

Holding a Run Frequency during Contesting (courtesy of Jim, K1IR)

How do you do it?

1. Getting to the band early makes it much easier to find a clear frequency to get started on. If you're planning to go from 20 meters to 15 meters at the band opening, you need to monitor 15 on a second radio, and go as soon as you start to hear signals. Find your frequency and start making QSOs.
2. Understand that when you are already running on some frequency, others will have to choose how close they want to get to you. Your mere presence on that frequency should make them understand that getting close is going to be a problem for them.
3. Transmit a clean, strong signal. It sure is easier with good antennas and a 1,500 watt amp. Clean audio on ssb makes it easier for DX to understand you, and you will have a higher rate than if you are overprocessed, highly distorted, etc. Most guys won't get near you if you are already running like crazy.
4. Don't necessarily optimize your transmit antennas for F/S and F/B. It is ok if the guys off the side and back know you are there. You want your competitors to hear you and stay away; you also want to be able to hear the DX calling from South America while you are in the middle of your European run.
5. Transmit as much as possible. Your ever-present signal invites QSOs and lets everyone know you are using the frequency. When a weak station working you decides to send your call 34 times and his 27 times, transmit something while he is finishes! Tell the non-existent pile-up to standby! It'll help keep your frequency clear.
6. Be pleasant! Even in tough conditions. Don't lose your cool. QRM is always a temporary condition. If you sound like a nasty guy, competitors will tend to work against you. Instead of giving you some room to have your fun, they'll try to run you off the band.
7. Actually, your frequency doesn't have to be all that clear to keep a good run going. Work your ears and brain hard. Show them you can copy through anything. No one ever said it was supposed to be easy. But make it look that way. There's nothing more frustrating to someone who's trying to move in on you than an apparent increase in your rate.
8. Know how to work your radio. DSP, Notch, IF shift and IF width controls can work wonders under some conditions.
9. Directional receive antennas optimized for the key directions and vertical angles with plenty of F/B and F/S are very helpful. That means Beverages on the low bands. You can be awfully close to the rest of the crowd and still work the weak ones with a good RX antenna pointed in the right direction.
10. Have multiple antennas to choose from. Sometimes, an antenna that isn't quite as loud to the station you are working will still be loud enough to get the job done, but it might have much better rejection of an interfering signal, making it easier to complete the QSO.
11. Practice. Create a run in every contest you can get into. Experiment with all these techniques. Ask someone to listen to your run from their station and critique your performance. See if they copied the same calls you copied!

Eleven ideas is enough.

73,

Jim K1IR

