

How do I?



An occasional series

This week: Please log with LoTW or EQSL!

Warning: This will become a bit of a rant. I was hoping to write about FT4, a new digital mode from Joe K1JT. But FT4 is in beta testing and has some kinks that need worked out yet, so it will not be really mainstream until later this summer. I have not tried it myself, but initial reports indicate it is not as robust as FT8 and while some see it is a eliminating RTTY (Radio Teletype-see *Digital Modes* elsewhere in this series), I think at this time most see it as a potential way to rack up large numbers of contacts (QSO's), but that FT8 will still be the most used WSJT-X mode. Some users think that FT4 requires higher power than FT8. This could be a problem for the typical 100 watt home station as higher power at longer duty cycles may require some equipment upgrades. We will have to see how all this plays out. So rather than write about something that could really change in the next two or three months, I am going off on a tangent. Ever realize how you go on a tangent when you divert away from the main subject, but a tangent is a straight line? Odd. Also the longest section of tangent, (straight) railroad track in the country is on the former Seaboard Air Line in South Carolina. Approximately 79 miles. I think our tangent just took a tangent, so we better get back on subject. I hear our esteemed editor sighing as he reaches for the red pencil already!

I follow the WSJT-X Yahoo users group and have read a few “reviews” of FT8 and FT4 elsewhere. Every human has their own opinions, but I am troubled by two themes I see repeated.

The first is “Most stations upload to LoTW and e-QSL many times, some after each QSO. I don't do either”.

Why? No offense, but you are smarter than the average bear if you are using any of the WSJT-X modes and LoTW is very easy to set up and use. EQSL is also easy to set up and both are free. Never met a ham who didn't like free! And because the WSJT-X modes were primarily designed to collect grid squares and for DX (country to country) work, users really appreciate the logging of contacts made in LoTW and E-QSL. In fact, WSJT-X has links right into LoTW to make it easier, and if you use JTAlert (see *WSJT-X and JTAlert* elsewhere in this series), you can tell before you initiate the QSO if the other operator uses LoTW! And this may sound mean, but if I want a particular grid or DX

entity, and there are 2 people calling CQ and one is a confirmed LoTW user and the other isn't, guess who I am going to reply to first? and I may not respond to the other at all. Amateur radio is a hobby. It competes for time with life. Why deliberately limit yourself when you already have everything you need to use LoTW or EQSL if you are using the WSJT-X modes?

If you didn't have a computer or internet, I'd understand completely. But WSJT-X requires a computer and about 99 percent of WSJT-X users use an internet based time service such as Dimension 4 to keep the computer synchronized.

The second theme I hear repeated is that many new FT8 users are using digital modes and connecting a radio to their computer for the first time. That isn't the problem. *The problem is they refuse to read any of the reference materials ahead of time.* Joe K1JT has an excellent guide for his software and Gary Hinson has an even more readable one. I think of Hinson as the WSJT-X bible. Then since they haven't read it, or taken any notes, every time it doesn't work right there is a "bug". No, it's not a bug; you need to follow the instructions. So then instead of reading the reference material, they fire off an email to the WSJT-X group about this "bug". Which has probably already been "found" and all of the emails are in the archives. But no. "I cannot be bothered to look anything up. I want my problem fixed now, by K1JT personally!" Which sets off about another 100 emails reminding the writer that Joe, K1JT is a great guy, has a real job, radio is only a hobby for everyone, and by golly, your problem is not a bug and this is what you need to do. And reading all those emails takes away from my time to play radio! I know, I delete most, but some of them can be kinda funny.

Digital modes such as PSK31, FT8, FT4 etc are not for everyone. I know many folks who prefer a friendly rag chew on phone when they operate. Or who pound brass with the best of them on straight key night. But if you are going to operate on digital modes, please do yourself a favor and join the 100,000 or so LoTW users and watch the confirmed QSL's pile up in your logbook. For many, LoTW is the only way they log. Personally I use LoTW, EQSL and paper cards.

See below for links to the K1JT and Hinson references, JTAAlert and LOTW and EQSL.

See ya down the log!

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/>

LOTW

<http://www.arrl.org/logbook-of-the-world>

EQSL

<https://www.eqsl.cc>