Parks on the Air ᔆᴹ

Hunter Guide

Spring 2020 Edition

Parks on the Air ᔆᴹ (POTA) is an ongoing program, it encourages amateur radio operators in developing their skills, fostering community and demonstrating the hobby to the public.

There are thousands of parks available in the program worldwide and each will present a unique experience. Operating styles and seasons will also affect the nature of your experience.

Good luck!

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Disclaimer

This document is intended for amateur radio operators interested in participating in the Parks on the Air ᔆᴹ (POTA) program. It is not meant to be a complete checklist or procedure.

Getting Started

Read the POTA Rules

POTA is about having fun, but we do have some rules. Make sure to read the rules and understand them, they are available on the website https://parksontheair.com/rules

After you read the rules, FAQs, and this guide, if you have questions, feel free to engage the other POTA community members. POTA is available on social media at Facebook https://www.facebook.com/groups/parksontheair and Slack https://parksontheair.slack.com. There are many excellent videos available on YouTube as well.

Read the POTA FAQ Section

The FAQ section contains a lot of answers to common questions about POTA. Please take the time to read this webpage. https://parksontheair.com/faq/

Register on the POTA website

https://www.parksontheair.com/wp-content/uploads/How-to-Register.pdf

Create an account on the POTA website. It is best to use one of your existing accounts on Amazon, Google, or Facebook when signing in. Once you have your account established you can add any callsigns to your account you've previously held, including 1x1 calls. If you use modifiers add them to your account as well. For example, N3VEM activating a park in Canada would add VE3/N3VEM.

If you have contacted a POTA station prior to setting up an account, as long as the activator you contacted has sent in their log. You should see your contacts under your new account.

Contacting a POTA Station

DX Code of Conduct

POTA follows the DX code of conduct. We ask all activators and hunters to adhere to this code

http://dxcc.info/eng11/index.htm

1. I will listen, and listen and then listen again before calling.
2. I will only call if I can copy the DX station properly.
3. I will not trust the Cluster and will be sure of the DX station's callsign before calling.
4. I will not interfere with the DX station or anyone calling and will never tune up on the DX frequency or in the QSX slot.
5. I will wait for the DX station to end a contact before calling.
6. I will always send my full call sign.

7. I will call and then listen for a reasonable interval. I will not call continuously.
8. I will not transmit when the DX operator calls another callsign, not mine.
9. I will not transmit when the DX Operator queries a call sign, not like mine.
10. I will not transmit when the DX operator requests geographic areas other than mine.
11. When the DX operator calls me, I will not repeat my callsign unless I think he has copied it incorrectly.
12. I will be thankful if and when I do make a contact.

Couple Items to Expand on

- It should also be noted that if you need to send a tone to tune your antenna tuner or amplifier, go a minimum of +/- 5kHz from a station that is using a frequency.
- Parks on the Air ℠ welcomes all ham radio operators to participate. Which means we have a wide range of experiences, from Elmers to recently licensed hams. For most this is how they learn to call CQ, handle pile-ups, and answer a CQ. Please be patient and considerate with new activators. *You are a part of their learning!*

Exchange

POTA does not require a formal exchange.

Typically, activators like the following for their log: Callsign, Signal Report, and State

- Most often activators would like to receive real signal reports.
- Some activators will provide their park # for your personal log (ie: K-1518).

Be sure to use phonetics when first giving your callsign. It is best practice to use the NATO phonetic alphabet. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NATO_phonetic_alphabet

There are times where an activator will be participating in a contest (like a state QSO party), while in a park. Be sure to listen for any contest exchange!

Sometimes the activator will be quick with the QSO, as they may have a pileup to go back to. Other times they may give you information about their portable setup at the park. This is an open invite to share your station information with them. Be open that they may want to get back to calling CQ as most activators are on battery power and have a limited time to operate.

