



# QSLing 101

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As well as others

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# Topics

- The Basics
  - Your Card
  - Following Operator instructions
  - Sources of QSL route information
- Using the Bureau System
- Direct QSLing
  - Envelope Etiquette
  - IRCs and IRCs vs Greenstamps
- Special Tips for QSLing via a Manager
- Alternatives to Traditional QSL Methods
- References

# Your Card

- Successful QSLing starts with the QSO and good logging practices
  - Verify clocks regularly (including UTC/local offset in logging programs)
  - Log carefully/completely
  - Log promptly
- Have your callsign printed on both sides of your QSL card
  - Don't use unusual fonts, especially on the QSO data side
  - Avoid uncomplimentary color combinations
- Print QSO data legibly
  - Suggest DD/MMM/YY (03-Apr-08) date format, include a legend
  - Use UTC time
    - **NEVER, NEVER, NEVER** send a card with QSO data in local time!!!!
    - You would be **SURPRISED** just how many I receive like this every month
  - Use printed labels if possible
  - List multiple QSOs in chronological order
  - Neatness counts
    - Avoid smudges, test any ink pens or rubber stamps you may use
    - Don't cross out mistakes, start over with a new card
    - A card with a cross out or bad smudge is not valid for award credit in most cases

# Follow Operator Directions for QSLing

- You work HC8N
  - Operator says: QSL via W5UE
    - You send your card to W5UE direct with SASE (more on using managers later)
    - You send your card to the Outgoing ARRL Bureau identifying W5UE as the manager on the card
- You work C6A/W5UE
  - Operator says: QSL via home call (HC in CW)
    - You send your card to W5UE direct with SASE
- You work IK1SPE
  - Operator says: QSL via bureau (buro in CW)
    - You send your card to Outgoing ARRL QSL bureau or Italian bureau
  - Operator says: QSL via Call Book Address (CBA in CW)
    - You send your card to his home address (QRZ.COM/Buckmaster, etc) with SAE + IRC or Greenstamps (US Dollars)

# What if you don't get QSL instructions?

- Methods of finding a QSL Route
  - The Internet
    - QRZ.COM – Pathfinder – Many, many others (see Ref Page for links)
  - DX Bulletins
    - Ohio/Penn DX Bulletin – 425 DX News – ARRL DX Bulletin – Daily DX (see Ref Page for links)
  - Packet Cluster (RF based or Internet)
    - “sh/qsl dxcall”
  - Local Club Repeater
    - Ask a DXer
  - Local Club Email Reflector
    - Ask a BUNCH of DXers!!!

**Check SEVERAL sources.... Compare notes with a friend**

# ARRL QSL Bureau System

- Outgoing Bureau
  - The ARRL QSL Service cannot be used to exchange QSL cards between stations within the 48 contiguous states (DX Station with US Manager Okay)
  - Presort your DX QSL's alphabetically by parent call-sign prefix
  - **DO NOT** separate the country prefixes by use of paper clips, rubber bands, slips of paper or envelopes
  - Open to ARRL Members ONLY – Include proof of membership
  - Cards are bundled and bulk shipped to foreign bureaus by ARRL staff
  - Fee Based – Check ARRL Web Site for current rates
  - Recommended dimension of your card - Height = 2-3/4 to 4-1/4 in, Width = 4-3/4 to 6-1/4 in
  - Not all DXCC entities are served by the Outgoing bureau – Check the ARRL Outgoing Bureau page for a list and full details
  - Be aware that not all hams utilize the bureau system. Check instructions from the station or their manager

# ARRL QSL Bureau System

- Incoming Bureau
  - ARRL Incoming DX QSL Bureau System is made up of numerous call-area bureaus that act as central clearing houses for QSL cards arriving from foreign countries
  - **Volunteers** staff these "incoming" bureaus
  - The service is free; ARRL membership is **not** required
  - Your Incoming Bureau is determined by the number in your call. i.e. K2FF is served by the W2 Bureau no matter where he lives, W5UE is served by the W5 Bureau no matter where he lives
  - Send a 5 x 7-1/2 or 6 x 9 inch self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) or money credit where applicable to the bureau serving your call-sign district
  - Neatly print your call-sign in the upper left corner of the envelope
  - The W5 Incoming Bureau maintains a great web page where you can check the status of envelopes/cards you have on hand

# Envelope Etiquette

- Print recipient's address clearly and accurately on envelope
  - If going outside US, print country in upper case English near the bottom of the envelope
  - See references for USPS guidelines on international mail addressing
- Leave small unsealed opening at both upper corners of envelope
- Return Envelope
  - Use return envelopes with “peel and stick” seal flap
  - Print your address **CLEARLY** on your return envelope
  - Print a return address on your return envelope. Either station sending to or your return address
  - Avoid folding your return envelope in the outer envelope
  - If you must fold, **NEVER** put the folded edge facing the top of the outer envelope
  - **DO NOT** place your card inside of your return envelope
- For US to US mailings
  - Place proper postage (in proper location) on your return envelope
  - Be wary of pending postage increases, include sufficient postage to cover (Forever Stamp)

# Valid IRC

Should be canceled in left-hand corner from country of issue



- Can be redeemed for international postage from any country to any country (maybe)
- Cost from post office in US is \$2.20
- Some QSL managers will sell at discounted prices

