

SKCC Straight Key Month - 2024 User Guide



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Introduction

The Straight Key Month special event (aka SKM) celebrates manual Morse radiotelegraphy using straight keys, bugs and cootie keys. It runs from Jan. 2nd through 31st. This guide is offered as an aid in finding and contacting the SKM special event stations. Hopefully, readers will be inspired to hunt for them in all call regions and contact as many of our operators as possible.

This guide is intended for new CW operators as well as those who are new to SKM. There are a number of practical tips included that are useful for HF CW operation in general. New users can improve their CW skills by hunting for SKM event stations around the bands.

SKM stations in the US will operate with the K3Y special event call sign; participating members in other countries will use their own individual call signs. All are listed on the event calendar & schedules (below).

The calendar and other helpful resources mentioned in this guide can be found on the SKCC Straight Key Month web page located at www.skccgroup.com/k3y/

SKM Stations

Event stations in the US will be operating as K3Y/1, K3Y/2, etc., according to their geographic location. In addition to these ten mainland call regions there will also be operators in Hawaii (K3Y/KH6), Alaska (K3Y/KL7) and Puerto Rico (K3Y/KP4). In any given US call region only one operator will be on the air at a time. Each call region has Coordinators who are responsible for scheduling operators and processing logs. Their email contact addresses are listed on the webpage.

SKCC members outside of US jurisdiction will operate as event stations using their own call signs (not K3Y). They typically call "CQ SKM", to indicate their special status as SKM event operators. Multiple stations in the same country may be on the air at the same time. They are listed on the event schedule but may often operate at other than scheduled times. So, you will need to keep watch for them.

Event operators are free to choose their own frequencies on bands 160m through 6m. The only exception is 60 Meters where SKM operation is not permitted. Operators are typically found near the published SKCC "watering hole" frequencies but may go anywhere in the CW portion of the band.

Finding the SKM Stations

Listed below are online resources for locating SKM activity. While these tools are very convenient don't forget about the "old fashioned" way of finding stations-- spinning the VFO across the band and listening for them.

Manually scanning the bands has several benefits. You will occasionally find stations on the air before they are spotted online. You can be the first, or among the few, to make contact before a crowd of callers gather. Discovering stations on your own is more satisfying than being pointed to them online. Monitoring for stations also helps to develop your operating skill because you are actively

SKCC SkedPage

<https://sked.skccgroup.com/>

Operators will often (but not always) log in to the SkedPage and post their activity. Some may accept QSY requests for particular bands but they are not required to do so. If they are busy with a steady stream of callers they may be reluctant to switch to another band. Operators may be busy working callers so please don't feel offended if your request is not responded to or if an operator has turned off their PM messaging.

SKCC Skimmer Software

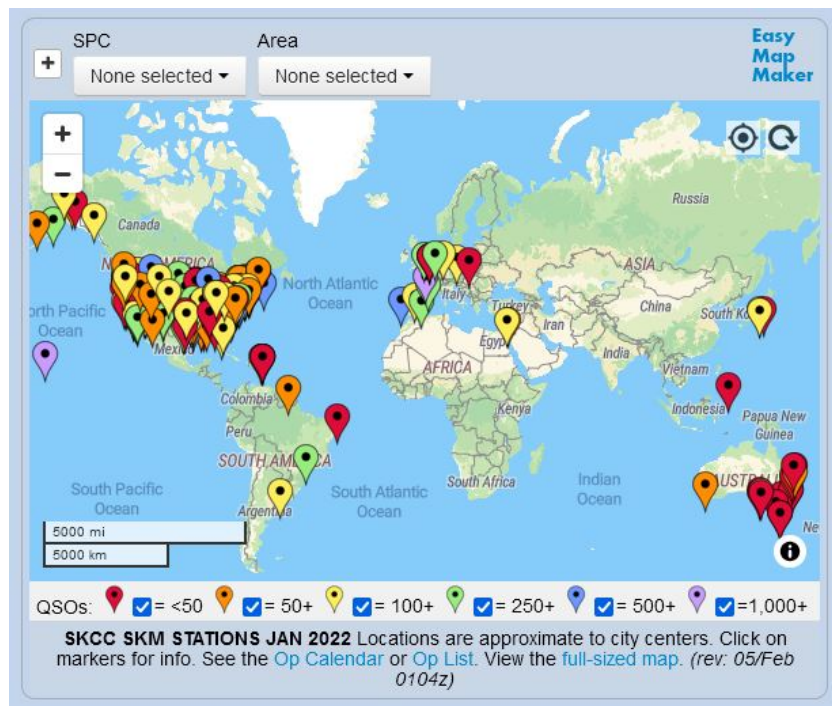
Available on the [K7MJG website](#). Enter callsigns of stations that you are hunting, either K3Y regional calls like "K3Y/7", "K3Y/KH6", etc. or operator callsigns such as "F6HKA", etc. Skimmer is a comprehensive application that sources data from RBN and SkedPage. Refer to the "K3Y Goal" section in the Skimmer instructions.

