
RadioSport

DXing Tips and Truisms

What is a DXer? In our hobby, the term DX is used to denote “distance”; in other words, long-distance communication. The very mention of the term raises the age old question – “How far can I get with my station?”

If you truly want to experience the ultimate in excitement in Amateur Radio, you must by all means, get involved with DXing. Don’t be deterred by the misconception that DXers are all technical elitists. The truth is that you do not need a huge investment in equipment or years of experience to be a successful DXer. You will however need to have an HF station, or access to a club station.

The thrill of DXing is working the world with the most modest of stations and, given the right conditions, it is quite possible to reach the other side of the world with very low power (i.e. 5 watts QRP). It is this magic – working a distant station with nothing between you and that station but the atmosphere – that inspires DXers the world over to relentlessly pursue the most distant and most remote points on the globe.

DXers are among the most active amateurs in the hobby. Virtually every country in the world has, at some point or other, been activated on the Amateur Radio bands and many Radio Amateurs have succeeded in contacting most of them, while a few have confirmed contacts with all of them. When you consider the number of possible countries (DX entities were 338 in January 2008) and given the remoteness of many, this is an accomplishment of some considerable magnitude.

Nevertheless, the main object of DXing is to **have fun**. So here are some personal tips that will help you to enjoy DXing and some truths to be followed to amplify your fun.

1. World of fun – When you turn on your radio you enter a world of fun. You enter a world without war, a world where race, politics and strife are not relevant. You enter a world filled with friends who share a similar passion – radio.

2. Listen, Listen, Listen – To enjoy DXing and to be successful at it, LISTENING becomes by far the most important factor. The art includes, listening to and learning from other, more experienced DXers;

listening for DX stations; listening on different bands – you never know when there might be an opening; listening to determine where that rare DX station is listening (it may be working split - listening on one frequency while transmitting on another frequency); all of these will help you become a more successful DXer and increase your enjoyment from your station.

3. Study Propagation – it is critical to know what bands are open to your area and when. Propagation is the greatest DX equaliser. Your best chance of snagging a rare DX station is when propagation conditions are best for you. It **does not matter how much power you can run**. If the band is not open, the DX station can’t be worked. Often times, due to our geographical location here on the east coast, we will have propagation to a DX location when other big-gun stations in other parts of North America do not. Good propagation is better than any antenna or any amplifier. Remember, you do not need to be a “Big Gun” to enjoy and succeed at DXing.

4. Know Your Prefixes – in other words, know what calls are associated with which countries. This is important and it can be tricky. There are many special prefixes in use and many strange prefixes that show up from time to time as well. It is therefore a good idea to check prefix lists as you don’t necessarily want to spend a lot of time chasing a station from a country that you already have simply because you don’t recognize the prefix.

5. Know Your Radio and Your Station – learn how to QSY (change frequencies) quickly and operate split frequency. Many DX stations, especially the rare ones, will be working “split frequency” simply because of the volume of traffic. Working split keeps the transmit frequency of the DX station clear so that everyone can hear him better when he transmits. Finding exactly where the DX station is listening, especially if he is tuning his receiver around, is very important and mastering this technique will pay big dividends. If your DX station says “listening up 5 to 10”, this means that he is listening anywhere from 5 to 10 kHz up from his transmit frequency. So, DO NOT call him back on his transmit frequency. Rather, try to find the spot where he is listening and call him there. There is a real art to this; it is not as easy as you might think.

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6. Get a Computer Logging Program - this will help you to keep track of the stations and the countries that you have worked. Having a good logging program that provides a real-time accounting of countries (and other entities) worked is invaluable and will save you time working a country that you have already worked and have confirmed. The value of having a computer alongside your transceiver is huge. Get a good logging program and use it. Keep track of your QSOs and also your QSLs. Keeping your records up to date will save you money in postage and also save you time in the long run.

7. Get In Touch With Other DXers In Your Area – your colleagues are a valuable source of information and assistance.

8. Learn, Develop and Improve Your CW Skills – it is infinitely easier to snag rare DX on CW than it is on SSB. With SSB loudest often wins the QSO. With CW skill often beats loud.

9. Read the DXCC Rules – they should become second nature to you. And make sure that your country list is up to date. Good DX logging programmes will provide free country list updates.

10. Subscribe to a DX Bulletin – There are some free bulletins that will arrive each week by e-mail. The *Ohio/Penn DX Bulletin* is an excellent one. **To subscribe:**

Send a message to "opdx-request@nshore.org" and in the "Subject:" line put "subscribe" (no quotes).

11. Develop the "Art of the QSL" – QSLs are an important part of DXing. It is exciting to receive mail from all over the world. However, QSLing can be expensive, as most rare DX stations insist that return postage be included with QSL requests. Joining Radio Amateurs of Canada (RAC) so that you can use their outgoing QSL Bureau free of charge will greatly reduce your QSL postage costs. The other QSL option that is rapidly gaining in popularity is electronic QSLing. See an article on Electronic QSLing (eQSL) using the ARRL (American Radio Relay League) *Logbook of the World* elsewhere in this book.

12. Measure your performance – so you can appreciate your achievements.

13. Upgrade Your Station – once you have done

the above and have worked most of what you can hear it is time to upgrade your station. Start with your antenna. A dollar invested in your antenna is worth \$10 spent on a radio or amplifier. Getting a beam (directional antenna) up on a tower with low loss coax feedline is the place to start. Then, if you can, adding a power amplifier (Linear Amp) will be a nice addition to your dream station.

14. Acknowledgement of Your Accomplishments – There are many DXing awards that you can work towards. These provide proof of your accomplishments. For example, there is the ARRL award – DXCC – for working 100 countries and the WAZ award is for working all 40 of the world's CQ (magazine) zones. These awards demonstrate proof that you are an accomplished DXer.

What's After That? Well, there is:

- the DXCC Honour Roll – any Radio Amateur who has confirmed contacts with 329 or more entities on the current DXCC list is eligible for the DXCC Honour Roll.
- the DX Challenge – recognises radio amateurs who have contacted a combined total of at least 1000 current band-entities on the current DXCC List on any combination of amateur radio bands from 160 to 6 meters.
- the five-band awards for working DXCC on each of five HF bands and,
- the five-band WAZ for working all CQ zones on each of 5 bands.

And After That?

Well you can do it all over again working QRP (less than 5 watts) or one of the digital modes (RTTY or PSK). There is simply no end of the fun of DXing.

A number of books have been written on DXing, and more books will certainly be written. However, the object of this short article is to fire your imagination and hopefully to get you involved in one of most exciting, most challenging and by far the most rewarding aspects of our great hobby of Amateur Radio.

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