

How to Make Your First CW QSO

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Here is some information on how to make your first CW QSO, probably on one of the Novice bands. One of the major stumbling blocks to starting to work CW is the fear that your CW ability is not good enough. Always remember item #2 below if you panic on your first attempt, but keep trying.

Here are some comments first:

1. Don't be afraid. (Boy, that's easier said than done)
2. Remember, it is easy to get out of any situation; you just turn off the main switch.
3. If the station is going too fast for you to copy, tell him to QRS. If he won't do it, he isn't worth making a contact.

What to do first?

1. First, listen around the band.
2. Second, decide whether you are going to call CQ or answer a CQ. Of course in part this depends on whether or not you hear a station calling CQ.

How do you start?

1. First, listen around the band.
2. Pick one of the low bands first, since you probably will not have so much QRM to worry about.
3. Spend some time listening around the band to get an idea of how it is done by listening.

How About some operating aids?

The ARRL makes available a number of operating aids. These can be obtained separately or from their two publications listed below:

1. How to Operate An Amateur Radio Station
2. The ARRL Operating Manual.

You can also find some operating information in *The ARRL Handbook*.

Aids include:

1. Signal report card (RST values)
2. List of Q signals.
3. List of abbreviations of words. (Phillips Code).
4. List of bands and frequencies available to amateurs.
5. Map of Call Sign areas and calls of other countries.
6. Information on WAS (Worked All States) and other operating awards.

How do you proceed to have a QSO?

The first thing to do is listen on the band you using. Listening will give you an idea of band conditions and who is operating at that particular time. You probably will have trouble copying some stations because they are going too fast. Don't worry. Just find stations who you can copy, if there are any. If everyone is going too fast, then call CQ at the speed you think you can copy. Here are three choice of what you can do after you listen around the band:

Call CQ.

Answer someone else's CQ

Arrange a QSO with s friend.

When you are ready to 8tart, use the QSO sheets below. They are made so that you can either make copies of each page and use each copy once, or you can cover each page with a sheet of plastic and then use a felt pen to fill in the blanks for each contact you make.

Note: you probably won't have to use the QSO sheets very long, but they are a good way for you to write down what you are going say for your first few contacts..

To Call CQ

To call CQ, use the following pattern:

(Example)

CQ CQ CQ DE KB6XXX KB6XXX KB6XXX

CQ CQ CQ DE KB6XXX KB6XXX KB6XXX

CQ CQ CQ DE KB6XXX KB6XXX KB6XXX K

Notes:

1. It is best to call several short CQs as above than a long CQ.
2. After calling as above, listen on your transmitting frequency first and then tune up and down band.
3. If you do not find someone calling you in 2 or 3 minutes, call CQ again- It is probably best to do this three times on the same frequency and then move to a new frequency if you do not get a response.
4. If you get NO response after several tries on several frequencies, do not assume your equipment is bad. It may be that conditions are just not allowing your signal to go very far.

Note: Use the CQ lines below as a script if necessary and just read off of the lines as you go along, especially if you are just starting out and have let your code speed slide.

CALL CQ AT A SPEED YOU CAN COPY EVEN IF IT IS JUST THREE WORDS PER MINUTE

Fill in your call and copy from this:

CQ CQ CQ DE _____

CQ CQ CQ DE _____

CQ CQ CQ DE _____ K

QSO Exchange Number One

Use the following when you first come back to a station who has answered your CQ: (fill in his call and your call and then use this script.)

His call (twice)

Your call (twice)

_____ DE _____

R R OK OM THX FOR COMING BAK BT

UR SIGS RST 5 7 9 IMI RST 5 7 9

IN _____ IMI _____ BT

NAME HR IS _____ IMI

_____ BT SO WHAT SA IMI

_____ DE _____ AR K

Notes:

1. Fill in your name and call in the spaces provided above
2. IMI is the repeat sign sent “di di da da di di” and it is also the question mark.
3. A tip: use BT “da di di di da” as often as you like in fill space while you think of something to say.
4. You can use QTH for your location if you like saying “QTH HR IS (your QTH)”
5. If you make a mistake just go “di di di di di di di di”, repeat the word and go on. Don’t be afraid to make mistakes, even the best and most experienced operators do.
6. Signal report above depends on how well you copy the station. When copying a station, use 8 ½ x 11 paper and write or print or do whatever you like. If you miss something, don’t worry about it.

QSO Exchange Number Two

This is a suggested exchange for you to use the second go around. Notice, that it also has an ending QSO section. You can either go on for a further exchange, or end at this point: (Fill in you call and other information in the spaces provided so that you can just copy this on the air.)

_____ DE _____ R
OK _____ TNX FER THE RPT FROM _____ BT
RIG HR IS _____ ES
ANTENNA IS _____ BT
WX HR IS _____ ES
TEMP IS _____ DEGREES BT
WELL QRU HR BT TNX FOR QSO ES VY
73 ES GE SK _____ DE _____ GE SK

Notes:

1. Fill in both call signs as necessary, his name and QTH, your rig and antenna and WX (weather) information.
2. You could ask him how his weather is and about his equipment if you wish to keep the QSO going and not go on to the ending of the QSO. It is however, suggested that you make your first QSO's short.
3. You can use the same information when answering a station when you have answered his CQ and he has come back to your.
4. ES (dit di di dit) means AND. Note that you can use this sheet to fill in his name and QTH and have it ready when you go back for the second go around.

QSO Exchange Number Three

Use this sheet when you go back to a station who has come back to you when you answered his CQ. You should have copied the report he gave you, his name and QTH and any other information. If you missed any of these, you can ask him to repeat. For this example we assume you missed his name. (Fill in his call and your call and other information and use this as a "script.")

_____ DE _____ R R

TNX FER THE RPT BT UR SIGS

RST _____ IMI _____ BT QTH IS

_____ IMI _____

ES NAME IS _____ BT

PLEASE REPEAT UR NAME IMI REPEAT

UR NAME AR _____ DE _____ KN

Notes:

1. If you missed nothing, you might ask him what his weather is like or perhaps what kind of equipment he is using.
2. You might also ask about QSLing, and you might give him your mailing address and ask for his.
3. Collecting QSL cards can be fun and you might want to work towards WAS or other awards.