

How do I?

An occasional series

This week: FT8 with JTALERT

This is not a condensed version of the Hinson FT Operating Guide or the excellent resources on DR Joe Taylor's WSJT home page (see links below). Many of the Cumberland Amateur Radio Club (CARC) members use the N3FJP logging software. The club has used Scott's Field Day logger for longer than I have been a member. It is solid and it works. For 2019 we expect to use FT8 on a larger scale at Field Day. The WSJT-X software has built in logging which is easily exported in ADIF format to N3FJP, but there is an easier way. JTAlert is a free piece of add on software that does several things.

JTAlert can be easily configured to log your QSO directly to N3FJP. When you click on a call sign in WSJT-X it fills in the call sign in JTALERT and lets you view band, mode, state/country/continent and CQ and ITU zones. You can click on the call sign and see if it is new, or if you have worked them before. It also opens the contact info box in N3FJP and prebills what it knows. When you complete the QSO and click "log it" in WSJT-X it completes the info in the N3JFP logger and a confirmation box pops up. simply click OK and move onto the next FT8 QSO. JTAlert was originally designed for JT65 and JT9 modes. Please be sure you are using the version with the red X icon for FT8.

I have not used it very much yet, but JTAlert's primary use is to notify you when a wanted call sign prefix, state, grid square, country, DXCC entity, etc is on the air, or when someone is calling you. Our resident JTAlert expert uses JTAlert to sound an alert when something he wants is on the air.

JTAlert can also monitor several reporting sites and display the number of TX and RX stations on various bands. This allows you to quickly see where the activity is and hopefully make better use of the time spent playing radio.

JTAlert has several configuration screens. On one you can set it to show you if someone is a Logbook of the World (LOTW) user or E-QSL member. You can also set it to only show those who do both. If you are paper chasing, knowing up front who is a member of either can increase the odds of making a QSO that will be QSL'd.

Some useful hints:

1. WSJT-X needs to be the only user of your sound card and/or CAT control. If you have rig control activated in N3FJP the two will fight. You need to turn it off in N3FJP.
2. Start N3FJP first and minimize it on the task bar. Then start WSJT-X then start JTAlert.
3. This is not related to JTAlert but I have found you need to follow the Hinson Guide and set your WSJT-X transmit frequency to 1500-2000 hz; preferably around 1750. I found that if I go above or below that range that WSJT-X wants to move the transmit frequency 500hz every time it goes into transmit. So if you start on 7074 by the time you are done you will be up around 7078 or down to 7072. Not good. If you stay around 1750 the radio display doesn't change.

I am still not sure I "like" FT8, but I have made a lot of qso's this winter I could not have made otherwise.

Catch ya on the air!

Links:

K1JT home page

<https://physics.princeton.edu/pulsar/k1jt/>

Hinson FT Guide

https://www.g4ifb.com/FT8_Hinson_tips_for_HF_DXers.pdf

JTAlert download

<https://qrznow.com/jtalert-is-available-download/>