

To QSL or not

- What is a QSL? An acknowledgment of a radio contact between you and another Amateur operator.
- Why Do I Want a QSL?
 - Courtesy – Sending a QSL is the final handshake of a contact.
 - Awards – QSL serve as proof of a two way contact needed for certain awards.
 - Tradition – Exchanging QSL's has been a long tradition in ham radio
- What makes up a QSL?
 - Callsigns
 - Location
 - Date & Time (UTC)
 - Frequency/Band
 - Mode
 - Signal Report
- Types of QSL
 - Cards – the oldest form of QSL where the operators exchange post cards.
 - Tradition is to send these through the mail service. Some operators will require a fee to respond.
 - Online QSL Request Services (OQRS) such as ClubLog. Some operators now use an online service to allow you to request a card, for a fee, without sending them your card.
 - Electronic QSL – contact information is uploaded to a website where it is matched (or not) to the corresponding contact. When a match is made, you are given credit for the contact.
 - Logbook of the World (LOTW): the gold standard operated for ARRL. You will only be notified of matches to your uploads. Date and time must be within 15 minutes. Some fields, like grid square and zones can be different. LOTW will not accept electronic QSL's from any other service
 - eQSL: a similar electronic QSL service. You will be notified of mismatches and can correct them. It is up to the participants for be honest.
 - QRZ.COM offers an online log and QSL award program
 - There are other electronic QSL programs offered by other countries.
 - Awards: each of these organizations offer some types of awards.
 - ARRL awards can be based on paper or LOTW QSL's. To use paper QSL's, they must be inspected by a “card checker”, usually at a HamFest.
 - CQ will accept either LOTW or eQSL QSL data.
 - QRZ.com requires you to upload/enter a matching contact.
 - Certificates: Some special event stations offer a certificate for \$.