



# Contest Operating Strategy

Maximizing Your Potential

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# Where Do I Begin? ...I'm Glad You Asked!

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- Know the rules (all of them!)
- Develop a plan that best exploits your station, availability, and goals
- Practice, practice, practice
- Effective operating style(s)
- Know your competition
- Have fun!



# Know the Rules

- Rules change all the time
- Ignoring rules can be fatal
  - Score reductions, DQ
- Not all contests are created equal
- Missed scoring opportunities
- Impact on reputation



# Develop a Plan

- Set goals
  - QSO totals, best personal score, 1:1 competition, stretch goals
- Review previous log entries/competitors
- Look for mistakes/poor operating decisions
- Be radioactive!!
- Plan to operate to your station's strengths
- Prepare in advance!



# Practice, Practice, Practice

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Typical well-conditioned  
contest op



# Even More Practice...

- Play in lots of contests
  - QSO parties, regional contests, CWTs, etc.
- Be radioactive!!
- Contest skills are not developed overnight
- Explore conversational CW
- Know your logging program inside & out
- Experiment with CW simulators (e.g., RUFZ)



# Operating Better Than That Other Guy!

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- Some basics:
  - Say/send the least amount needed to make a QSO
  - Don't be afraid to operate high in band
  - Timing in pileups matters
  - Old adage: operate on highest open band
  - Play to your strengths (and weaknesses)
  - If you mentally feel loud, you're loud...exploit this!!



# Operating Better Than That Other Guy!

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- Some more basics:
  - Use your ears first (then your tools)
  - Run when you can; S&P is not bad operating
  - Check odd bands/propagation
  - Track multipliers; avoid missing “easy ones”
  - Know/search for odd openings
    - 10M morning Asia LP, middle night high bands, early 40M EU, listening where others are not





# Operating Better Than That Other Guy!

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- Let's talk SSB...



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# Operating Better Than That Other Guy!

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- SSB tips:
  - Use normal phonetics
  - Zero beat guys you're calling
  - Be realistic about workable stations
  - Situational awareness matters
    - Callers working someone else, adjacent stations, band conditions
  - NEVER, EVER, say "Please copy!"



# Operating Better Than That Other Guy!

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## Early CW operation from K3LR



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# Operating Better Than That Other Guy!

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- CW tips:
  - Use appropriate CW speeds
    - Speed reflecting propagation, station you're calling, etc.
  - Call stations off-center frequency/where others are working them
  - The "one second" pause
  - Stations can be successfully passed on CW



# Knowing Your Competition

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- Review previous results
- Study publicly available logs
- Listen to published recordings
- Discuss strategies with others
- Let the “head games begin”

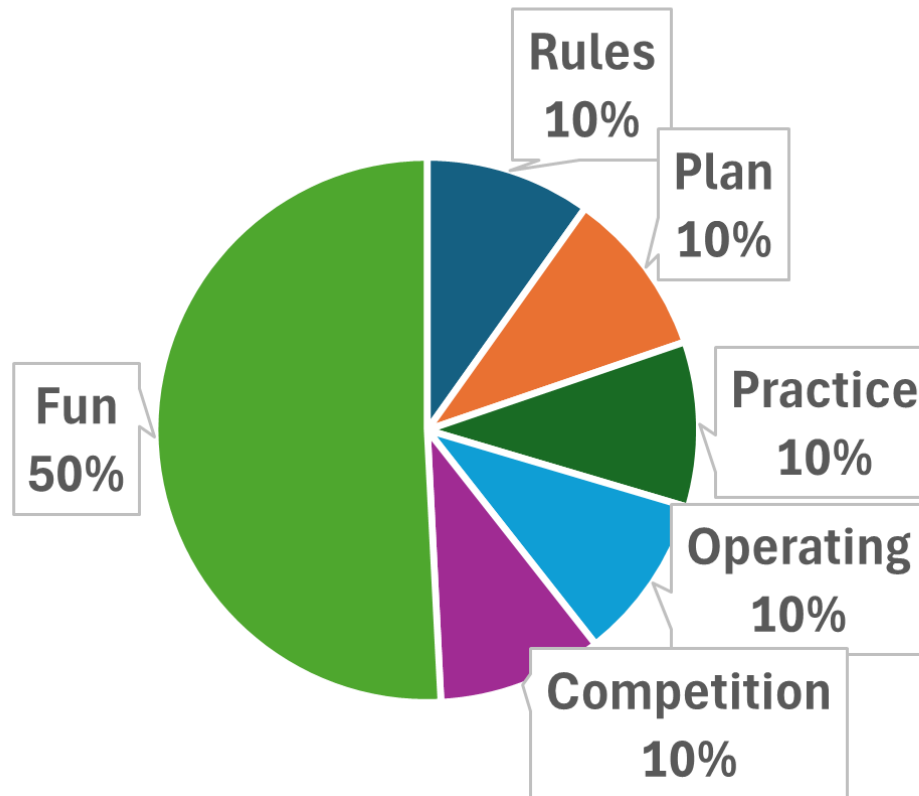


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# Contest Operating Wheel





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Questions?

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