

# Building Your Path in Ham Radio

Illustrated by a journey into

- DX'ing
- Contesting
- Problem-solving
- Curiosity
- Collaboration
- Friendship
- International Travel

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May 20, 2024

# Lessons from the world of gaming

**What makes a hobby  
engaging and enjoyable?**

## Satisfaction =

- meeting and overcoming a challenge
- better understanding of the physical world
- collaboration and problem-solving with others
- learning new skills



If technology doesn't seem like magic  
it's probably obsolete.



## Tip #1

- Keep an open mind.
- Stay flexible.
- Consider & try different things.
- Be curious and ask questions.
- If lose interest in what you started with . . . explore other activities.

## Tip #2

- Scrounging
- Loaned Gear
- Used Equipment



## Tip # 3

- Start with a simple set up
- Borrowed, Used or Scrounged
- Simple (yet effective) antenna
- Start with just one band

# US Amateur Radio Technician Privileges

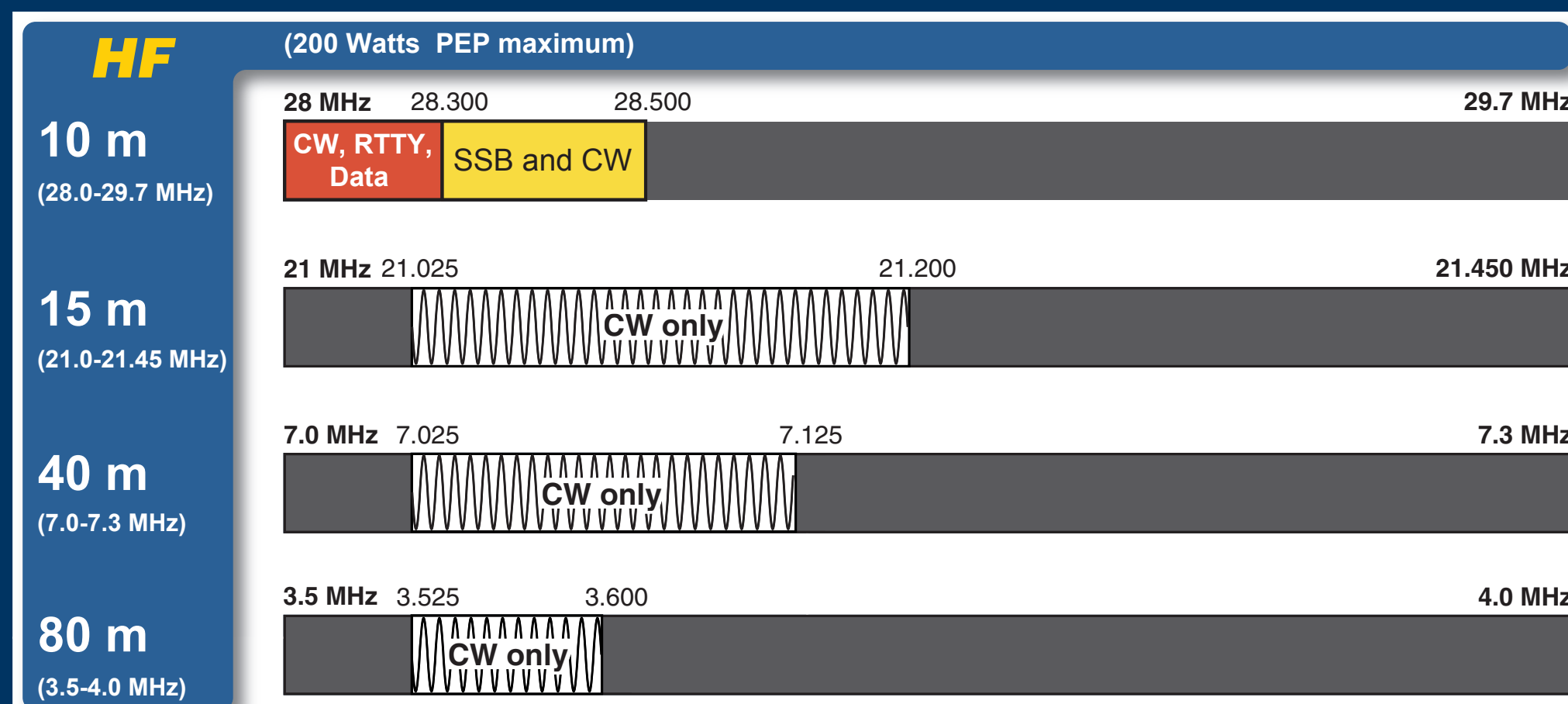