An example exchange with an activator would be:

> Activator: CQ CQ Parks On The Air, this is Kilo 8 Zulu Romeo Yankee at K-1518, Maybury State Park in Michigan. Standing by for a call.
> Hunter: Kilo Alpha 0 X-Ray Tango Tango
> Activator: Kilo Alpha 0 X-Ray Tango Tango, QSL?
> Hunter: Roger Roger, You are 58 into California. Excellent signal over here. Over
> Activator: Thanks for the 58 into CA, you are 57 into park # K-1518, QSL?
> Hunter: Roger Roger
> Activator: Thanks, 73
> Hunter: Thanks for K-1518, 73

Logging

Hunters do not submit logs. It is the activators responsibility to upload their log for you to receive credit.

You do not submit any log, as a hunter, to POTA. Although you can and should still keep a personal log for the contact. You are still free to upload your log to LOTW, QRZ, or any other QSL confirmation tool.

Hunting in Different Situations

Not all the time you will be operating at your home station. If one of the following operating situations apply to you then feel free to include them when you contact the activator. This might help you break through a pile up. (ie: "K8ZRY QRP") Below are a couple examples.

- Mobile
- Portable
- Maritime Mobile
- QRP
- Park to Park (Used when you are in a park registered on parksontheair.com & you are contacting someone in another POTA park)

Multiple Contacts/Dupes

Even if you have contacted the same operator at the same park in the past. You will help the activator greatly by getting their minimum of 10 contacts for an activation or towards an award.

Under certain conditions, you can contact the same operator at the same park, multiple times during the current UTC day. You can contact the activator for each mode they use, and each band they operate during that current UTC day, and it will not be a duplicate contact.

Ie: K8ZRY is activating K-1518 at 20:00 UTC. KA0XTT successfully contacts him on 20m SSB. At 21:00 UTC K8ZRY moves to 20m FT8. KA0XTT successfully makes contact again. This is not considered a duplicate contact as this was on a different mode. Same goes for different bands.

With the permission of your club, you can give the activator a club call sign as well as your own callsign.

Activator Going QRT Suddenly

Sometimes activators have to cut short a conversation or an activation for a variety of reasons. The common ones could be: weather, antenna/radio/power problems, or visitors (Park's Staff or others)

Some activators have a goal of the number of parks they want to activate in a time frame. Some POTA folks have activated all Washington DC parks in a weekend. In order to activate the 28 parks there in 2 days, you have to move fast! Sometimes that means leaving a pileup.

Spotting Stations

Pota.us

(pota.us)

This is the official spotting website for POTA. You can see current activations, as-well-as, scheduled activities.

There are a couple different views for pota.us. If you click the three bars in the upper left corner, check out "Late Shift Mode" & "Prefer Table View".

If an activator is participating in a contest from a park, and you make contact with them. Ask if you can spot them. Some contest PROHIBIT spotting.

Active Spots

This is where all active stations within the past 30 minutes will be located. You can see their callsign, frequency, park information, & comments.

Respot

If you can reliably hear an activator calling CQ POTA. You can help that activator get the word out by spotting them on pota.us!

If you can hear hunters contacting the activator but are unable to hear the activator. Then please do not spot the activator.

If you contact an activator, a great way to lend them a hand is to respot them on pota.us. This lets other hunters know that the activator is still activating the park. You can also add comments on the respot like: "57 in Michigan" or "Stated going QRT in 10 minutes"

All you need to do is click on respot, update it with information and click "Spot"

You can also spot on other spotting sites, if you wish. Although POTA does not support other spotting services (only pota.us).

Scheduled Activations

If you click on the "Activations" tab this will direct you to a page where activators can post their tentative activation schedule. This is so that hunters can keep an eye out for them on the bands and spot them if they are heard.

Facebook

(https://www.facebook.com/groups/parksontheair/)

Many activators will also post on the POTA Facebook group. Some even post pictures and maps of their QSOs after the activation. Come join us!

