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Contest Season Has Arrived

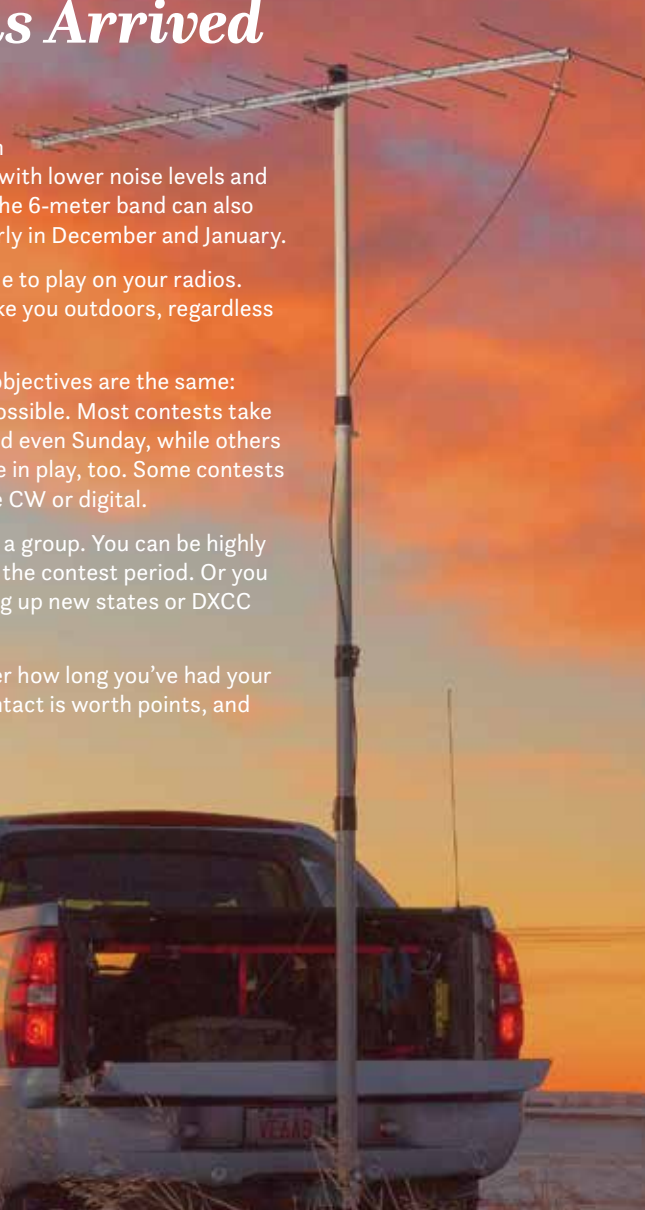
Autumn kicks off contest season in the amateur radio community, and the fun extends through the end of March. At this time of year, conditions on the HF bands improve in the northern hemisphere, with lower noise levels and better long-distance propagation overall. On VHF, the 6-meter band can also bring unexpected long-distance contacts, particularly in December and January.

Winter drives people indoors, allowing for more time to play on your radios. Of course, there are some contests that can still take you outdoors, regardless of the weather!

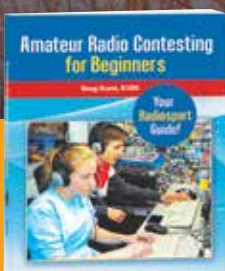
Every contest has different rules, but the ultimate objectives are the same: make as many contacts as possible, as quickly as possible. Most contests take place on weekends. Some span Friday, Saturday, and even Sunday, while others last only a few hours. Different operating modes are in play, too. Some contests require you to operate SSB, but for others it may be CW or digital.

You can participate in a contest by yourself, or with a group. You can be highly competitive and operate through most, if not all, of the contest period. Or you can contact stations here and there, possibly picking up new states or DXCC entities for awards.

Everyone is welcomed in a contest. It doesn't matter how long you've had your license or how much equipment you own. Every contact is worth points, and that's all that matters.



The most popular winter contest on VHF is the ARRL January VHF Contest. You can operate from inside your home or take your equipment and antennas outdoors! [Jerry Clement, VE6AB, photo]



New to radio contesting? Pick up a copy of *Amateur Radio Contesting for Beginners* by Doug Grant, K1DG. You can purchase it from your favorite dealer, or directly from the ARRL online store at arrl.org/shop/Amateur-Radio-Contesting-for-Beginners.