

*How do I?*

*An occasional series*

*This week: Phonetics and Phone*

Until radio was nearly two decades old, Morse Code or CW (wireless telegraphy) was the only way to transmit messages via radio. After WWI, technology improved as vacuum tubes were developed and voice over radio (VOR), or (phone) became possible. This technology developed through the 1930s and really reached the amateur radio community after WWII. Due to propagation conditions, pronunciation, regional dialects, and other language barriers, it was quickly realized that VOR required a phonetic alphabet. Many were created and probably just as many claim to be the first. But the one phonetic alphabet that has survived is the (NATO) alphabet or the (IATA) [International Air Transport Association] alphabet. They are identical and were developed in the 1950s around the same time.

<b>A</b>	<b>Alpha</b>	<b>J</b>	<b>Juliet</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>Sierra</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>Bravo</b>	<b>K</b>	<b>Kilowatt</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>Tango</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>Charlie</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>Lima</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>Uniform</b>
<b>D</b>	<b>Delta</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>Mike</b>	<b>V</b>	<b>Victor</b>
<b>E</b>	<b>Echo</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>November</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>Whiskey</b>
<b>F</b>	<b>Foxtrot</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>Oscar</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X-Ray</b>
<b>G</b>	<b>Golf</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Papa</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Yankee</b>
<b>H</b>	<b>Hotel</b>	<b>Q</b>	<b>Quebec</b>	<b>Z</b>	<b>Zulu</b>
<b>I</b>	<b>India</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>Romeo</b>		

The above is standard. You may occasionally hear the old, non-standard Los Angeles Police Department version that uses William for Whiskey, among other changes, or the WWII USA armed forces (Able, Baker, Charlie, Dog, Easy, Fox) version. Those are non-standard.

Some DXers use L- London, P-Portugal, Z-Zanzibar and a few other variations that have an international flavor. My call sign (KB3PQT) includes a Papa and a Quebec. Some folks seem to struggle with those letters, so after unsuccessfully trying the official phonetic alphabet, I will use Portugal and Queen, which sometimes works and sometimes I get yelled at for deviating from the standard. Use non-standard versions of the phonetic alphabet at your own peril.

Catchya on the air!