

# m0blfarticles

## QSL-ing January 2000

Sending QSL-Cards is a fascinating and exciting aspect of Amateur Radio. It is not as expensive as it sounds!

Basically, cards are exchanged between radio amateurs to confirm that a contact has been made. So, if you worked a special event station, for example, or a station quite far away, you might like to ask them for their card. Normally, you would confirm that they are happy to do this on-air.

You will now need to send your card to them. For this you will need some cardboard (white is usually cheapest), cut to just under the dimensions of one-quarter of an A4 page landscape. It is best to stick to this size guideline, as it ensures that the least damage will occur to it in the course of its journey. The card should be printed, with a home PC, photocopier or professional printer, with the following details:

- Your callsign and first name
- Spaces for the time, date, mode (eg FM) and frequency of the contact
- Space for the recipient's callsign
- Space to write in the signal reports exchanged
- Brief Information about your rig and its power
- The words 'PSE QSL' if you would like a card back (or 'TKS QSL' if you have already received a card)

If you like, you could put this on the back and have a nice colour photo on the front as many other amateurs do, but beware of the cost of professional colour printing!

So how do you post it? You could send it to the amateur's home address by looking up their callsign in an address database (such as [QRZ.com](http://QRZ.com)) but imagine the potential cost of stamps! Instead amateurs use the 'Bureau'. To do this, you have to be a member of your country's national radio society (the RSGB here) and then you can send a batch of cards to the address provided by them. They will then ensure that the card reaches its destination. Be aware though, it's cheaper but slower than the normal post. Do not be surprised if it takes two years or more for a reply to reach you!

How do you receive a reply? In some countries people have to be members of their society to receive cards as well. Here, however, any amateur can do this. All you need to do is to send a couple strong, Stamped Addressed Envelopes (slightly bigger than the cards). The stamps such be of the 1st, 2nd type (rather than with a value on them) to guard against rises in the postage rates. The envelopes are sent to the volunteer allocated to callsigns similar to your own (eg M0AAA - M0AZZ), whose address can be obtained from the RSGB - even for non-members. The RSGB will send them cards for you as they arrive but they will keep the envelopes until enough cards are received for the stamps you have provided (eg 60 grams of cards for a normal 1st or 2nd class stamp in the UK), before sending them to you. This is why it takes so long!

What if I want my cards sent more regularly? You should always mark your envelopes in the top left-hand corner with phrases such as '1 of 3', so you know when to send more envelopes. Your sub-manager ( the volunteer that looks after your cards) will be happy to send you your envelopes, when they have 6 cards in them, for example, if you do not want to wait until the 60 gram limit is reached. Just mark your envelopes, again in the top-left corner, 'STOP 6'.

How do you send a QSL card through the bureau? You have to be a member of the RSGB & live in Britain. If you are, simply send a batch of cards to:

RSGB QSL Bureau,  
P.O. Box 1773,  
Potters Bar,  
Herts.,  
EN6 3EP.

The cards should be sorted, but without separations in the following manner: Cards for Britain should come first, arranged alphanumerically from G1A to M9ZZZ. Then come cards for the rest of the world, excluding the USA, arranged as above from 1A0AAA to ZZ9ZZZ. Following all of this, you put in the cards for the USA, arranged by number and then suffix (ie ignoring the 'N', 'W', 'K' or 'AA' national prefixes.)

So, why bother QSL-ing? QSL cards from contacts are required as proof for many award schemes but are also very collectable. They are a very neat memory of QSOs with far-off places (especially DXpeditions) and represent something that you can show off to friends and family.

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