

CQ CONTEST! THIS IS KC5CMX, KILO CHARLIE FIVE CHARLIE MIKE XRAY. QRZ?

by Carl Berry, KC5CMX

Anyone turning on the radio this past weekend may have heard something like this and for new hams, it sounds as foreign as it does with any other language, so let's look at it.

CQ Contest

Ask 10 hams what it means and most likely, you'll get 10 answers. "**CQ Contest**" is simply a limited call out to hams, just like someone may call, "CQ North America" or "CQ Silver Springs Radio Club". You are calling out others that are operating in the contest. It lets people that are on nets or out to rag chew, know that you are just calling other contesters.

Next is your call sign, then QRZ or Q R Zed, it's another way of saying, "Who's calling me?", but it doesn't end there. Almost immediately, if not sooner, people will respond with their call, for example, "K2ADA".

A sample exchange would be, "K2ADA, Carl, Florida or "Thank you, K2ADA, this is KC5CMX, and the name is Carl in Florida."

His exchange would be, "Andy, Florida" or "Thank you, this is Andy, K2ADA, in Florida".

The exchange is usually the same both ways and sometimes, the giver or receiver may personalize it, but it's **always the same information exchanged for that entire contest**. The callsign isn't always repeated because it was in the original contact, however, some will repeat it phonetically so there is no error on the receiver's end. With newer rigs, they may already have it programmed in. Sometimes, when there is a lot of QRM (interference), either station may ask to repeat some or all of the exchange. Just so you are aware, not all hams are good operators (LIDS) and will use "made up" phonetics, so just be ready for it.

An exchange example could be the North American QSO Party on the phone bands. The **exchange** is the senders callsign, name and state. In ARRL Field Day it is the callsign, class and section. In other contests the exchange includes a signal report. In a contest, no matter how terrible the signal is, it is always 59 or in CW it's 599 (5NN). Occasionally, the operators will have a **very short** QSO such as talking about the weather on either end, the locations where the operators are at, "Oh, you're in Ocala. I used to live there, but moved to Southold, New York. Do you know...?" **The main point of having a contest is to make a contact with a**

ham at another location, get it in your log accurately and to *have fun* while doing it.

Points are accumulated during the event and tallied with others in the same class, section and call zone or whatever the rules of the contest may be. *Remember, it's all in fun!* Don't lose sleep over a busted QSO or bad operators. Life's too short!

The NAQP contest for me, was a load of fun. Not only did I promise to email some warm, sunny weather to the northeast, I made contacts with people where I went to school at as a kid, some 1,300 miles away. I worked with a great group of people in the Mid Florida Group.

They are **Andy Allen, K2ADA, CJ Heise, KM4ZQE, Wayne Millican, WA1PMA, Bruce Richardson, WA4IPU**, & yours truly, **Carl Berry, KC5CMX**. Our group's total score was **189,763**, which was considerably higher than the 2018 score.

There is a right way and a wrong way to operate a contest. The correct way is to **Follow the rules**. Many organizers will publish links to their contest rules on the WA7BNM Contest Calendar <https://www.contestcalendar.com>. It is one of many valuable resources while contesting.

With the advent of the internet, so many things are now available to us for ready reference at our fingertips. One of them is [DX Spots](#). What is spotting? It is a way to let other hams know what station you worked, what frequency and what is their QTH (country or location)

One thing to keep in mind about spots and spotting. **ID10T** is not a call sign in Italy and as one of our great presidents said, "Trust, but verify." Don't assume that the call posted in spots is correct! Listen and make sure that the previous station spotted them correctly. It will save you some heartburn!

[PSK REPORTER](#) is similar to spots, except when your signal is heard by a monitoring station, it is posted on a world map and you can see how far your signal is going. It can also serve as a tool to see if you are getting out at all. Very handy if you suspect rig or antenna problems.

In CW contests, there are a number of contest shorthand codes you need to know for example, 5NN is the same as 599. It is sent like that because it's short and quick.

Some operators will send up to 30 or more words per minute but if you're one that's tone deaf or have problems understanding code, **fear not!** There's an app for that! [CWGet](#) and [FLDigi](#) are two programs that can decode the code for you. They're both pretty accurate, depending on the signal strength. They are

connected to the computer via soundcard interface. Q codes are used a lot both during contests and on CW. [Here's a link to the PDF on the ARRL website](#) referencing Q codes. A good CW operator will slow down their speed to what is being received, usually to 18 WPM, however, I have found that those who use some software to decode will have 21 WPM set as a threshold. If you can't ever make contact with them, increase your speed.

Some newer rigs like the [Icom IC-7100, 7200, 7300, 7610](#), as well as other manufacturers, have a built in sound card interface using a USB B style cable (USB to the square looking end) common with printers. A nickel's worth of free advice here – ***use a good quality cable with a lot of shielding and ferrites! It will save you endless hours of heartburn when you have your rig connected to the computer and it keeps losing connection!***

Spotting another station or using spots during a contest depends on the rules. While not the same for every contest, it depends on what the operator's preferences are and how it will affect the class and points they are entered in. A good internet connection is required to use spots. This brings us to contest logging and the software used.

