encourage contacts with island stations world wide. Just look at a recent RadCom, which detailed the number of amateurs who are participating, about 18 separate awards are available. They also require the cards.



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Meaning and Use of Q Codes

Q-codes are a form of abbreviation used during a CW contact, however some have come into use during normal voice contacts.

A question mark after the Q code means a question. For international and amateur means see the table below.

QRL	I AM BUSY	? ARE YOU BUSY	<i>Sent in CW to ask if frequency is clear.</i>
QRM	I AM BEING INTERFERED WITH	? ARE YOU BEING INTERFERED WITH.	<i>In a QSO means I have MAN MADE interference</i>
QRN	I AM TROUBLED BY STATIC	? ARE YOU TROUBLED BY STATIC	<i>In a QSO means I have STATIC OR SOLAR NOISE interference</i>
QRP	DESCREASE TRANSMITTER POWER	? SHALL I DECREASE TRANSMITTER POWER.	<i>In amateur service callsign/qrp means I am transmitting on low power</i>
QRT	STOP SEND	? SHALL I STOP SENDING	<i>In amateur service going qrt means I am closing down.</i>
QRZ	YOU ARE BEING CALLED	? WHO IS CALLING ME	<i>In common use who is calling me.</i>
QSB	YOUR SIGNALS ARE FADING	? ARE MY SIGNALS FADING	<i>In common use in a QSO to describe fading.</i>
QSL	I AM ACKNOWLEDGING RECEIPT	? CAN YOU ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT	<i>In a QSO normal use is to confirm the sending of or ask for a QSL Card, however this Q code is creeping into usage at the end of voice transmissions instead of asking how the other station is receiving.</i>
QSO	I CAN COMMUNICATE WITH	? CAN YOU COMMUNICATE WITH	<i>Normal use means a conversation with another station.</i>
QSY	CHANGE TO TRANSMIT ON ANOTHER FREQUENCY	? SHALL I CHANGE TO TRANSMIT ON ANOTHER FREQUENCY.	<i>When use means move to another frequency.</i>
QTH	MY LOCATION IS	? WHAT IS YOUR LOCATION	<i>The same meaning as the original meaning</i>