

# Top Secret: QRP Tips

## for QRPers Only

I am going to share a few secrets with you, but you have to promise not to share them with the QRO crowd. So place your hand on the Altoids tin and swear “I will not share anything read here with non-QRPers.” Anthony A. Luscre K8ZT

Why is this column top secret? Well, I am going to tell you some ways that you can successfully compete with the kilowatters in getting contacts. If these were to fall into the wrong hands, you might not stand a chance in that next pile-up.

Following are some tips that have worked for me and other QRPers over the years. Sometimes you might use just one, other times you may find combining two or more brings success. The tips are divided into three main groups.

### 1) Timing-

- **Be There First** Probably the most effective technique for making contacts is to be the first station to hear and then be heard by the target station. The way to do this is spend quality listening time on the right bands at the right time (plus luck).
- **Be The Only One There** Even rare DX stations or busy contesting stations have slower periods. Your task is to be there then. When exactly are these times: the last portion of a contest, just when the band is beginning to open or close, when a station has just QSYed, when a contest station is fighting another station for the frequency and the random times (found by listening over a long period of time for just that right minute.)
- **Get in the Rhythm** Time your response so you are heard in the crowd. Techniques can include: quickly sending your call, delayed calling, tail ending, varying the number of times you repeat your call, varied pacing and emphasis. Listen to see what rhythm the successful stations are using, and then follow suit.

### 2) Be Heard Above the Din-

- **Being The Loudest Station** is usually difficult when other stations are running 200 times your power, so you need to use your signal effectively. This is where having good antennas with high gain aimed at the target can help.
- **Make Sure Your Signal “Sounds Good”** CW- make sure your keying waveform is optimal with no key clicks. Use a quality keyer with paddles/keyboard and make sure they are adjusted properly. Use good spacing and character weighting. Match your speed to the other station’s sending. Phone- use an effective microphone. DXing or Contesting mic elements place emphasis on a specific range of frequencies that can make your signal stand out. Use speech processing properly and/or sparingly.
- **Be On the Right Frequency** Learn how to zero beat the other station’s signal. Sometimes you need to be on a different frequency than that of the target station. Listen to the stations that are being worked and zero beat them instead, then use your RIT to listen to the target station. You can try varying your frequency slightly above or below the crowd to make your signal stand out.
- **Speak the Language of Your Target** Learn a few key words and numbers in the native language of the operator you are trying to work. <http://www.k8zt.com/qq.html#11>

**Choose The Right Call Sign** You may want to use the vanity call sign system to select a new call sign that is more effective in being heard and correctly copied by others.

### 3) **Operating-**

- **Get on the air!** More time on the air can definitely increase your chances, especially if you know when and where to hang out.
- **Know Your Equipment** Read the manual and learn the operation of all the features of your rig(s). I know this might seem like a waste of time, but believe me when you want to work that rare DX station and it is the last hours of operation just before they leave the island and they are working split and you not sure how to do it with your rig you will care! Pay special attention to sections on: working split, RIT, XMIT, filter selection, DSP, mic gain and speech processor.
- **Learn From Others** It is very helpful to listen for effective operators and then mimic their style. Even better is finding a person or group of operators that you can observe in action in person. Field Day and other multi-operator events are good chances to learn from others.
- **Experience a Pile Up From the Other End** It is very eye opening to be on the other side of the pile up. You quickly learn which stations stand out in the crowd. You get to hear the whole range from very good to very bad operators. Although it can be prohibitively expensive for many hams to travel to a rare DX location, there are many other ways to get on the other side of a pileup. You can be the operator for a special event station, travel to a rare state for ARRL Sweepstakes (DE, ND, WY, SD or VT), travel to a DX country close to home XE, C6, CY0, CY9, FP, etc. or drive to rare CQ Zone 2 for the CQ World Wide contests.
- **Practice, Practice, Practice** I know it sounds trite, but the best way to become an effective operator is to practice. See what works and improve or change things that don't work, then practice some more.