

Progress through a JOTA Station

Welcome

Your station will appear friendly and welcoming if there is someone ready to greet visitors.

Register names, status (Cub, Scout, etc.) & Unit. Include parents, Radio Amateurs and everyone at the event. This list is essential if the building has to be evacuated and also facilitates writing the Station Report. [1]. If you have a station leaflet [2] explaining what to expect and where to go, this is the time to hand it out. Explain about Station safety

Brief introductory talk

Ideally one of the Radio Amateur will give a brief introductory talk, tailoring it to the age group and making the following points:

- Amateur Radio is not 'broadcasting' but a one-to-one contact. (Ignore nets).
- Take turns - you cannot interrupt but have to wait until invited to reply..
- Remember that anyone can tune in and listen to your conversation.
- All hobbies have jargon - Phonetic Alphabet, Q-codes, Call signs and abbreviations
- Radio Amateurs use only first names or nicknames
- No rudeness, or bad language allowed

Phonetic Alphabet

Explain how using the phonetic alphabet avoids confusion or errors. Go through the alphabet stressing the letters that the individual visitors will need. Then offer games.

- Initial letter game
- Wordsearch - matrix
- Wordsearch - sentences

Messages

Help the visitors to think what they will say and make the following points.

- First name only - say name first and then spell in phonetics.
For example: My name is Fred - Foxtrot, Romeo, Echo, Delta.
- Place or troop/pack/unit, etc. - also in phonetics if necessary
- Tell the listener what is exciting, different or challenging in Scouts. (ie. no lists of hobbies, pets or football teams).
- Spelling & grammar not important - these are your notes to remind you what to say if you are mike-shy.
- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Leaders should set an example and be happy to pass messages too.

When a successful contact has been made and message passed, make sure that they listen to the reply and are ready to answer any queries. Then find out where the station is and mark in on the map. If several contacts are made with the same station, get Scouts to ask what the place is famous for.

Larger stations frequently have a VHF/UHF station in addition to their HF station. Visitors are guided to the VHF/UHF station first because speech is usually much clearer in these FM contacts.

Visitors may do some of the following activities while waiting for the operator to find a suitable contact.

QSL Cards

Visitors can design their own QSL cards - possibly two (one to send and one to keep as a souvenir). Remember the callsign lettering must be at least 10mm high. A few good examples help here.

Morse Code

Many visitors are fascinated by Morse code, so have a couple of practice oscillators and a list of the sounds. Encourage the use of 'dit' and 'dah' rather than dots and dashes, so the list starts: A = di-dah, B = dah-di-di-dit, etc Explain that Morse letters are sound patterns and using dots and dashes means your brain has to do two operations, not one.

Kit Building

Some JOTA stations offer simple electronic circuits for visitors to build. Remember safety considerations and the use of goggles.

Direction Finding

A small transmitter is hidden and Scouts are equipped with a suitable receiver and a directional aerial. With the aid of a map and compass they search for the transmitter.

Radio Orienteering

This is a combination of direction finding and orienteering. There is no 'master map' but small transmitters are hidden at the control points which transmit in turn. Again the Scouts are equipped with a suitable receivers with directional aerials and maps & compasses. They try to locate the transmitters as quickly as possible. This is not widely available because it requires specialist equipment.

Cub and Scout Activity Badges

Cubs who 'Pass a message to someone using amateur radio' have satisfied clause 6(h) of the Cub Communicator Activity Badge. Visiting a JOTA station is an ideal opportunity to 'Write and decipher three simple messages using codes, cyphers, invisible ink or semaphore' thus satisfying clause 6(f). With the help of the Cub Leader the rest of the badge could be attempted during the visit.

The whole of the Scout Communicator Activity Badge can be completed during one visit to a JOTA station. Clause 1(a) causes most problems, requiring 25 stations to be logged which is very difficult in the setting of a visit to a JOTA station. This is something of a throwback to the days when those with an interest in Amateur Radio started off as Short-wave listeners,

learning how to conduct contacts following the accepted procedure. Licence examinations tested the theory. Today the Foundation Licence is much more 'hands on' but the badge clause has not changed.

One approach is to have a separate receiver with an operator who helps them to pick out call signs, Q-codes and other items specific to Amateur Radio. The aim is to understand better how the jargon you have met earlier helps to facilitate radio communication even if there is no shared language. Try tuning several bands, especially where there are JOTA stations. Mapping stations heard will give a feel for the distances involved. Don't ignore the conversations where only one station is heard. 'Logging' can be mind blowingly boring or an opportunity to learn something about how radio reaches round the world.

Scouts who have enjoyed the kit building activity should be encouraged to consider the Scout Electronics Activity Badge.

Annual cloth UK JOTA-JOTI badges are available based on the official World Bureau logo for the year. They can be worn on Uniform as well as camp blankets etc.

Notes for organisers

Room layout

Where possible, position the operators so that they face the visitors as they come in. This is far more welcoming than the backs of people and has a number of other advantages.

- The shy visitor will hesitate to interrupt a busy operator who has not seen them.
- It is easier to keep an eye on who is coming in and possibly more important who is going out (and with what).

If you can, arrange the location such that any noisy activities are kept well away from the Radio Amateur trying to find contacts for the visitors.

Progress through the station from activity to activity cuts down both movements and noise. If at the end the Beaver, Cub or Scout has passed all or part of a Badge make sure he or she has written proof to present the leader or if possible have badge presentations at the event.

If you have plenty of help, Scout leaders can take over activities not requiring specialised knowledge leaving the Radio Amateurs to concentrate on the technical side.

Photography

JOTA and JOTI stations are great opportunities for recording the event for future years. Good photographs have uncluttered backgrounds and participants clearly actively involved in what they are doing. They should be wearing uniform, even if this is no more than a Scout scarf. Logos of firms and football teams do not promote Scouting. If the photograph is to be published remember parental permission.

Other activities

Jamboree on the Air and Jamboree on the Internet together are the biggest International event in the World Scouting calendar attracting as many as a million participants. From the start the

opportunity to promote International Scouting has been uppermost and the weekend provides a chance to combine the event with activities with an International theme. Other stations add technical and science based activities, such as electronics and astronomy. Often the weekend offers older Scouts and Explorers a chance for camping, cooking and pioneering (maybe aerial masts?) and yet more badges! The event is what you make it!

The Radio Amateurs are usually happy to share their hobby, their expertise and their equipment without thought of reward as long as frequent cups of tea and coffee are readily available. Offer to meet their expenses and proffer your thanks. If they have enjoyed the event they will return!

Liz G0RJX & Richard G0REL

[1] The World JOTA Coordinator asks the National JOTA Coordinators for the numbers of people visiting the JOTA stations in their country so that he can compile the figures for the World JOTA-JOTI Report. To this end, the organisers of JOTA stations are asked send in a report on their station. To make it as easy as possible the report form is in two parts - one for the Radio Amateur and one for the Scout Leader. It is available as a PDF to print and in Word to send in electronically.

[2] This leaflet summarises Callsign prefixes, Phonetic alphabet, Q-codes & QSL cards. It has a brief history of Radio Scouting and covers the main safety points. Finally there is a space for the visitor to write their 'message' and note the stations heard.