QSL CARDS

Sending and Receiving Paper Gems

What is a QSL Card?

"QSL" is a telegrapher's shorthand for:

"I acknowledge receipt of your message or transmission."

A **QSL card** is a written confirmation or acknowledgment of a contact.

Why Do I Want a QSL Card?

- **Courtesy** – Sending a QSL card is the final handshake of a contact.

- **Awards** – QSL cards serve as proof of a two-way contact needed for certain awards.

- **Tradition** – Exchanging QSL cards has been a long tradition in ham radio and it is fun to get cards from other contacted hams.

Information on a QSL Card

Confirming QSO with	Day	Month	Year
W1AW	21	May	2013
UTC	**MHz**	**2x Mode**	**RST**
14:30	21.395	SSB	59-

- Call signs
- Location
- Time & Date

- Frequency
- Mode (2-way)
- Signal Report

Be sure to include all of this basic information because QSL cards are often used to verify contacts for awards.

Essential Information

- Your call sign should be printed or written on the report side of the card.

- Indicate if you were portable or mobile.

- Include your geographic location
  - Street address, city, state, county, and grid square

- Include ITU and CQ zones

Additional Information

Other information may include:

- Membership in a club
- Organization affiliations
- Email address
- Awards earned
- Previous call signs held

Information to Exclude

Because QSL cards are sent to people from a variety of cultures, you may want to refrain from putting certain things on your QSL card:

- Religious or political statements
- Risqué pictures, drawings, remarks or humor
- Anything that could generally be offensive

Basic QSL Design

Standard QSL size: 3 ½ inches high x 5 ½ inches wide horizontal or vertical

Filling out the QSL Card

- **Call sign** of the other station you worked

- **Time and date** (Use UTC for both and be sure to properly convert from local time and date, if that is how you keep your log. Spell out the month to avoid confusion.)

- **Frequency** (Approximate frequency in kHz , MHz, or band in meters)

- **Mode** (AM, SSB, CW, RTTY, PSK)

- FCC emission designators are not easily understood

- **Signal Report** – Use standard RST system; Phone modes only use RS

Additional Information

If you make a mistake when filling out a QSL card, throw it away and start over.

Crossed out or written over information will disqualify any card being submitted towards an award.

Additional Information

If you are sending the QSL card to a QSL manager through the QSL bureau, please be sure to indicate this using "QSL via."

Example: QSL via: KB1DMX

PSE QSL TNX

- Circle "**QSL TNX**" to indicate that you are answering a QSL: "Thanks for QSL"

PSE ~~QSL~~ (QSL TNX)

- Circle "**PSE QSL**" to indicate that you are requesting a QSL: "Please QSL"

(PSE QSL) ~~TNX~~

How to Send Your Cards

- QSL Bureau

- QSL Manager

- Direct Mail

QSL Bureau
"Via Buro"

Advantages

- Least expensive
- Good return rate
- Can send to foreign QSL managers (not stateside managers)

Disadvantages

- Not time sensitive
- Not all DX uses the Bureau

The QSL Bureau is for DX cards only (Includes KL7 & KH6)
The QSL Bureau cannot forward IRCs or "green-stams" (cash)

QSL Mangers

Stateside

- Some DX operators have stateside QSL managers
- Not very expensive
- You pay postage both ways (SASE)
- Excellent return rates
- Fairly good turn around time

Overseas

- Excellent return rates
- Can get expensive
- Faster return than QSL Bureau
- You pay postage both ways
  - IRC
  - Foreign postage
  - Green stamps (cash)

QSL Direct

- 99% return rates

- Most expensive way to QSL

- You pay postage both ways
  - IRC
  - Foreign postage
  - Green stamps (cash)

Use foreign postage on SASE for best return rate.

Dos & Don'ts

Do:

- Write legibly or use QSL labels
- Use professionally printed cards
- Send SASE or IRC

Don't:

- Write call signs on envelopes
- Send cash

Electronic QSL (LOTW)

Advantages

- Fast upload
- Secure
- Apply for awards online
- Upload feature built in on some logging programs

Disadvantages

- Only matches QSO with other LOTW users
- No QSL card to display

Displaying QSL Cards

Albums

- Show by band, mode, award, etc
- Easy to carry to meetings or conventions

Wall Hangers

- Easy to hang & change cards
- Minimal attachment to walls

Display Boards

- Great for presentations or shows
- Use of photo corners prevent tape damage to cards

Frame

- Display special cards or events

QSL Cards

Display boards are great for presentations or shows.

End

Be sure to check out the QSL gallery and more

arrl.org