



*New Contest!*  
October 3 & 4, 2020  
[foxmikehotel.com/challenge/](http://foxmikehotel.com/challenge/)  
**Portable Operations**  
**Challenge**

*FoxMikeHotel Portable Operations Challenge-User Guide from Ed DD5LP*

*“The POC is a challenge for the  
contester and non-contester alike.”*

This document is UNASHAMEDLY aimed at the “Non-Contesters” among participants in the P.O.C. I am a member of the P.O.C. steering committee but this is **my personal opinion and advice**. Experienced contesters will have different approaches to operating – which is fine. As long as everyone has fun, I don’t believe in the “all MUST operate in the same way” edict.

### What is the P.O.C.

The **FoxMikeHotel – Portable Operations Challenge** as the name says is a portable operations challenge and its aim is defined as providing as level a playing field as possible between portable and home stations - using the golfing "handicapping" analogy.

I see the P.O.C. as being much more than that though - I call it the *"Thinkers contest"*.

It’s different.

While it has scoring based on distance per watt, how far away a contact is matters but how much power you use to make the contact also matters - something we have taken from VHF contests. It's no longer JUST a matter of getting the maximum number of contacts in the time available.

As your licence says, you should only use as much power as is needed to make the contact - and you will get more points for doing that!

The fact that we allow the contestant to choose which contiguous 8 hours within the 48 hours to operate is so that, as well as making the contest practical in all parts of the world, *the "thinking contester"* will plan for radio conditions and atmospheric effects like grey line propagation to get the most long-distance contacts. Operating for more than 8 hours and then "cherry picking" the best 8-hour block is not allowed and will result in exclusion. The contester or contesting group have to do their homework before the contest starts based on what they believe will be the best time for them. We don't require pre-registration of the 8-hour block, so if you need to, or decide to, delay your start time

from what you planned - that's fine remembering that you can't operate in the contest past the end of the 48 hours of course.

## Still need a challenge?

Do you operate portable or from your home station? As it's easier to operate from your existing home station, the handicapping gives less points for a contact from a home station than from a portable one. Going portable has other advantages like a quieter band away from electrical noise but of course it is a logistical exercise and normally temporary portable antennas are a compromise when compared to home station ones.

Now you need to consider which mode or modes to use. We know that longer distance contacts are easier to get when using Digital data modes, then CW and lastly phone. This is handicapped in the scoring giving more points to the phone contacts - which generally will be of a shorter distance than the other two modes. But what if there is a busy band with DX on all modes? Using for example Digital will get the longest distance at the lowest power but (FT8 for example) takes up to a minute per contact in which time one could perhaps make 5 CW contacts or 3 SSB contacts - what is the option that will bring the most points? It depends .... This is a real challenge.

How many stations do you have running at the same time? This year we have a maximum of two transmitters allowed to be operational concurrently. Is it worth it as your overall score will be halved if you run two transmitters - perhaps it is, perhaps it isn't - we (the organisers) don't know and this is something that we will analyse when the logs come in and most likely change the maximum transmitters limit next year along with implementing a different handicapping method for this parameter.

This is a new contest and we will learn from what happens in the first running to be able to improve it for the later years. We are starting with a basic model that can be improved upon. As no one has had a contest quite like this one before it's inevitable that some things will work well while others will need to be changed before 2021. The more people who take part, the better as it will give us a larger sample to decide what needs to be changed in the rules.

Don't forget the awards & prizes that can be won. See the website for details.

A lot of this contest will be about planning ahead of the day and then executing that plan well.

CQ POC CQ POC

## [How to do well in the FoxMikeHotel - Portable Operations Challenge?](#)

As the name suggests this is a contest that is angled towards portable operation but home stations can still win it. Whether portable or "QTH" based, the following points will help you be competitive:

1. If you can, get out portable, as well as giving you a better chance through the scoring handicap. It will also be more enjoyable, you will hear more and it tests your gear out for emergency operations if you

ever need it.

2. Choose your 8-hour block carefully. The contest runs for 48 hours and contestants chose one 8-hour block for the contest. Depending on which band(s) you are best equipped for and what time of day is best for that band from a propagation point of view, will affect how many contacts you can make and how distant they are. Would grey-line operation be possible? Which bands have been performing well the days before the contest?

3. Use as little power as you can to make a contact! Maximum distance, least power using SSB gets the most points, followed by CW and digital. Make sure you record the power used for the contact, correctly in the log.

4. Use the best antenna that you can, this will help by adding gain or reducing noise on both receive and transmit. Remember a simple dipole might be a better receive antenna when installed away from populated places, when compared to a tri-bander beam in a town.

5. Scouting for the best site: Check for noise sources before the contest. There's little point finding a lovely portable location if when you set up there the bands are wiped out by QRM from some local building or communications installation. Check out multiple locations in the weeks prior to the contest so that should one site not be accessible on the day, you have an alternative. What about weather - is one site open to high winds and rain while another is more sheltered - when working portable it's always good to have alternatives available.

