

Coping with Cabrillo

Few developments have affected Amateur Radio contest operating as much as the development of logging software for personal computers. Such programs quickly replaced paper logs, dupe and multiplier sheets on the operating desk. These same programs make it a simple task to submit your log electronically to the contest sponsor.

Standardization Needed

In early 1999, computer professional Trey Garlough, N5KO, worked with many of the major developers of Amateur Radio logging software to develop a standardized electronic contest entry specification for the ARRL. The result was the *Cabrillo File Format Specification*, which in late 1999 was adopted by the ARRL as its standard format for electronic contest entries. Beginning with contests in November 2000, all logs for ARRL contests that are electronically generated must be in the Cabrillo file format. **The ARRL will continue to accept paper logs written by hand.** However, contest entries generated using a computer must submit the electronic Cabrillo file.

A Look at Cabrillo

Information about the Cabrillo File Format Specification is available on-line at: <http://www.kkn.net/~trey/cabrillo>. An example of a Cabrillo file is shown below.

Each line in a Cabrillo file begins with a keyword ending with a colon. This keyword identifies the data contained in that line. The file begins with the "START-OF-LOG:" keyword. Other keywords identify summary

information defining the contest entry. Non-QSO data lines can appear anywhere in the file; however, QSO data lines must appear in chronological order.

The format of each QSO data field is defined in the Cabrillo specification, and there is at least one blank space between adjacent data fields. These fields must be positioned in a specific order. The line starts with the "QSO:" keyword, followed by the frequency (in whole kilohertz for HF contests, or a letter designating the band for VHF/UHF) and mode of the contact. Next is the date (in YYYY-DD-MM format) and four-digit UTC time. The entrant's call sign and sent information comes next, followed by the call sign of the station worked and the received information.

The log file ends with the "END-OF-LOG:" keyword, which is very important. On occasion, the ARRL has received electronic log files that have been cut off or truncated. This sometimes happens during the e-mail process, usually beyond the control of either the entrant or the ARRL. With a Cabrillo log file, if the "END-OF-LOG:" keyword is missing, it is obvious that the file has been truncated and the entrant can be contacted to send another copy. With the non-Cabrillo ASCII files generated by the popular logging programs today, this truncation can be difficult, if not impossible to detect.

Generating Cabrillo Files

Recent versions of most popular contest logging programs can generate Cabrillo files. Specific instructions for these programs and the Cabrillo-compatible version number

follows. If you have a pre-Cabrillo version, you should contact your software provider about obtaining a current version.

- *CT* by K1EA—As of version 9.49, *CT* supports Cabrillo files for the CQWW, ARRL DX (either domestic or DX), Sweepstakes and ARRL 10-Meter contests. A Cabrillo file can be created from within the program by typing the command WRITELOG in the call sign field of the logging screen. The Cabrillo file will be created along with the other log output files. It will be named *yourcall.TXT*, where *yourcall* is the call sign used during the contest.

- *NA* by K8CC—NA has supported Cabrillo since version 10.43. A Cabrillo file can be created when exiting the program. On exit, a screen prompt appears saying "END PROGRAM: <W>rite Log to Disk, <P>rint, <E>xit". Press "W" to write the log to disk. The Cabrillo file will be created along with the other log output files in the *NA* output directory. It will be named *yourlog.LOG*, where *yourlog* is the base filename of the *NA* log being processed.

- *TRLog* by N6TR—The first Cabrillo-compliant version of *TR* is 6.50. A Cabrillo file is created using POST, the separate post-contest program provided with *TR* to generate entry files. Run the POST program, select "C" from the menu of commands and follow the prompts on the screen. The Cabrillo file will be created in the same directory as the log file being processed. It will be named *yourlog.CBR*, where *yourlog* is the base filename of the *TR* log being processed.

- *SD* by EI5DI—A Cabrillo file can be

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START-OF-LOG: 2.0
CONTEST: ARRL-SS-CW
CALLSIGN: K8CC
ARRL-SECTION: MI
OPERATORS: K8CC, WB8T
CATEGORY: MULTI-SINGLE
CLAIMED-SCORE: 172536
CLUB: Mad River Radio Club
SOAPBOX: Big pileup on KP2N to get last section for sweep!
NAME: Dave Pruett
ADDRESS: 2727 Harris Road
ADDRESS: Ypsilanti, MI 48198 USA
QSO: 28002 CW 1999-11-06 2200 K8CC      1 M 69 MI KH7R      1 A 67 PAC
QSO: 28002 CW 1999-11-06 2200 K8CC      2 M 69 MI KE9I      1 B 75 IN
QSO: 28007 CW 1999-11-06 2201 K8CC      3 M 69 MI N7VM      2 A 76 UT
QSO: 28010 CW 1999-11-06 2203 K8CC      4 M 69 MI NOAH      4 B 95 WY
QSO: 28023 CW 1999-11-06 2204 K8CC      5 M 69 MI W5VX      8 A 59 STX
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An example of the Cabrillo file format.

created using SDCHECK, the separate post-contest program provided with SD to generate entry files. The first version of SDCHECK supporting Cabrillo is 9.68. Start up SDCHECK then select Option 4 - Entry File. The Cabrillo file will be created in the

same directory as SDCHECK. It will be named *yourlog*.LOG, where *yourlog* is the base filename of the SD log being processed.

