

“HEY MAN, LET’S SPLIT!”

You’ve found a station operating from the Dogs dinner islands! Major DX! Then you hear: “He’s working split” . . . “UP UP” . . . “UP 2” . . . what does this mean?

WHY SPLIT FREQUENCY?

If a DX station listens and transmits on the same frequency, the pileup often obliterates his transmissions. You can’t tell IF he’s transmitting, let alone to whom. For his part, the DX has difficulty picking callsigns out of the chaos and completing QSOs efficiently. This is frustrating for everybody and certainly slows down the QSO rate.

Consequently, many DX ops work *split frequency*. This means that the DX transmits on one frequency but listens elsewhere, usually a few kHz above or below his transmit frequency. If the pile-up is big, he may listen over a range of frequencies instead of just one.

This makes it easier for the DX to control the pile-up and correctly copy those calling him. Because you can hear the DX, you can feel secure that it really was your call he answered and that he copied your callsign correctly. More people get to work the DX. People are less tempted to call again for an insurance contact. Less wasted time = more fun!

HOW IT WORKS

If you have a dual VFO rig, set your receive VFO to the DX’s transmit frequency. Set your transmit VFO to a frequency within his listening range. Hint: Form a habit for using your VFOs. Either always transmit on VFO A and receive on VFO B, or always transmit on B and receive on A. This helps avoid transmitting on the wrong VFO in the excitement of the chase. If you don’t have a dual VFO, you can often use the RIT control to accomplish the same thing. Choose your own transmit frequency, then engage the RIT and tune to listen on the DX’s transmit frequency. Warning: You may have to break down and read your rig’s instruction manual.

How do you know where the DX is listening? On phone, he will specify a listening frequency or range: A DX op transmitting on 28.480 MHz may say, “Listening up, four-eighty-five to four-ninety.” So you transmit on a frequency between 28.485 and 28.490 MHz. Or he might just say “Up five,” in which case you transmit about 5 kHz above his transmit frequency.

On CW, the DX may be less specific. He might say, “UP 2” or maybe just “UP.” Time to play detective. Tune slowly up the band until you find a group of hams pounding away like mad. There’s the pile-up. Pick your transmit frequency in or near this mess and start to call. If you suspect you can’t hear the pile-up because you’re in their skip zone, try going up 2 or 3 kHz.

Users of the DX PacketCluster often announce where they heard successful calls made, to assist others in the hunt. They may say “UP 3” or “QSX 14050.3” instead of using the word “listening.” They might also say “WORKED 14050.3” to let you know where their own successful call was made. Once their own QSO is in the log, DXers will help others with information.

SOME DX-SPEAK

Pile-Up: The frenzied horde of hams competing to work a DX station.

Breaking the Pile-Up: Getting the DX to come back to your call, amid the roaring chaos.

QSX: Q-signal indicating the DX is working split. “QSX 28.495” means the DX will be listening on 28.495 MHz.

Working transceive: The DX listens and transmits on the same frequency. That is, he is not working split frequency.

Insurance contact: Discouraged practice of working a DX station again on the same band and mode because you aren’t confident of the first QSO.

LIDS AND HOW NOT TO BE ONE

Alas, you will still hear people transmitting on top of the DX. This is because they didn’t listen long enough to pick up the DX’s Instructions, are lids who don’t *follow* instructions, or got their VFOs backwards. The latter happens to the best of us sometimes, though we take care to prevent it. *RESIST THE URGE TO INSTRUCT THESE NITWITS IN THE ERROR OF THEIR WAYS.* That would just add to the QRM and make things worse.

Some DX ops don’t give their callsigns and listening instructions often enough, causing lids to bawl, “Who’s the DX?” . . . “What’s his callsign?” . . . “Call?” . . . “CL?” . . . etc., on the DX’s transmit frequency. *KEEP QUIET AND WAIT FOR THE INFORMATION.* Another use of the PacketCluster is to put out announcements asking, “What’s the commotion on 14.025?”

When some lid persists in calling on the DX’s CW transmit frequency, I have actually heard somebody send him a “599 TU” to make him think he worked the DX and go away! Of course, this is illegal and can’t be recommended.

Unkey frequently so you can hear when the DX answers someone. It might be you! Some lids call incessantly. How would they know if the DX came back to their calls?

IN THE LOG!

The best advice for building DXing skills has always been *LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN.* When you hear some juicy DX, don’t immediately start to transmit. Listen. If you don’t hear the other stations he’s working, he may be working split but not announcing it very often. Tune up and down the band a few kHz. Listen. Can you find the pile-up? If not, go back to the DX’s frequency and listen until you discover what’s going on. When you finally break the pile-up, take a minute to analyze what you did that worked. Put that in your data bank of DXing skills for next time. A modest station with a skilled operator will succeed in working DX, and skills develop with time, thought, and effort.

Good luck in the pile-ups! --73 de WT3P