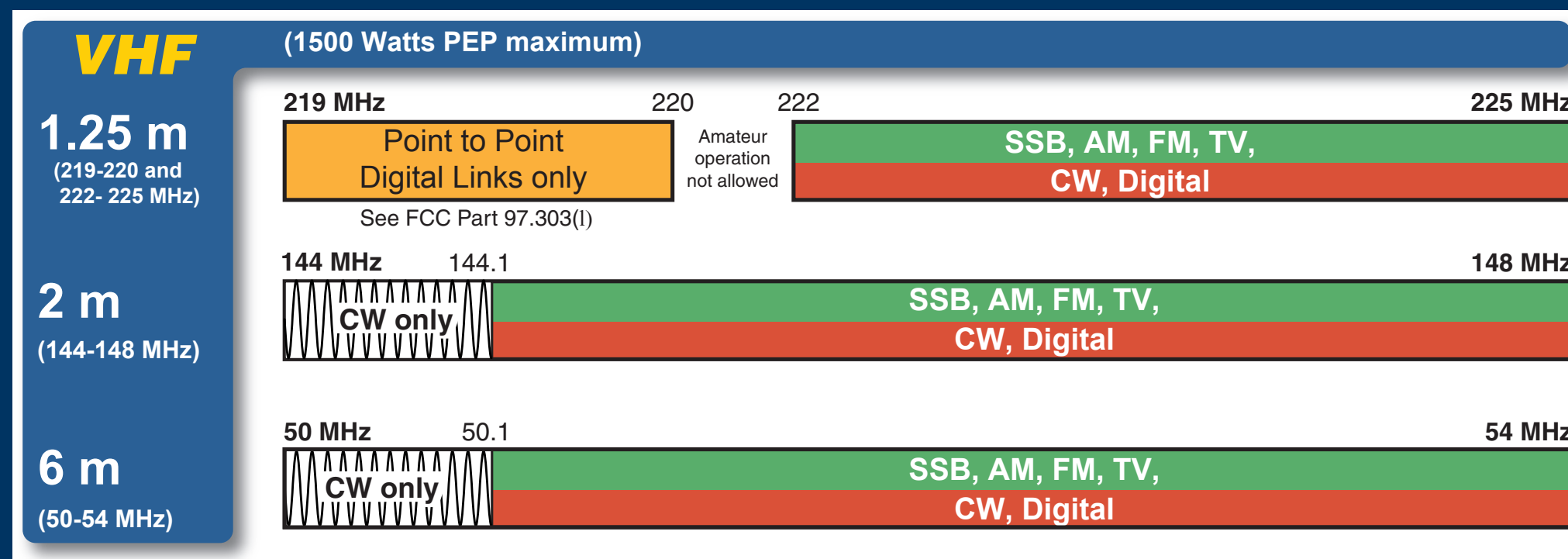
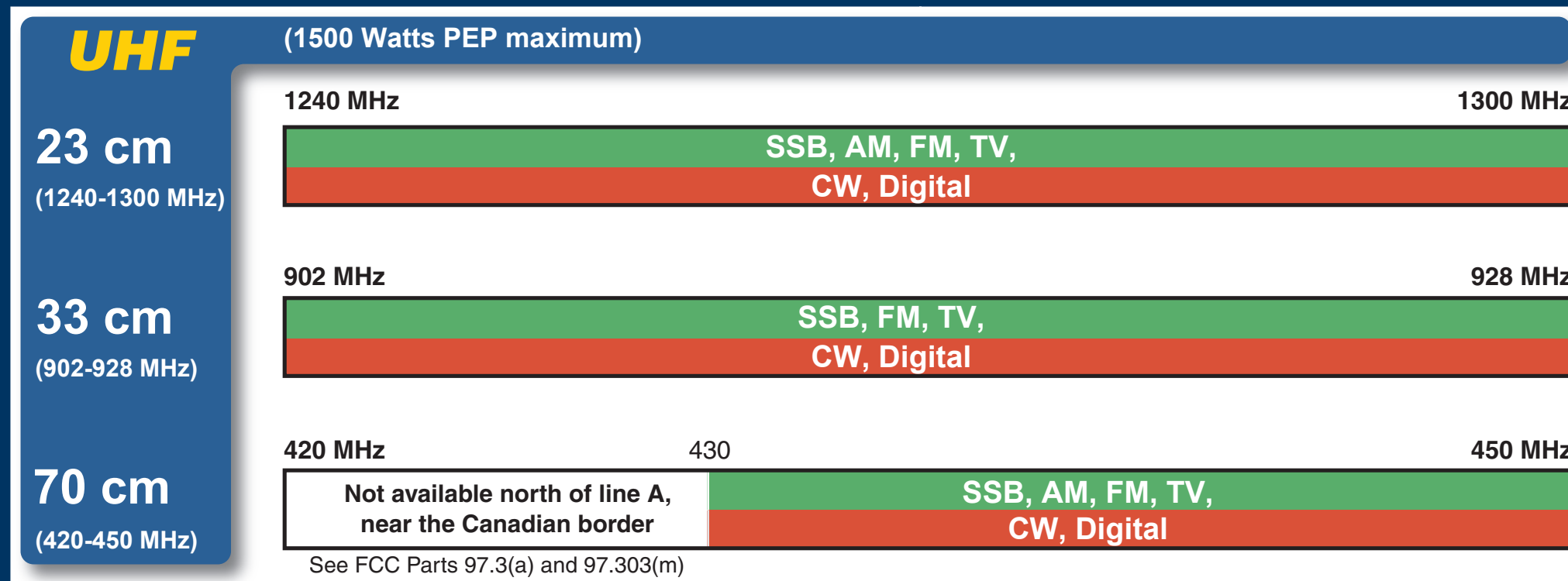
This chart shows privileges and band plan recommendations for each of the frequencies, as granted by the FCC to the Technician licensee. It is good amateur practice to follow the band plan established by the Amateur Radio community. The band plan is developed so that spectrum allocated for our use is used most effectively. You'll find a complete description of the band plan online at [www.arrl.org/band-plan](http://www.arrl.org/band-plan).



