

How do I?

An occasional series

This week: Sending QSL Cards Via the Bureau

Elsewhere in the *How Do I...* series we have described the process of making sure you are prepared to receive QSL cards via the Incoming QSL Bureau that serves your call area. See the article titled: **Receiving DX QSL Cards via the Bureau** for the full story.

Today we are going to make a ham radio operator happy by sending him or her a QSL card via the ARRL Outgoing QSL Bureau.

For starters, let's mention that a QSL card is proof of having made a radio contact. QSL cards can be used as proof of performance when claiming an award such as the DX Century Club.

And, let's also mention that QSL Bureaus in the USA, either Incoming or Outgoing, handle QSL cards exchanged between an American amateur radio operator and a DX station. These QSL Bureaus do not handle QSL cards for same-country QSOs between two stations.

Many radio clubs at the size and scope of a "National Association" provide a QSL Card Sending and Receiving service. Some charge a fee for using these services. Others include use of the service as part of the standard membership fee.

Germany has a relatively small number of amateur radio operators. The national association is the DARC. In Germany, all local clubs are DARC affiliated.

One of the advantages of being a German amateur is that by joining your local club and DARC, you have access to their QSL distribution network. As I understand it, whether you want to send a QSL card across town, or across the planet, you simply take it to a club meeting. The QSL representative collects your card and forwards it as appropriate.

In the United States, QSL Bureau card processing is sort of a split system. Inbound cards arriving from DX stations are routed to Incoming QSL Bureau Sponsors. Typically, there is one Incoming QSL Bureau for each of the Call Sign Areas 1 through 10, plus Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, US Virgin Islands, and Guam. No other US Territories participate in the QSL Bureaus.

Outbound QSL Bureau cards are handled through the ARRL Headquarters offices in Newington, Connecticut. You must be a current ARRL member to use this service.

ARRL charges a fee for using their Outbound QSL Bureau. For small quantities of QSL cards the fee is based on the number of cards you are sending in a given batch. For larger quantities of QSL cards the fee is based on the combined weight of all cards you are sending. In a given batch.

The current price tiers (in 2023) are:

\$2.00 for sending 10 or fewer cards in a batch.

\$3.00 for sending 11 to 20 cards in a batch.

75 cents per ounce for sending 21 or more cards in a batch.

At a high level, sending your QSL Cards via the ARRL Outbound QSL Bureau involves the following steps:

- Gather the QSL cards that you wish to send via the bureau.
- Sort the cards by DX country prefix, as instructed by the ARRL.
- Produce proof of your current standing as an ARRL Member.
- Prepare the QSL card submission form. This form can be downloaded from the ARRL website.
- Calculate the ARRL processing fee based on the actual number or actual weight of the cards you are sending.
- Write a check or purchase a Money Order to cover the fee.
- Package your cards according to ARRL instructions. Include proof of membership, the submission form and your payment.
- Mail or ship your pre-paid package to the ARRL Outgoing QSL Service.

Additional and Supporting Details:

- ❖ Gather the QSL Cards that you wish to send via the bureau.

Some countries do not have a QSL Bureau. Do not include cards to countries that do not operate their own QSL Bureau. These countries are listed on the ARRL website

Some countries that have a QSL Bureau will not process cards for non-members. A listing of such countries appears on the ARRL website. If you have a card to send to one or more of these countries you should verify how the DX station wants to receive your QSL card. You may find his or her instructions on the QRZ.com website.

Some DX stations use the services of a QSL Manager. When preparing your DX QSL Cards be mindful of any QSL Managers and list their call sign following the DX station call sign. For example: **PZ5CO via UA2RF** indicates that UA2RF is the QSL Manager for PZ5CO.

- ❖ Sort the cards by DX call sign country prefix.

Some countries assign more than one call sign country prefix. France is an example. The letter F is the primary prefix for France. France also issues TM call signs. Both the letter F and the letters TM should be sorted and grouped together for shipment to France.

DX QSL Cards that make use of a QSL Manager should be sorted according to the QSL Card Manager's country prefix. For example, PZ5CO via UA2RF should be sorted and grouped with UA cards.

Do not use staples, clips, elastic bands, or other separators between cards.

Be consistent in the placement and positioning of the cards. They should be faced in a consistent direction.

❖ Produce proof of your Current Standing as an ARRL Member.

The traditional method is to photocopy the mailing label affixed to your issue of QST Magazine. You may photocopy your ARRL Membership Card as proof. If you do not have access to a photocopy machine you can hand-write your ARRL membership number on a sheet of paper and use that as proof.

❖ Prepare the QSL card submission form.

This form serves as a collection point for the information ARRL needs in order to process your outgoing QSL Card shipment.

❖ Calculate the ARRL processing fee

For small batches, count the cards and refer to the pricing tiers..

For larger batches of 21 cards or more, obtain an accurate weight of the cards. Your local Post Office may be able to assist in weighing the cards themselves to determine the number of ounces. Do not include the weight of the shipping carton.

❖ Write a check or purchase a Money Order to cover the fee.

Write checks payable to **The ARRL Outgoing QSL Service**

Write your call sign on the check or money order.

Do not send cash, postage stamps or International Reply Coupons (IRC) as payment.

Packages arriving without sufficient payment will be held unprocessed until payment in full is received.

❖ Package your cards according to ARRL instructions.

Include proof of membership, the submission form, your payment, and the cards.

❖ Mail or ship your pre-paid package to the ARRL Outgoing QSL Service

ARRL Outgoing QSL Service

225 Main St.

Newington, CT 06111-1494

For the most up-to-date information you may wish to visit the ARRL website. There is a tremendously granular level of detail at their website. This document does not attempt to duplicate every nuance of the ARRL instructions.

<http://www.arrl.org/outgoing-qsl-service>

Anything you may find on the ARRL website takes precedence over anything found in this document. The information shown in this document should be taken as a high-level summary.

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