Slack

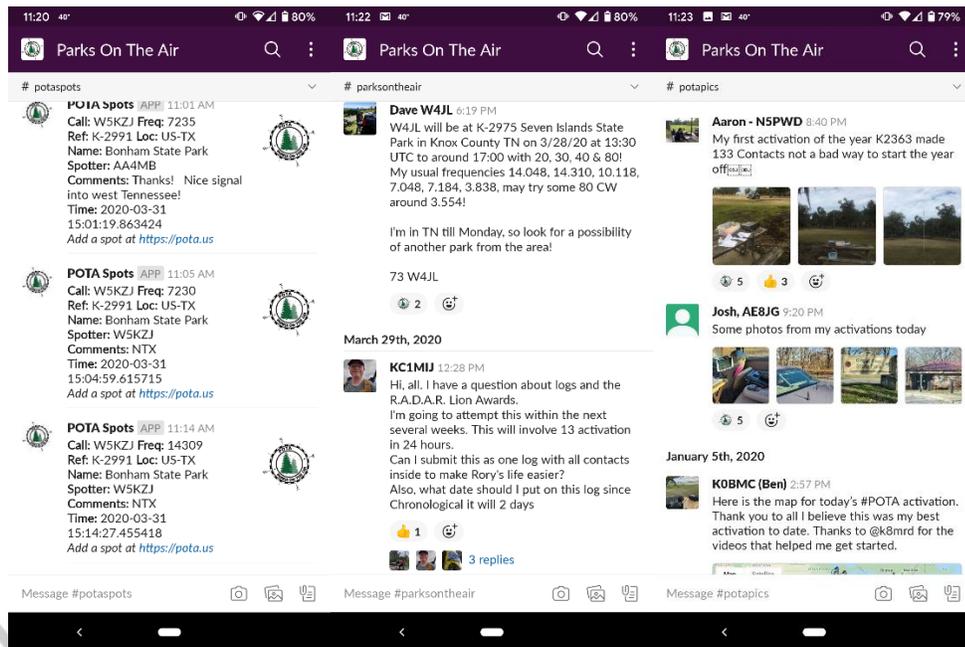(https://parksontheair.slack.com)

Check out the spots channel. This channel grabs the spots from pota.us. If you want to set up notifications for this channel you can but be warned that there will be a lot of notifications.

Slack is also a good tool to quickly chat with the rest of the POTA group. There are several channels to talk in, below are a couple of the channels. Check it out, on desktop or mobile!

Getting Credit

Do I Submit my Log?

Hunters do not submit logs. It is the activators responsibility to upload their log for you to receive credit.