• *WriteLog* by W5XD—To create a Cabrillo file with *WriteLog*, pull down the Contest menu and click on Cabrillo File.

In the screen that appears, make sure your sent information (ARRL section, category, power, etc.) is all entered correctly, then click OK. The Save As window appears showing the directory where the Cabrillo file (named *yourcall*.LOG) will be created.

Helping The Contest Branch Serve You

By Dan Henderson, N1ND, ARRL Contest Branch Manager

Our goal in the Contest Branch is simple: provide accurate contest results to our participants. Several changes have been implemented that have allowed us to make great strides toward that goal. E-mail addresses for each contest have helped get logs to the correct queues for processing. A back-up server allows us to archive all e-mailed contest entries, so that original e-mails can be consulted if a problem arises. A listing of logs received at <http://www.arrl.org/contests> allows participants to verify basic information that affects their entry. And you, as a participant, can help us avoid problems by following a few easy guidelines.

While more contesters are using electronic logging, we still receive approximately one-third of all logs in handwritten paper form. *Handwritten paper logs will continue to be accepted for ARRL contests*. There are generally three major problems we encounter with handwritten logs—all easily handled at the participant's end.

First, please make certain that you are using the most current forms and rules for the contest. Contest rules change occasionally and all participants need to make certain their information is up-to-date. The latest forms and rules may be obtained three ways: (1) Send an SASE to the ARRL Contest Branch, 225 Main St, Newington, CT 06111 and request the forms; (2) download them from the ARRL Contest homepage at <http://www.arrl.org/contest/forms>; (3) request forms by e-mail to the ARRL Info Server (server guidelines are found in each contest rules announcement).

Another problem we encounter with paper logs is that a participant may include entries for several contests in the same envelope. For example, in January 1999, we received one envelope from a participant, postmarked in late-January, that contained the following contest logs: ARRL Sweepstakes CW and Phone, ARRL 160 Meter Contest, ARRL 10-Meter Contest and the ARRL RTTY Round Up. By combining the entries into a single mailing, four of the five logs were received after contest submission deadlines. Help us serve you by submitting only one contest entry per envelope (and clearly marking the contest name on the outside of the envelope).

The final concern with paper logs is illegible handwriting. A recent handwritten entry included a tough-to-read call sign, which ended up wrong in the write-up. The entry, written in a sprawling script, had what appeared to be the letter W, but was in fact the letter U with an extremely long finishing tail. A simple matter to correct, but one that could have been avoided.

Electronic logging, while taking contesting to new levels, nonetheless presents its own pitfalls. E-logs share a common problem with paper logs when they are either submitted late or sent to the wrong contest address. But what can the participant do to help eliminate problems with e-logs?

One of the most common problems we encounter is participant submitting the log and summary for the wrong contest. In fact, in every major contest we receive at least one such log! Recently a phone call was received from an individual upset that his 160-Meter Contest log had been "lost." A check of the backup revealed that he had submitted a CQ World Wide summary sheet and an ARRL November Sweepstakes log!

Many contesters will name their log files with some variation of the contest name and year. Imagine the confusion caused at the ARRL Contest Branch when lots of people submit files *SSCW99.log*. That is why the rules tell you to use your call sign for the file name, with an extension such as .log (ie N1ND.log). The participant saves us time—and helps eliminate potential headaches—by using the required file naming protocols.

The ARRL uses a different e-mail address for each event. E-mail sent to the wrong address has the potential to be overlooked. You

should only submit the required files. When you send more than the required log files, you create the potential for saving the wrong file. You should only submit the file that contains the new Cabrillo log file! Please do not send other files, such as *CTLog*.bin files, *NALog*.qdf files, breakdown sheets, rate sheets, *Excel* spread sheets, or *Word* document files.

Rules for contests do change. All of the major contest-logging software programs incorporate rules changes in their latest versions. If a new ARRL section is added, or if there is a new entry category, older copies of software may not be correct. You may miss or lose multipliers, be entered in a wrong category, or your software may not recognize the exchange that you try to log. The result is that your entry will have a problem, and your score may not be accurately reported.