RBN Reverse Beacon Network

To see an SKM Operator's current or past activity on the bands enter their callsign (either the "K3Y/..." call for US operators or personal callsign for non-US op's). Past activity may give a hint as to future operations, indicating favorite frequencies or days/times. This [link](#) will show activity (if any) for "K3Y/2" operators during the past day. Substitute any call for "K3Y/2".

Operator Map

The interactive world map of SKM Operator locations is at skccgroup.com/k3y/k3y. You can pan and zoom the map; click on the markers to see op info; filter stations by SPC (location), Area, and number of QSOs logged.



Contacting the SKM Stations

It is often quite easy to make contact with SKM operators. But sometimes more effort is required, depending on propagation conditions and the number of other callers responding. By following the tips below you will make things easier for yourself, the SKM operator, and other callers.

Answer the event station's CQ by simply transmitting your callsign *once or twice*. A longer response such as "K3Y/KH6 K3Y/KH6 DE AF2Z AF2Z K" will interfere with other callers and decrease the number of contacts the operator can get to during his shift. There is usually no need for you to transmit the SKM station's call sign: he knows you are calling him when you simply send your call sign in response to his CQ.

If there are several other stations calling try moving your transmitter a little off-frequency (i.e., not "zero beat"), up to 150 Hz higher or lower than the SKM op. This makes it easier for him to distinguish your pitch among multiple signals and will increase your chance of getting through.

If you do achieve contact with an operator who is getting lots of calls please keep your exchanges short. Other callers who are still waiting for their chance to get through will appreciate it. There is no need to rush but don't send unnecessary info or extra ID'ing. On the other hand, if an operator is "lonely" (i.e., not getting any responses to repeated CQ's), you can feel free to be more chatty.

There is no penalty for or prohibition against "dup" contacts (i.e., contacting the same operator multiple times on the same band) but in general this should be avoided. However, you can certainly call an operator again for "insurance" if you are not certain a previous contact has been made.

The QSO Exchange

When you make contact with SKM stations they will typically respond with the following information: RST; QTH; NAME; CALL; SKCC# (where CALL is the operator's own licensed callsign).

In response, you should send your info: RST; QTH; NAME, and SKCC#. If you are not an SKCC member just send RST, QTH and name. Non-members are always welcomed!

Common CW greetings and abbreviations are often included: GM, GE, FB, GL, TKS, 73, CUL, etc. The following is an example of a typical exchange with a US SKM operator (caller responses are highlighted in red):

```
CQ CQ DE K3Y/5 K
AF2Z
AF2Z DE K3Y/5 GM UR 579 LA DANA AD5VC SKCC NR 1555S K
R GM DANA RST 599 NJ DREW SKCC 2082S DE AF2Z K
R TKS DREW GL 73 SK
TU 73
CQ DE K3Y/5 ...
```

Notice that the K3Y/5 station has included his own callsign "AD5VC" in his initial

info exchange. This would be omitted for non-US SKM operators since they're already operating under their own call sign rather than a K3Y/x call.

