

Newcomers and Elmers Net – Local and DX Contacts Robert/AK3Q 9/1/13

Local contacts

Experienced hams hardly think anything about talking on repeaters because it has become second nature to them

- for the newcomer, it can seem rather daunting
- for the experienced ham it can be easy to forget good protocol
- tonight I will review some basics and then we'll do some hands-on practice
- by way of review, always say your call clearly and slowly enough for someone to understand you call – even when checking into a net you have checked in before
- most nets are not rushed, and even an emergency net where things are happening fast, clarity and accuracy keep things from having to be repeated, saving time in the long run
- When putting your call out or responding to a call on a repeater, give time for the repeater to hear you and time for the other person to turn their attention to the radio
- If answering someone, repeat as much of their call as possible to alert them that you heard their call, and then give your call

Roundtable discussions

When several folks are on a repeater talking (or even on simplex or HF frequencies, a roundtable format usually develops

- the idea is that we try not to leave anyone out of the discussion
- helps to avoid a lot of dead air
- sometimes two people talk back and forth for a few minutes directly, but then return to the roundtable format
- pauses are regularly made to allow someone else to join in

DX Contacts

DXing (making distant contacts) is a special kind of amateur radio activity, in some ways, the original motivation for people to get involved in radio

- I confess it is my first passion in ham radio
- DXing is relative – depending on the band it could be a few hundred miles, but typically DXing is considered contacts in another country
- DXing is a lot like fishing – sure, you can buy fish at the grocery store, and you can use the Internet to talk to people around the world
- But catching dinner is far more challenging, and working distant countries from one radio to another is a special kind of thrill
- A lot of folks think DXing is all about equipment. In reality, even very modest equipment can make contacts around the world

- The oldest antennas are simple wire antennas, and they still allow you to work around the world
- I have worked every continent from here with 100 watts or less and a simple wire antenna
- I have around 120 different countries, and my numbers are low compared to a lot of folks who chase DX
- There are folks who have worked over 200 countries each on 5 bands or more

The secret is in listening more than you talk

- listening does a lot of things: it lets you learn how the DX station is working their contacts
- you learn what information is being asked for by the DX station (and since they are the reason there is a pileup, they get to set the flow)
- listening helps you learn the speed and style of the DX operator
- this has gotten me more DX contacts than anything else
- for example, you can learn how the DX station ends their contact—do they pause and then give their call; or do they simply say QRZ and wait for new calls
- similarly, you can learn how they answer a new call—do they take the first strong signal they hear, or do they wait for the crowd to thin and take a station they can understand more easily?
- Many times you can pause a bit before putting out your call and be heard more easily – this is called “trailing”; I have used that technique quite often and sometimes will get recognized on the first or second call
- Other times I still have to keep at it for 20 minutes or more to make the contact
- Also you can listen to make sure they are not calling for specific regions or call numbers; e.g. “stations with the number 3 only, please” or “only DX from the West Coast”
- Most DX happens on the lowest portions of the bands – start in lowest section of the band your license allows and then move up as you can
- On contest weekends you will find folks all over a band for DX; usually things will be quite crowded all along the band
- On non-contest days DX will tend to gather in the lower portions of the bands
- If working during a contest time you need to learn what information is required for the contest, even if you are not going to submit a log – you want to give the other station the information they need.
- During non-contest times or when there is not a pileup, you will want to call the DX station by first using their call sign and then saying yours (e.g. “delta lima seven x-ray tango (DL7XT), this is AK3Q, alpha kilo three quebec”)

- DX contacts tend to be shorter than local contacts; let the DX station take the lead; if they are willing to talk more than just sending a signal report, by all means talk with them; if they want to end it quickly, then let them do so
- Send your signal report back, than them for the contact, and wish them 73, and end with your call sign
- Ask for any clarifications to make sure you have the contact information correct; they may do the same
- Never interrupt a contact (QSO) unless invited when it is DX – if several folks are talking you attempt to join in by giving your call when there is a break in the conversation
- Keep in mind they may not be able to hear you, or they may not want to add someone to the conversation
- Don't assume you are being ignored; if you try to join in by giving your call and no one responds, don't do it again more than once
- Also make sure you do not tune up your radio over a conversation— move to a free frequency nearby to tune if needed

DX Code of Conduct

- I will listen, and listen, and then listen again before calling.
- I will only call if I can copy the DX station properly.
- I will not trust the DX cluster and will be sure of the DX station's call sign before calling.
- I will not interfere with the DX station nor anyone calling and will never tune up on the DX frequency or in the QSO slot.
- I will wait for the DX station to end a contact before I call.
- I will always send my full call sign.
- I will call and then listen for a reasonable interval. I will not call continuously.
- I will not transmit when the DX operator calls another call sign, not mine.
- I will not transmit when the DX operator queries a call sign not like mine.
- I will not transmit when the DX station requests geographic areas other than mine.
- When the DX operator calls me, I will not repeat my call sign unless I think he has copied it incorrectly.
- I will be thankful if and when I do make a contact.
- I will respect my fellow hams and conduct myself so as to earn their respect.