Published by:

**ARRL** The national association for  
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Effective Date March 5, 2012



## Tip # 4

- QRP vs. 100 watts

## Tip # 5

- Set a goal
- Then gradually increase your capabilities
  - antenna
  - operating skills
  - equipment
- YouTube presentation by N1AV

## *Increasing capabilities:*

- Lifelong learning
- The various aspects of ham radio
  - all have enough depth to remain fascinating - no matter which direction you choose.

## *Tip # 6*

Resist rushing out  
to buy a big fancy set-up

## Tip # 7

**Establish a workbench.**

**Podcast: Ham Radio Workbench**

- **Started in July 2016.**
- **First episodes about gathering what you might need.**
- **I guarantee it will to teach you something useful - (that you did not know).**

**[hamradioworkbench.com/podcast/250-dollar-workbench](http://hamradioworkbench.com/podcast/250-dollar-workbench)**

## Tip # 8

### How to get exposed to new ideas:

- Field Day event
- Watching presentations
- ARRL publications: QST, Current, NCJ, QEX
- Subscribe to email reflectors, e.g. [groups.io](http://groups.io)
- Join a specialty club,
  - e.g. Front Range 6 Meter Group, CWOPS, GMCC, etc.



## Tip # 9

- Collaboration - under appreciated
- Sharing ideas - synergy
- How to be a good collaborator?

## Tip # 10

Be alert to what gives you satisfaction  
in the hobby

- that may change over time

## Tip # 11

### Learn to operate CW - if get bored with FT8 and SSB

- much easier to make contacts on HF
- relaxing way to operate
- Many subtle techniques
- satisfying way to communicate

### The code is Not Very Difficult to Learn

- A challenge
  - but immediate rewards
- Helps to sharpen the mind
- Really not hard to learn
- Gradual improvement - quite satisfying
- Learning curve - not steep
- Rewarding progress is steady

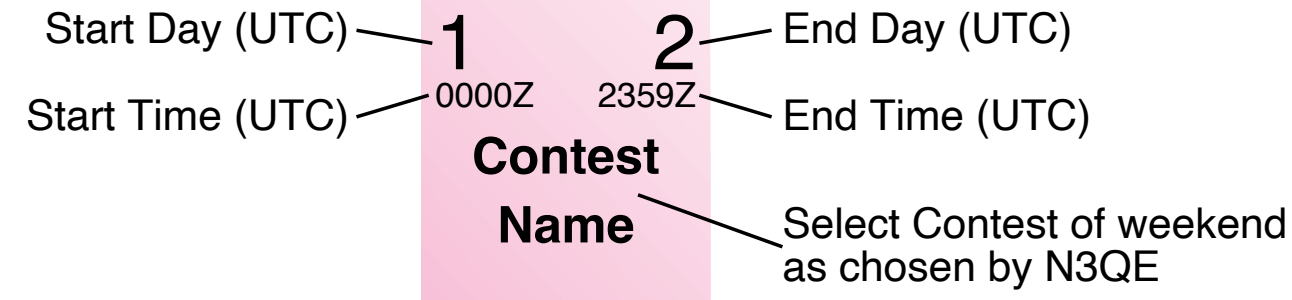
# Contesting & DX'ing

# “contest”

- concentrated station activity
- working toward a goal
- comparison with other stations