6. Although we are limiting this contest to a maximum of two transmitters per station, we are not limiting the number of operators, so groups can enter as one station (please apply all relevant distancing and hygiene rules for COVID - also common-sense actions e.g. don't share headsets ). A fresh voice on the microphone or hand on the key can improve the contact rate over the 8 hours. Splitting operating and logging duties reduces stress. Do not confuse two transmitters with SO2R – the rules are that you declare the maximum number of TRANSMITTERS you have had running concurrently. In the “contesters favourite” SO2R, it's two radios that are in use but that does not have to mean two transmitters transmitting at the same time. You can have two transceivers connected up and jump between them as you want to change band or mode and still that is just ONE transmitter on at a time. The Two transmitter option is for when a group runs two independent stations both transmitting at the same time. One for example might be operating 20m FT8 with the click-to-work logic and another working on 40m SSB. In this TWO\_TRANSMITTER configuration, you could even work with just one operator given the simplicity of operating the digital station (while it's doing its exchanges automatically the same operator could be making contacts in parallel on the second transmitter).

CQ-POC CQ-POC

[Example exchange in this challenge.](#)

This is for those who don't want yet to operate "contest-style" – just to operate in a way similar to what you are used to and are comfortable with. If you wish to learn the much briefer exchanges used by experienced testers, you will no doubt hear that during this challenge and these operating procedures are documented in contest training information on the web.

For now, let's just have some fun!

#### **DATA TO BE EXCHANGED:**

*Information you need to provide to the station you are working:*

Your call sign, station class (Q or P) with your serial number and your 4-character Maidenhead locator.

*Information you need to receive and log from the station you are working:*

Their call sign, station class (Q or P) with their serial number and their 4-character Maidenhead locator.

**One example of a QSO is shown below however this can be shortened or lengthened as long as the required information is exchanged:**

- CQ CQ CQ POC this is K4FMH listening.
- DD5LP/P
- DD5LP/P go ahead
- K4FMH this is DD5LP/P your report is P0005 from JN58 – QSL?
- DD5LP/P from K4FMH QSL, you are Q9987 from EM42 73, QRZ POC

I suggest you allow the station class and serial number to run into one item as this will simplify operation. Other formats or sequence of exchange in the contact are acceptable as long as all required information is transferred.

If the station worked is not in the contest and hence has no serial number to give you, enter this in your log as Q0001 (or P0001 if it's a portable station). The other station's 4-character Maidenhead locator must be entered however, otherwise no points can be allocated for the contact.

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#### Logistics?

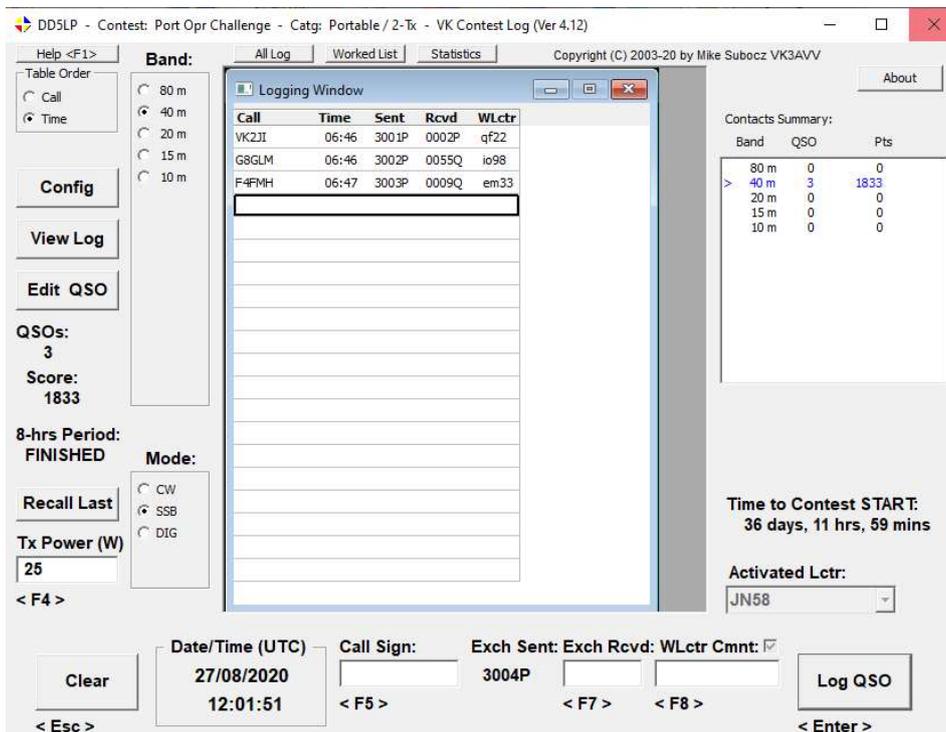
OK, you're interested and want to give it a go at least for a few hours. Do you have to enter and send a log in?

