

Getting Started with POTA

Parks on the Air® (POTA) started in early 2017 when the ARRL's National Parks on the Air special event ended. A group of volunteers wanted to continue the fun beyond the one-year event, and thus, POTA was born.

General information about the program is available at parksontheair.com, so we highly recommend checking out the information there. You may also want to join the [POTA Slack Channel](#) or the [POTA Facebook group](#), where you can easily interact with the POTA community online. POTA also maintains accounts on [Twitter](#) and [Mastodon](#) if you prefer to interact on those social media platforms.

Once you're ready to start, just remember that the golden rules of POTA are to have fun and keep it simple. We want to give you as much flexibility as possible, to have fun your way.

Getting started with POTA can happen via one of two paths — as an “activator” who heads out into the parks or as a “hunter” who is trying to contact someone in a park. The easiest way to participate in POTA is as a hunter, so we'll start there.

Getting Started for Hunters

Hunters are the individuals located anywhere, who contact the activators in the park. As a hunter, the rules are few and simple.

- Follow the law.
- Follow the [DX Code of Conduct](#).
- Follow the Golden Rule.

The first place to start as a hunter is to head to <https://pota.app>. The home page you land on will be the spotting page, which lets you know who is on the air, what parks they are in, and what frequencies and modes they are currently operating on. Spin the dial, and answer their call if you can hear them. If you make a contact, you've officially started in POTA! That's all there is to it!

While at <https://pota.app>, click the “sign up” button to create an account, which will let you see your progress towards certificates and awards based on the logs that the activators you contacted submit. POTA is on the honor system, based exclusively on activator logs, so as a hunter, you don't have to lift a finger (Other than the one that hits your key or PTT!).

Getting Started for Activators

Activators are the individuals that pack up their portable gear and head out to a park, and set up a station. After you've done some hunting, you might want to take a shot at activating. The rules for activators are still fairly simple:

- Follow the law
- Follow the [DX Code of Conduct](#)
- Follow the Golden Rule
- Leave no trace
- Follow any instructions from park rangers you encounter
- Be courteous of the public space you are using
- You must have an account registered at <https://pota.app>
- You and all your equipment must be within the boundaries of the park(s)
- You must submit an ADIF log after your activation is complete.
- Follow the Rules detailed here (<docs.pota.app>)

Once familiar with the rules, head to the map <https://pota.app/#/map>. Allow location services to quickly zoom to your location, or use the drop-downs to choose an entity and location. The yellow dots are approximate locations of parks in your area. Check official sources (park websites etc.) and ensure you are within the park's boundary.

Once you've chosen a location in the park, set up your gear, find a quiet frequency, and start calling CQ. While doing your initial CQ calls, you'll want to head to <https://pota.app> and click the button to add a spot. Once you've spotted yourself, the hunters will probably come fast and furious, so be prepared to start logging your QSOs!

You can use any logging method that generates a valid ADIF file. Refer to the [logging requirements section of the rules](#) for the required fields. After generating your ADIF file, head to the "My Log Uploads" section of the website (You'll find that under your callsign in the menu) and use the file dialog to upload your logs. You'll see your stats within a few hours, and any earned awards will start to populate through. At this point, you can sit back and congratulate yourself on joining the ranks as an Activator!