**Vast number of “contests”**

# PERIODIC TABLE OF SELECT AMATEUR RADIO CONTESTS



<https://Radiosport.World/>

# 2024

off-the-air, SSB, VHF/UHF, Multimode, CW, Digital

Jan		Feb		Mar		Apr		May		Jun		Jul		Aug		Sep		Oct		Nov		Dec		
6 1800Z	7 2359Z	4 0000Z	4 0359Z	2 0000Z	3 2359Z	6 1500Z	7 1500Z	4 varies	5 varies	1 1800Z	2 2400Z	6 1400Z	7 1400Z	3 1800Z	4 0600Z	8 0000Z	8 0400Z	5 1600Z	6 2159Z	2 2100Z	4 0300Z	6 2200Z	8 1600Z	
ARRL RTTY Roundup		NA Sprint CW		ARRL DX SSB		SP Polish DX		7QP/IN/DE New England QSO Parties		ARRL Digital		Marconi Memorial HF		NAQP CW		NA Sprint CW		California QSO Party		ARRL SS CW		ARRL 160		
13 1800Z	14 0559Z	10 0000Z	11 2359Z	10 0000Z	10 0359Z	13 0700Z	14 1300Z	11 1200Z	12 1200Z	8 1800Z	10 0300Z	13 1200Z	14 1200Z	10 0000Z	11 2359Z	14 0000Z	15 2359Z	12 0600Z	13 0600Z	9 0000Z	10 2359Z	14 0000Z	15 2359Z	
NAQP CW		CQ WPX RTTY		NA Sprint RTTY		JIDX CW		Volta WW RTTY		ARRL June VHF		IARU HF		WAE CW		WAE SSB		Oceania CW		WAE RTTY		ARRL 10		
20 1800Z	21 0559Z	17 0000Z	18 2359Z	16 0200Z	18 0200Z	20 0700Z	21 0659Z	16 1100Z	19 2000Z	15 0000Z	16 2400Z	20 1800Z	21 0559Z	17 1800Z	18 0600Z	14 1800Z	16 0300Z	19 1500Z	20 1459Z	16 2100Z	18 0300Z	21 1400Z	22 1400Z	
NAQP SSB		ARRL DX CW		BARTG HF RTTY		CQMM DX		Contest University Dayton Hamvention		All Asian DX CW		NAQP RTTY		NAQP SSB		ARRL September VHF		Worked All Germany		ARRL SS SSB		Croatian DX		
26 2200Z	28 2200Z	24 1800Z	25 0559Z	24 0000Z	24 0400Z	27 1600Z	28 2159Z	25 0000Z	26 2400Z	22 1800Z	23 2100Z	27 1200Z	28 1200Z	24 1200Z	25 1200Z	21 1200Z	22 1200Z	26 0000Z	27 2400Z	23 0000Z	24 2400Z	28 0000Z	28 2359Z	
CQ 160 CW		NAQP RTTY		NA Sprint SSB		Florida QSO Party		CQ WPX CW		ARRL Field Day		RSGB IOTA		WW Digi		SAC CW		CQ WW SSB		CQ WW CW		RAC Winter		
				30 0000Z	31 2400Z					29 0000Z	30 2359Z					31 1300Z	1 0400Z	28 0000Z	29 2400Z			30 0000Z	1 0000Z	
				CQ WPX SSB													UK/EI DX SSB	CQ WW RTTY						

# PERIODIC TABLE OF STATE QSO PARTIES

<https://Radiosport.World/>

# 2024

Saturday 1 Sunday 2

ST

Active QSO Parties that weekend

No QSO Parties

1 State

2 States

3+ States

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
6	7 3 VT MN BC	4 2 NS	3 6 LA MS MO	4 5 7QP(AZ ID MT NV OR UT WA WY) IN DE W1(CT ME MA NH RI VT)	1 2 KY	6 7	3 4	8 8 TN CO	5 6 CA	2 3	6 8
13	14	10 11 OK ID WI	9 10 NM GA	11 12 AB MB SK	8 9	13 14	10 11 MD DC	14 16	12 13 NV AZ PA SD	9 10	14 15
20	21	17 18 VA	16 17 NE MI ON ND QC	18 19 AR	15 16 WV	20 21	17 18	21 22 TX IA NH NJ WA	19 20 NY IL	16 18	21 22
26	28 24 25 SC NC	23 24	27 28 FL	25 26	22 23 AL	27 28	24 25 HI KS OH	28 29 ME	26 27	23 24	28 28
		30 31			29 30		31 1			30 1	

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<https://Radiosport.World/>  
 Please send updates to  
[tshoppa@gmail.com](mailto:tshoppa@gmail.com)



# Operating goals - certificates:

## Examples:

- Worked All 50 States (WAS)
- US Counties (3143 counties)
- 100 Countries (DXCC)
- 340 countries is Top of Honor Roll
- Worked All Zones (WAZ) - 40 zones
- All 455 Grid Squares in US (Fred Fish Memorial Award)
- Parks on The Air (POTA)
- Summits on the Air (SOTA)



## To get a taste of DX and Contesting:

- simple scrounged equipment
- simple antenna
- show up when contest is going
- at least glance at rules
  - know the “exchange”
- set simple goal for yourself, e.g. 10 contacts?

## Bottom line for finding a satisfying path in ham radio:

- Allow yourself to be drawn into something that is exciting for you.
- Start small and gradually expand - as you feel it.
- Ask for help.
- Be a good collaborator.