

Join the Fun

You can become a Ham radio operator! Obtaining a Ham license from the FCC is not that difficult.

There are three levels of Ham licenses:

1. Technician (30Mhz and above)
2. General (All bands, all modes)
3. Extra (All privileges)

The Technician and General licenses require a 74% (26/35) score on a test of 35 questions. The Extra license requires a 74% (37/50) score on a test of 50 questions

License registration costs \$35 and renews in 10 year intervals.

Resources

Amateur Radio Relay League (ARRL).
<https://www.arrl.org/getting-licensed>

POTA web site:
<https://parksontheair.com>
<https://pota.app>

Ham practice tests:
<https://www.hamexam.org>

Local clubs – Find a local club:
<https://www.arrl.org/find-a-club>

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How It All Started

In 2016, the ARRL sponsored the National Parks on the Air (NPOTA) program to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the National Parks Service (NPS).

The NPOTA program was proposed to the ARRL by Sean Kutzko (KX9X) and Norm Fusaro (W3IZ). The idea was simple; inspire ham radio operators to deploy portable rigs in US parkland to celebrate the NPS anniversary, and evangelize Ham radio operations to park visitors.

The ARRL agreed to sponsor the program for one year. To say the program was a success is a serious understatement. The enthusiasm for the program was overwhelming.

As 2016 came to a close, despite its popularity, the ARRL did not extend funding for the program.

One of the most avid NPOTA fans was Jason Johnston (W3AAX) of Severna Park, MD. He undertook a mission to save the program. Joined by a small group of talented and dedicated technical volunteers, Jason launched the Parks on the Air (POTA) program to continue the spirit of NPOTA.

Today, the reach of POTA has been astounding. It is one of the most popular activities in all of Ham radio. It is now rapidly expanding worldwide.

Parks On the Air



Parks On The Air (POTA) is a fun and exciting Ham radio activity that combines the challenges of Ham radio with the beauty of our National and State park systems. It is a fellowship of worldwide Ham radio operators that deploy portable radio gear in a park.

The idea is simple. Ham radio gear is set up in a park by an *Activator*. The *Activator* must contact 10 other Hams (*Hunters*), via radio, from the same park in the same day. If 10 contacts are achieved, then the *Activator* gets credit for activating that specific park. The *Activator* must submit a contact log to the POTA website for credit.

Activators

An *Activator* is a Ham radio operator who deploys portable ham radio equipment in a park. To successfully activate a park, the following conditions must be met:

1. The park must be open to the public.
2. The activator must be within the park boundaries.
3. The activator must follow all park rules.
4. The activator must follow all FCC rules.
5. The activator must complete 10 contacts with other Hams (Hunters) via radio frequencies within the same calendar day. All POTA dates/times are based on Greenwich Mean Time (GMT).
6. The activator must submit logs of the contacts to the POTA web site for credit.

Hunters

A *Hunter* is a Ham radio operator who seeks out contacts with *Activators*. Most hunters operate from their home stations, although some hunt on mobile radio equipment.

1. The hunter must contact the activator and exchange call-signs and signal reports.
2. A hunter can have multiple contacts with the same activator in the same park if different bands and or modes are used.
3. Hunters try to hunt as many parks as possible.
4. Hunters do not need to submit logs.

The Contact

During a POTA contact the *Activator* - *Hunter* typically exchange 3 things:

- Call sign
- RST
- Hunter location (State)

Call sign and location exchange is obvious. RST requires some

Example Contact

Here is an example of a typical POTA contact.

Activator:

“CQ Parks on the Air. This is November One Sierra Papa Whiskey (N1SPW) calling CQ from Park US-3559.”

Hunter:

“KX9X”

Activator:

“KX9X, I have you 5-9 in to my park US-3559.”

Hunter:

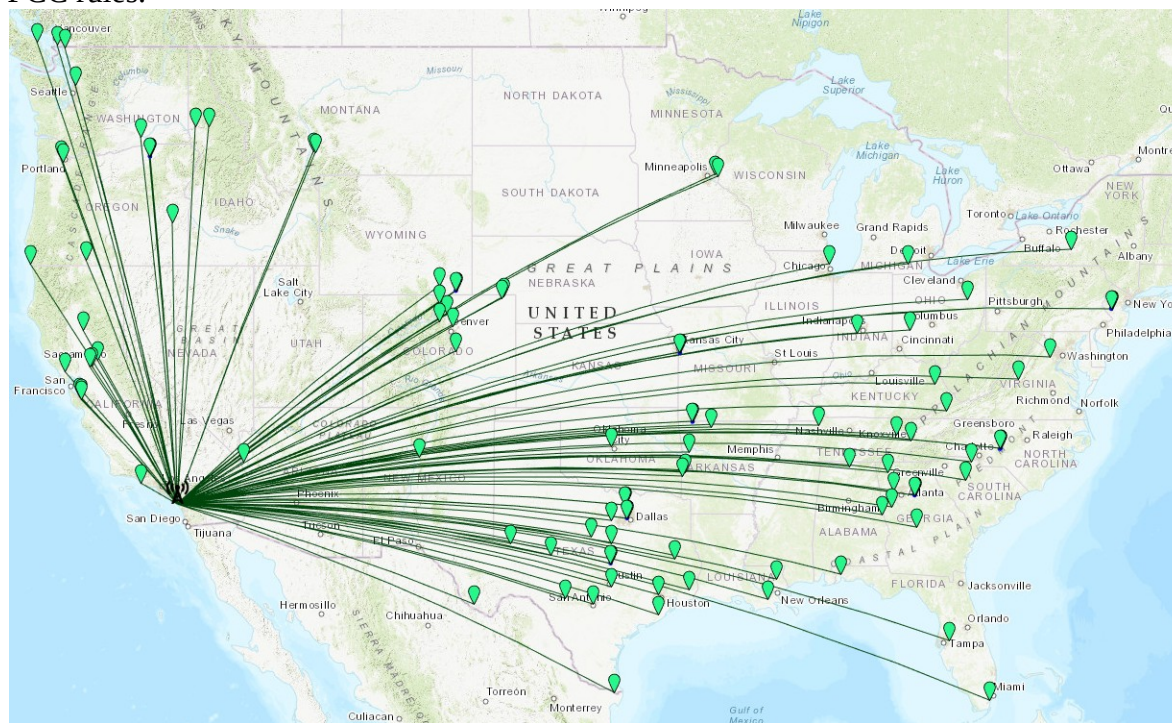
“I have you a 5-7 from Illinois, Chicago area.”

Activator:

“Thanks for hunting me down tonight. 73.”

Hunter:

“Have a great activation - 73.”



2025-05-10 POTA Contact Map from US-3559 (San Onofre State Beach in California)

explanation.

RST is short for Readability, Signal-Strength, and Tone. In POTA exchanges, Tone is not used.

Signal readability is a range, 1-5.

Signal strength is a range, 1-9.

Higher numbers mean clearer signal.

The activator logs the contact using a paper log or a computer/tablet/phone application.

The log is submitted to the POTA web site.

CQ – Short for “Seek You”

73 – Best Regards