You should *always* verify that your summary information and log file are accurate before you submit your entry. Don't assume that your software prepares correct summary information. You should open the log file and verify what it contains before you submit the entry. If your file doesn't have all of the required information, your entry may be entered into a default category.

E-mail is the easiest method of submitting your log. Before you send that e-mail, take a moment to make certain your file is complete. Recently, a contest-winning performance ended up with a major submission problem, one that was not caught until after the results had been printed. The log file appeared to have been truncated and, therefore, it was incomplete. In this case, over 500 QSOs of the log were lost in the transmission. This sometimes happens when sending files over the Internet (I'll leave it to the net gurus to explain how this happens). A good way to catch this is to e-mail yourself a copy of the file as a cc: to your submission to the League. The new Cabrillo file format (with its End of Log statement) gives us a way to verify complete logs are received.

The old contest@arrrl.org e-mail address is no longer valid. When you send your log to the correct address, you receive an automated response indicating that your e-mail has been received. Hold on to that receipt until the list of "logs received" is posted on the Contest Web page (or until the results are in print). If there is a problem with your entry or if it is missing, the response serves as proof of your submission before the deadline. If you have contest questions, send them to n1nd@arrrl.org instead of the entry submission address.

To summarize, here is a "Top Ten" list of ways you can assist us in "getting it right."

- (1) **Read** and familiarize yourself with the contest rules before the event.
- (2) Use **current** copies of your logging program or paper summary sheets.
- (3) Verify that your summary information is **complete** and **accurate**.
- (4) If using paper summaries and logs, make certain all information is **legible**.
- (5) If using e-logging, submit the **required** Cabrillo file.
- (6) Send your entry **before** the 30-day deadline for submission.
- (7) Use the **correct** e-mail or postal mail address for submitting the entry.
- (8) Check to be certain your current mail and e-mail **addresses** are on your entry.
- (9) Electronically logged contests **must** submit their Cabrillo readable log files.
- (10) If you have questions, e-mail n1nd@arrrl.org or call 860-594-0232.

Change the destination directory if desired, and then click OK.

Preparing the Entry

Cabrillo files can be easily viewed or edited using the *DOS Editor* program (EDIT.EXE) or *Windows NotePad*. A word processor program is not recommended since such programs often insert hidden formatting characters into the file without the user's knowledge.

Opening the Cabrillo file allows the entry information to be quickly reviewed. One very important item for the ARRL Contest Department is the "ARRL-SECTION:" field, which is used to compile the score listings in *QST*, which are by ARRL section. Be sure to check this field to ensure that your score will appear under the correct section in the *QST* listings. Remember that some states have multiple sections, so include the correct section if you live in one of those areas.

A common problem with electronic logs is incorrect information. For example, many popular logging programs allow a default location (such as your state) to be set. However, many contests use different entities for the geographic locator, in which case the default may be incorrect. Program

bugs can also cause the QSO information to be incorrect. A few minutes reviewing the QSO information in your entry file can catch these types of errors quickly.

Prior to submitting your electronic entry, it may be necessary to rename the Cabrillo file. The ARRL requires your entry file to be named *yourcall.LOG*, where *yourcall* is the call sign used by the entry during the contest. Some programs name the Cabrillo file in this way, while some do not (to avoid the possibility of inadvertently overwriting a prior copy of *yourcall.LOG* from another contest.) If necessary, rename the Cabrillo file to *yourcall.LOG* using either the RENAME command in DOS, or using *Windows Explorer*.

One issue with using the call sign as a file name is that the forward slash character (/) used in portable call signs is not a valid file name character. Use the underscore (_) character as a substitute, or omit the character entirely.

Submitting the Entry

Your electronic entry may be submitted one of two ways. One method is to copy the Cabrillo file to a floppy and send it to the ARRL via regular mail. However, most

entries are sent as e-mail attachments. E-mail programs typically support attachments as a way to send an electronic file as a separate, detachable part of the e-mail.

To submit your entry, prepare an e-mail addressed to the ARRL for the specific contest to be entered. The address is always found in the rules for each contest or online at <http://www.arrl.org.contests>. The subject line should contain your call sign, the name of the contest and your entry class. Nothing needs to be included in the body of the e-mail because the Cabrillo file is a complete entry in itself.

Attach the Cabrillo log file, send the e-mail and you're done! Don't send the files as the text of the e-mail, as this causes problems in detaching and saving the file information.

Submitting an electronic log is easy once you've done it a few times. Electronic logs allow the ARRL logcheckers to do their job more quickly and accurately, and Cabrillo allows them to spend less time doing data translation and more time checking. The entrant also benefits from Cabrillo through improved integrity of their entry file. Electronic log submittal is here to stay, and it sure beats killing a tree to print your entry!