There are as many styles and methods of logging as there are flavors of ice cream. Some of the popular and common logging programs are [N1MM+](#) and [N3FJP](#). Both are good and relatively easy to operate and interface. I personally use N3FJP as my logging software.

The author of the software, Scott Davis, N3FJP and his wife, designed it to be easy to use and interface with most modern radios on the market today. It won't work with Heathkits or other vintage radios. I do know this software fairly well and as with all software and equipment, some operators have a personal favorite. This is mine.

With most radios, you must set up the string so the software will work with both the computer and radio. That includes the CI-V codes, ports and other information unique to the radio. Usually, you would need to change the port assignment either on the rig or in the software, as well as setting the comm ports. For more information, see your equipment's operating manual.

The software used for contesting and general logging are almost the same but are written for that particular contest. One thing that was added is an API, a way for the contest program to talk to the regular logging program (ACLog). This is an easier and more secure way to transfer data between programs.

Another advantage of using this software is when you operate as a team but not in the same location, and you can keep up with each other's scores or

contacts. We set up a website that was uploaded to every few minutes by the members computers and we could check the scores as we wished.

Mid Florida Group Total Score = 189,763

Current status: 01/20 06:12 UTC

Total uploader currently off line. Please see individual upload pages.

Call	Score	QSOs	20 Min	60 Min	Frequency
WA1PMA	73,224	648	72	73	7.21994
K2ADA	61,472	544	6	63	7.22850
KM4ZQE	33,616	382	36	50	7.19417
KC5CMX	13,135	185	3	11	0.000000
WA4IPU	8,316	132	0	13	

N3FJP Software: www.n3fjp.com

Serving the Amateur Radio community with contesting and general logging software since 1997.

When you are all at the same location, you can set up a network so everyone can see what bands & frequency everyone is operating, how many contacts have been made and what mode people are operating.

Network Status Display 1.2 (Ctrl N)

Phone:	160	80	60	40	30	20	17	15	12	10
CW:										
Digital:										
Phone:	6	2	1.25	70 cm	33 cm	23 cm	13 cm	9 cm	6 cm	3 cm
CW:										
Digital:										

This Station's Name: Server Name or IP: Set Msg Server to Log File Host Type message to send and press enter:

Message To (blank to broadcast):

This form is used to set up networking of multiple PCs to a common data file. If you are running this program 'Stand Alone', there is nothing that you'll need to configure here.

If you are interested in networking this program for a multi op contest, DXPedition or you just want to access your log from multiple PCs simultaneously at your home or club station, please read on! Better yet, click the Help button to your right below, which will take you to a web page that not only includes a more recent version of this text, but lots of graphics as well!

There's lots of explanation below, including how to network your PCs, enable the band status and messaging. If you are setting up for Field Day it is a MUST READ, but in short, to network multiple PCs, simply put your log file in a location that is accessible to all the PCs you wish to network by clicking File > Save As. Then, from the other PCs, click File > Open, navigate to the file and select it. Any contacts you enter should appear on all PCs in a minute or less (depending on the refresh rate you set). That's all there is to it!

For the rest of the story, some of the emphasis is on Field Day as that environment is the ultimate test of any network, but the information below applies to networking all of my software.

There are now two methods for networking my software - File Share and TCP. File Share has been used very

Server and clients connected

Network Method:
 File Share TCP

Enable Status / Chat Functions

Sync Clocks

Status: Disconnected

Uploading to DX Spots using this software is simple. Go to settings, select dx spots and enable it! When you make a contact, you have the option to automatically upload the information to the spotting network or you can do it manually. When someone spots you (yes, they'll do that!), your screen will light up and let you know. If you have the audio configured properly, you can even hear the author's wife say, "Needed spot" or "Duplicate".

I don't want to say too much on paper logging, except to say it's essential to know how to do so. DATE, TIME, CALL, BAND, MODE, SIGNAL REPORT & any other comments are the essentials. Just like in ACLog, you can mark off if you have sent or received QSL cards. Paper logs are *very important* to know how to do, and Murphy does come to visit at the worst possible time!

Another advantage to using ACLog software is it will allow you to update ARRL's Logbook of the World (LOTW), eQSL, QRZ and other databases. You may also download the logs from various sites, but a word of warning!!! *If you use multiple sites, you run the risk of duplicates or the information not matching exactly. This will in turn create a mess that you will need to straighten out.* I recommend **strongly** in backing up your ADI files BEFORE downloading anything from anyone, other than the ARRL or you will be downloading an endless headache of it goes belly up!

The author of the N3FJP software sometime makes changes to it, so I recommend checking for updates at least one week PRIOR to an event. Also, check out and make sure the computer network you set up works WELL IN ADVANCE of the event.

One last item, etiquette at a contest site. Most operators, especially me, when operating a contest *do not* appreciate crosstalk and distractions. When operating, I am in contest mode and that means concentrating on the contest! *It is **highly recommended** that you do not interrupt or distract the operator(s)* during a contest! They are not responsible for any objects that may be tossed your way (nerf balls, water bottles, soda cans, etc.) hihi 😊

With that, I will say I hope to see you in February at Hamcation in Orlando. If you can't make it, I'll understand. There's plenty of contests coming up including CQ WW WPX SSB in March and the CW comes up in May. I love to work the contests when I can, and I really hope to hear YOU on the bands!
73!