

Ten Sure Fire Ways to Improve QSO counts in RTTY Contests” Rate ?
Dayton RTTY Forum 2003
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1. Develop your plan of action prior to the contest

- If this is a contest in your area, review your previous efforts. If it's a contest in a guest situation then ask lots of questions and read everything you can get your hands on.
- Good sources are other operator's logs. Just ask them you will be amazed. This is the only sport where others are always glad to help.
- Check out what others have done in different modes. There are usually those who have been there before you
- Seek advice from those you find approachable. Send an email ask for advice.
- Depending on the year, the bands with the highest number of QSO's will interchange; during sunspot maxims it will almost certainly be 10 or 15 meters, while during minimums 20 is almost certainly the best bet.
- You should look at your QSO total curve shape as you enter the last half of a contest and understand just which bands to emphasize. After the contest, you can use this same process to help decide which antennas to redesign for the next season—ugh.
- After developing your plan of action. Work the plan throughout the contest

2. Fix your message buffers so that they work for you

- When running stations you, the operator, must convey the need for urgency through your operating practice. Message buffers help do this
- Short and concise but verify to keep the error rate as low as possible
- For polar paths the exchange needs to be longer so I tend to use two buffer setups. One for Stateside and one for polar
- Here is one way to handle those guy's who call with the exchange out-of-order. Try it you might like it. (example of F11).

3. Work

- This is the most important of all 10 points and is the area where you can gain the most in improving your score. When to run – when to Search and Pounce. Or is there a better method?
- Here is my method. When you start on a new band, start at the low end and proceed up. You may be able to work stations this way at about half of your good run rate, and at the same time find many of those needed multipliers using S & P
- Then, as you find a moderately clear frequency, try your CQ four or five times. If it does not work, continue up the band doing the same thing periodically. If conditions are not in your favor and the CQ does not work, a full band pass should not take more than about a half-hour and then you can try another band.
- When your CQ rate starts working then using the “Search & Pounce” memories in Writelog click on that freq. This is now your new base of operations. I then on the first lull click on the second VFO, move it to the top of the band, go way up. Say 140. That will be your new top. Next lull go way down. Save this, as well that will be the bottom. Now each and every time you don’t get an answer click either high or low and find the next station. Add it to S& P memory. Then quickly back to CQ, don’t work it yet, and next lull click and work. Then back to CQ, then reverse directions. It takes the 3 memories to do this and radio control.
- Do not make the mistake of staying in a huge pileup for too long—a multiplier will be worth only 3 to 10 QSO’s depending on the contest. The idea is to get the mults while Cqing and to get everything on the band you are on. This is really kind of like the SOMR (Single Operator Multi Radio) techniques but is useful in both single operator and in Multi-operator contesting.
- Always remember you are not simply DXing, but trying to maximize your contest score. Continue to work the plan. Avoid the mental lapse

4. Know your antennas - Strengths vs. Weakness

- If 40 is your best band then work that into your plan
- If you have a band you consider less competitive due to a modest antenna, it is frequently best to concentrate on the other bands and save that one until later in the contest. By that time most of the really big guns will be out of the way, and you can catch up in a relatively short time.
- A triband beam on 20 meters will not keep up with the big guns—you must sandbag there until late in the contest.
- You will not want to open the contest on 75 meters with a 70-foot high dipole even if you are on the East Coast.

- If you have one particular band with a really big antenna, stay with that advantage as long as it is productive.

5. What's good West, is different East, in the Heartland, or South

- West Coast is easy – work the Pacific on Friday and Saturday as it won't be there on Sunday afternoon
- West Coast – Work the highest band open and stay on it..run like crazy. When you own the JA's ..work the JA's, when you finally get your chance at Europe stay on them at all costs.
- West Coast gets the last shot on all DX, so you had better not miss it. Know what is on the band/bands before its your turn to work it
- East Coast – Even easier just point all Antennas at Europe and call CQ
- East Coast—Gee these low bands are easy for me to work Europe. Actually now that I have been there its actually easier to work everywhere from the East Coast. First shot on all DX
- East Coast – Don't forget those State and Province Multipliers
- Heartland – Nothing is easy its all work and you had better have two sets of antennas with the East on one side and the West Coast on the other.
- Heartland – Easy to work all of those W2's and W6's. As to the “black hole,” that is how it got its name—it is good throughout every opening, but seldom is dominant for long.
- South – Why is it that half of the DXCC RTTY Honor Roll guys are from New Orleans and why does Don AA5AU always win. Or is it Gee, nice that K5DJ seems to be selling so much Writelog that he can't find time to contest anymore.
- South – Strange antenna path's exist. Better ask one of the locals.
- South – Rare that we get quite as much Europe so put up more antennas but Asia is always so much easier

6. When do the bands open, and to where?

- I can tell you that sunrise and a few minutes right before, no matter where you are is very special.

- Two hours after sunrise on the West Coast has always been special we get long-path to Europe and to Asia on 40 and 80, If only we could get more stations there to just listen for us
- Sunset – Another magic moment in time
- Make those band changes quickly going up in frequency as necessary to keep the QSO rate highest. Remember, the higher the frequency band the shorter the opening will be in a given direction—you can not get those QSO's back later.
- You should reach your peak QSO's per hour rate, i.e. rate, during either the evening or morning opening. Watch the computer short-term rate meter carefully

7. When do I take my off-time/times?

- I'm old I like to take my off-hours when I like to sleep. Midnight to Six AM. If I am guest operating I adjust on my normal clock.
- High noon always has seemed slow

8. Low bands vs. high bands

- Sunspots and the ever changing cycle sure help in this decision
- Rules and points per QSO also help
- Check for double mults in some contests
- Location, location, location
- The real situation is never an Ideal one, and so it is with a contest QSO rate. There are the freak openings that can yield many special multipliers. Then, almost every station has at least one band where the owner perceives the antennas as "really working," and at least one they perceive as not really that competitive.

9. Maximize the score

- QSO's (points) times multipliers
- Rate i.e. number of QSO's is meaningless unless the multiplier is also optimized
- Searching for multipliers takes away from running stations

- Less optimum antenna directions and bands must be used hoping for multipliers to call
- Tradeoff between more QSO's on the hot bands versus more mults on slow bands like 80 and 40, or 10 during sunspot low

10. Where to operate on the band

- Get there early and have a place in mind. This is why you hear so many people prior to the start of the contest. Pick your band based on your plan
- In order to get the greatest number of QSO's in the log, try to stay with the highest frequency band which is really open, the band that can produce the most QSO's per hour at that time.
- Even if you're not – act like you are loud. Sunrise and sunset are the extremely critical periods on 10, 15 and 20
- Lower Power means higher or lower in the band. Don't try to battle in kilowatt alley. Those with filters – 250 Hz can operate in the thick of things.
- Don't be intimidated by those without filters. Sorry, but that's their problem. A RTTY signal is narrow so it requires narrow filters.
- Keep out of the frequency battles unless you are either (a) not serious or (b) don't care about the final score
- Remember that often times the other station doesn't really know that you are there. Propagation varies that much. Also be aware of who is on your frequency. During a lull ask the prime direction if your QRG is clear. This is especially true of the far East or the Far West. Often they can't actually hear each other.

Conclusion: Good operators are just plain good! However, they do have an excellent working knowledge of propagation from their area, they really know how their antenna systems get out band-by-band, they really know how to use their receivers, demodulators, software, and they have years of practice.