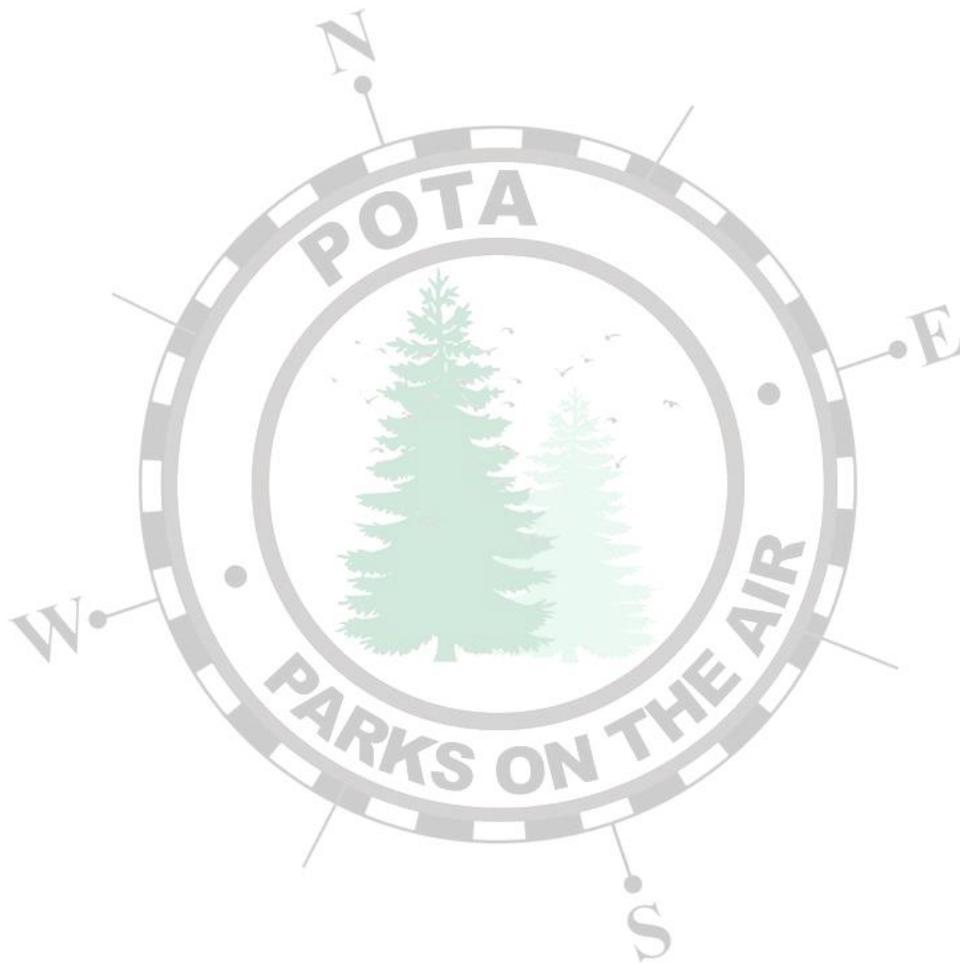## How Long Before Credit is Given?

Once an activator's log has been submitted to their log coordinator. The log coordinator uploads the log into the POTA database. Typically, this is synced overnight. So roughly a day after the activator's log is uploaded by the coordinator you should see your contact under your account.

Please be patient with the activator and the area log coordinator.

After 2 weeks, if you don't see credit for a contact you had with an activator, reach out to the activator. They should be able to let you know the status of the log being uploaded to the POTA database. The log coordinators that the activators submit their logs to are volunteers and most of

them have XYLs, kids, full time jobs, etc... So it's hard sometimes to keep up, especially when sickness comes into play.

Resources

Parks on the Air ℠ website	https://www.parksontheair.com
Parks on the Air ℠ statistics	https://stats.parksontheair.com
Parks on the Air ℠ spots	https://pota.us
POTA Facebook	www.facebook.com/groups/parksontheair/
POTA Slack	https://parksontheair.slack.com
DX Code Of Conduct	http://dxcc.info/eng11/index.htm
Qrz.com	www.qrz.com
ARRL	http://www.arrl.org
Logbook Of The World	http://lotw.arrl.org

Glossary

Term	Definition
Activation	An activator will "activate" a park when they set up their station and make the required number of contacts.
Activator	The amateur radio operator located in a park.
ATNO	"All Time New One", used to describe either the first activation of a park, or used by a hunter for the first time they've contacted a park ("Thanks for the new one").
Hunter	The person trying to contact the activator. Synonymous with chaser.
Late Shift	An activation taking place after dusk or dark. In North America the late shift occurs between 0000 UTC and 1200 UTC
Location	A geographic container such as a state or province.
P2P	"Park to park", used to refer to a QSO between two activators. It can also used when calling another activator.
Reference	The code used by POTA to uniquely identify a park. It is comprised of a prefix, followed by a dash, then a four digit number.

Feedback

Send any suggestions you may have about this document, use the "Contact Us" link
https://www.parksontheair.com/contact

Acknowledgments

Thanks to all the activators and hunters that participate in the program.