**Valid until 31 Dec 2025**

# Invalid IRCs



# IRCs vs. Greenstamps

- It is illegal for hams in some countries to possess US currency
- Postal theft is a problem in some countries
  - Conceal GS by folding white paper around it or similar tactic
  - Do not put call signs or other markings identifying as ham radio mail on the envelope. Address as normal business mail
- Many countries require more than \$2 or IRC for return Air Mail postage to the US. Follow the station operator (or manager) instructions
- Value of US dollar against foreign currency becoming an issue
- Consider including foreign stamps (new, local to country) with your request to DX stations (also available via Plum and other sources)
  - Always nice to include \$1 or so even with an SASE
  - Do not affix stamps to return envelope, just include them loose in the envelope
- If you send IRCs, be sure they are good (valid) ones

# Tips for Making QSL Managers Happy

And a happy manager is a prompt manager

- Patience
  - A busy QSL manager can handle hundreds, if not thousands of direct requests per month
  - We often have to wait 30 days or more to receive logs from the station owner
  - Many times QSL cards have to be designed/ordered/printed
  - DO NOT send an email 2 weeks after sending your request
- Always send at least an SASE to stateside managers
  - Simply sending a card will almost always result in no return or at best a return via the bureau if you are lucky
- Follow basics/envelope tips on earlier slides
  - Most of them are designed to optimize manager efficiency
- QSL Managers are not mind readers
  - Despite popular belief, special orders don't upset us, but if you don't tell us, we won't know
  - Most common example – K5XYZ works HC8N on RTTY/CW/SSB, sends one card for each QSO and **expects** the manager to send him a separate card for each mode, **BUT**, he doesn't enclose a note requesting this. Result: K5XYZ receives one card with all QSOs on one or more label(s)

# Tips for Making QSL Managers Happy

And a happy manager is a prompt manager

- When sending requests for multiple stations to one manager
  - Be prepared to wait until the manager has logs, cards, etc from ALL stations before receiving your cards... UNLESS
  - You provide separate SASEs for each call requested (and a note)
- Do Not tape ANYTHING to anything else in your request
- There are times for email
  - If you receive a card in error, most times the manager will resend without another SASE if our fault
  - If an extended time period (months) has elapsed since sending your request with no response, mail does get lost
  - Watch the “tone” of the email – it’s easy to inadvertently sound hostile or demanding
- Donations
  - QSL managers have expenses (cards, envelopes, labels, rubber stamps, bureau expenses, etc), usually not covered by the DX station
  - In south Louisiana we would call this practice **Lagniappe**, “A little something extra” – Trust me, we DO appreciate it!!!

# Alternatives to Traditional QSLing

- Online QSL Request Service (OQRS)
  - Some DX stations or their managers provide an online method of requesting a paper QSL direct. This service is fee-based to cover expenses and varies from station to station. Many stations use the OQRS service available in ClubLog while others utilize their own customized online tool. Check station QSL instructions on QRZ.COM and/or other sources (see reference slides)
- Logbook of The World (LoTW)
  - ARRL's LoTW system is a repository of log records submitted by users from around the world
  - When two participants in a QSO submit matching QSO records to LoTW, the result is a QSL that can be used for ARRL award credit as well as some CQ awards (WAZ)
  - Free to upload your log, see what credits are available – Applying for award credits (DXCC/WAS) is fee based
  - Registration is necessary – logs are digitally signed to ensure authenticity
- eQSL
  - Online method of exchanging electronic QSLs
  - Recognized for award credit by some – notably CQ Magazine

# References

- USPS Guidelines for International Mail
  - <https://www.usps.com/international/letters.htm>
- Online QSL Route Sources:
  - DX Zone (Exhaustive list – some dead):  
[https://www.dxzone.com/catalog/DX\\_Resources/QSL\\_manager/](https://www.dxzone.com/catalog/DX_Resources/QSL_manager/)
  - Pathfinder: <https://www.dxlabsuite.com/pathfinder/WebClient/>
  - IK3QAR: <https://www.ik3qar.it/manager/>
  - QRZ.COM callsign lookup: <https://www.qrz.com/>
- DX Bulletins
  - 425 DX Bulletin: <http://www.425dxn.org/>
  - Daily DX Bulletin: <http://www.dailydx.com/>
  - Ohio/Penn DX Bulletin: <http://www.papays.com/opdx.html>
  - ARRL DX Bulletin: <https://www.arrl.org/w1aw-bulletins-archive-dx>
- ARRL Bureau Links
  - Outgoing Bureau: <https://www.arrl.org/outgoing-qsl-service>
  - Incoming Bureau: <https://www.arrl.org/incoming-qsl-service>
  - W5 Incoming Bureau: <http://www.w5incomingbureau.net/>

# References

- Miscellaneous Links
  - Logbook of The World (LoTW): <https://www.arrl.org/lotw/>
  - eQSL: <https://www.eqsl.cc/qslcard/Index.cfm>
  - ClubLog: <https://clublog.org>
- Tons of great information from local clubs:
  - <https://www.599.org>
  - <https://www.deltadx.net/>
- William J. Plum DX Supplies
  - Always check with Bill first.. He is downsizing his inventory

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THANKS!!!

Questions???

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