Well first of all, good that you are interested. As I said before there's no registration needed, so when you are ready to start taking part set up your rig and off you go. Yes you could just give out points and not even send in a log, but I would ask you to do so as the more logs we get, even if they only have a few contacts in them, help us make the POC better and fairer for everybody, next year.

Unfortunately, we cannot process paper log sheets or documents of some kind, we do need to have the log (the list of all of your contacts) sent in via email as a file in a standard layout called Cabrillo.

Don't stop reading – you don't have to worry about getting your information all laid out correctly, that what logging programs on the computer do for you. While experienced contesters may use N1MM+ and other programs, for newcomers we have a very friendly and simple contest logging program called VK Contest Logger (VKCL for short). It's the de-facto logging program for Australian contests, although it covers lots of International ones as well and it's author, Mike VK3AVV (one of the team preparing the POC) has kindly added in the POC as one of the contests that it supports.

So go to [www.mnds.com.au/vkcl/](http://www.mnds.com.au/vkcl/) to download this (free) program and (optionally) if you want the convenience of automatically getting the band in use from your rig and you already have your PC connected to your rig, then also download OmniRig from: [dxatlas.com/OmniRig/](http://dxatlas.com/OmniRig/) (it is also free). Full details on how to install and configure both of these are on their respective sites (it's easy). If you are using the latest version of Windows 10, you will need to set the tick-mark against "run as Administrator" in the properties of VKCL before OmniRig can start. If you don't have your computer and rig connected together this isn't needed – just install VKCL and follow the instructions on how to configure it and you will end up with a program that looks like this:



The information that you will enter during the challenge are just those bottom three boxes – Callsign, Exchange and grid square. All the rest of the information on the screen is just to help you see how things are going.

There are lots of useful features in VKCL that you can read up about but you don't HAVE to use them. It's a nice simple program with a built-in help system.

Once your 8 hours is over it will tell you or if you decide to end early, you can tell the program to create that Cabrillo file that we need you to email to Frank ([FMHPOC@gmail.com](mailto:FMHPOC@gmail.com)).

If you are interested, you can look at the file – there is nothing hidden in it and here is an example of what one might look like:

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                                Portable Operations Challenge on 2020-10-02 - 03
START-OF-LOG: 3.0

CONTEST: POC

CATEGORY-TRANSMITTER: TWO

CALLSIGN: DD5LP/P

NAME: Ed Durrant

ADDRESS: ABC Strasse 27A
ADDRESS-CITY: Pasting
ADDRESS-POSTALCODE: 86999
ADDRESS-COUNTRY: GERMANY

GRID-LOCATOR: JN58

EMAIL: dd5lp@arrl.net

SOAPBOX:
SOAPBOX:

CREATED-BY: VK3AVV VK Contest Log (Ver 4.12) on 2020-10-03 15:33

QSO: 7000 PH 2020-10-02 1339 DD5LP/P P 1001 JN58 VK3AUQ Q 0007 QF22 20
QSO: 7000 PH 2020-10-02 1351 DD5LP/P P 1002 JN58 VK3ZH Q 0024 QF22 70
QSO: 7000 PH 2020-10-02 1442 DD5LP/P P 1003 JN58 VK3BNR/P P 0003 QF22 10
QSO: 21000 PH 2020-10-02 1445 DD5LP/P P 5001 JN58 VK3FS P 0017 QF21 10
QSO: 14000 PH 2020-10-02 1448 DD5LP/P P 2001 JN58 VK3MB Q 0019 QF22 10
QSO: 21000 PH 2020-10-02 1459 DD5LP/P P 5002 JN58 PD3EM Q 0046 JO21 15
QSO: 3500 PH 2020-10-02 1512 DD5LP/P P 0001 JN58 K3LR Q 1102 EN91 15
QSO: 7000 PH 2020-10-02 1842 DD5LP/P P 1004 JN58 VK3BNT/P P 0082 QF22 15
QSO: 28000 PH 2020-10-02 1945 DD5LP/P P 9001 JN58 DL5MCC P 7016 JN58 15
QSO: 14000 PH 2020-10-02 1955 DD5LP/P P 2002 JN58 HB9LU Q 0011 JN47 15
QSO: 7000 PH 2020-10-02 2001 DD5LP/P P 1005 JN58 KD2GUT Q 0007 FN30 15

END-OF-LOG:
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So that's my guide. Of course, it's not complete. I'm not going to tell you how to do everything – learning as you go is half the fun!

Good luck if you do decide to get on air on October 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> and remember, please send in a log.

73 Ed DD5LP / G8GLM / VK2JI.

Errors and Omissions definitely excepted!

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