

How do I?

An occasional series

This week: Planning & Equipping
A POTA Activation

Whether its ARRL Field Day, The PA State QSO Party, activating a park for Parks on the Air, or just operating from someplace new, it's fun to get outside.

Long time readers of this space will see there are many articles on radios, antennas, and other tips and tricks for operating away from your home station. See <https://www.radioclub-carc.com/resources/> for more articles.

Parks On The Air (POTA) has become one of the more popular radiosport events.

We have discussed portable operations elsewhere in this series, but today let's take a look at some specific things to planning a successful activation.

Some activations are easier than others. Just taking your 2 meter mobile rig in your car to a park parking lot is a lot easier than hiking thousands of miles making your contacts with a QRP rig and bare bones station.

But some techniques apply to all activations. This will be more than long enough if we just discuss those. Go get some coffee and read on!

1. Know before you go!

You started with the POTA map [Parks on the Air | POTA](#)

You found a likely park. But you are completely unfamiliar with it.

There are resources for that!.

Google Maps

Google Earth

Pennsylvania has [Find a Forest \(pa.gov\)](#)

[State Park Maps](#)

[State Game Lands \(pa.gov\)](#)

National Park Service [Find a National Park Service Map - GIS, Cartography & Mapping \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](#) which seems to be anything administered by the Park Service.

SC Maps has a variety of maps by state, in print and ebook.

[Pennsylvania All-Outdoors Atlases | Sportsman's Connection \(scmaps.com\)](#)

Personal scouting may be necessary to find the best spot. If that is not practical, the resources above and others are your friends. And be prepared to adjust on the fly.

2. Equipment

While you probably already are salivating at the chance to play radio outside, you need more than just your favorite transceiver and antenna. Some considerations:

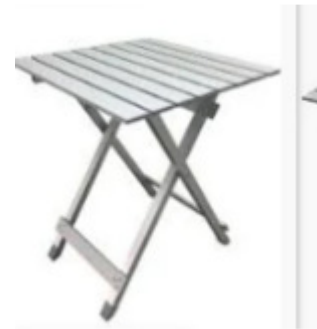
You may just be able to roll in and set up at a convenient picnic table. So typically just need to add a battery and whatever you are using for logging.

But if not, you need a **table**. While an ordinary folding table will do, I have found two lighter options.

One is an Ozark Trail Camping Table.

It is sort of like a TV tray but larger and very light.

Ozark Trail can be found at Walmart and Amazon. Cabela's sells the same table under their brand.



Ozark trail also sells a three-piece aluminum roll top table.

It is only about 17" high, so it's like a coffee table, while the one above is more like a TV tray in height. The roll top table holds 110 pounds. It breaks down into a carry bag and is more compact and portable than a standard table.



Another, but heavier, option is a Ozark Trail steel and aluminum table with four stools.

It has an MDF top, which adds even more weight.



These chairs can be nice, but a standard folding **chair** can provide more back support if sitting for a long time.



Shade. Trees are nice, but they may not be where you need to be. On a hatchback vehicle, if you lift the hatch and cover the back window with a blanket, it can provide shade.

Another option could be a 6'x6' canopy. A 10'x10' or 12'x12' is a nice size for larger groups, but for 1 or 2 people, a 6'x6' should work. The prices on them have reached what I paid for my larger one a few years ago.

Tools. So you have the transceiver, feedline, antenna, coax, some type of power source, logging materials, snacks and hydration. All set? Nope, Murphy can be particularly active.

Carry some basic tools: zip ties, duct tape, electrical tape, screw driver, pliers are good. Having the ability to replace ring connectors and Anderson Power Poles if needed can be even better.

Catch 'ya on the air!