If you need the operator to repeat something you can simply send that item followed by a question mark, for example: "RST?" or "NAME?", "NR?", etc. If you want to have the entire exchange repeated just send "PLS AGN? K" Don't hesitate to send "QRS" if you want the operator to go slower.

Likewise, the operator may ask you to repeat an item. Occasionally he may not copy your call sign fully and will send "QRZ?" or part of your callsign followed by a question mark; just resend the requested item once or twice followed by a "K".

Logs & Contacts

Callers don't submit logs or entries since SKM is not a contest. Only SKM event operators submit logs. It is generally suggested that you log SKM operators under their own callsigns; then, for reference, include their K3Y callsign ("K3Y/1" etc) in the comments field.

If you apply for SKCC awards and endorsements you will need to submit operators' personal callsigns, not K3Y/x calls. Most K3Y operators include their own call sign during the exchange; if not, you can ask for it by sending "PLS UR CALL?".

Some K3Y operators upload their contacts to LOTW. These will be under their own callsign, not the K3Y call. (Whether an operator uploads to LOTW is their individual preference. Not all SKM operators upload to LOTW.)

SKM operators submit all contacts to the event database (master log) which is used for compiling the caller Sweeps, Stats and Standings (see below), and for printing the event QSL cards.

You can check your contacts by entering your callsign in the SKM Log Search here: <https://www.skccgroup.com/k3y/k3y-logsearch.php>

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------|---|---|---|---|---|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| K3Y/KL7 | - | - | - | - | - | X | - | - | - | - |
| K3Y/KP4 | - | - | X | - | X | - | X | - | - | - |
| K3Y-AF | | | - | - | X | Operators worked: | | | | |
| K3Y-AS | | - | - | - | X | G4PVM, CT7AUP | | | | |
| K3Y-EU | - | - | X | X | X | x | x | - | - | - |
| K3Y-NA | - | X | X | X | X | - | - | - | - | - |
| K3Y-OC | - | - | X | - | X | - | - | - | - | - |
| K3Y-SA | | - | X | | - | - | X | - | - | - |

AF2Z has worked K3Y on 47 out of a possible 174 band slots.

The "X" marks show band-area combinations where you have been logged. Mousing over an "X" mark displays the call sign(s) of the operator(s) who have logged you. Dash marks indicate bands where at least one contact has been logged by operators in the region.

It shouldn't take more than a day or two before your contact appears in the online

database. For questions about missing contacts you can email the Coordinator for the particular operator's region; or the Event Manager. We will try to hunt down missing contacts and fix busted calls.

Sweeps, Stats & Standings

You can participate in SKM and get a QSL card by making only a single contact. However, there is much more fun to be had by working groups of additional stations. For example: a basic "sweep" consists of at least one contact in each of the ten US mainland call regions, K3Y/1 through K3Y/0. A DX Sweep is six contacts, one in each WAC continental region: Africa, Asia, Europe, N. America, Oceania, S. America.

Following are various Sweeps & Stats categories that you can pursue. These are all tabulated automatically and displayed in the Participant Standings section of the SKM webpages at skccgroup.com/k3y/k3y-statistics.php You can track your own progress on these pages by simply doing a browser search (Ctrl+F) for your call sign and seeing which categories you turn up in.

There are several "sweeps" categories. Each lists all callers who have managed to work the requisite grouping of contacts:

US Sweep – Contacts in each of ten mainland US call region: K3Y/0, K3Y/1, etc. through K3Y/9;

US & Possessions Sweep – The US Sweep above plus Hawaii K3Y/KH6, Alaska K3Y/KL7 and Puerto Rico K3Y/KP4. (Thirteen call areas total);

DX Sweep – Contacts in all six WAC continental areas: AF, AS, EU, NA, OC, SA;

Grand Sweep – Contacts in all the above 19 call regions: US + Possessions + DX.

In addition to the Sweeps categories above there is a Participant Standings page which lists callers who have completed the following six "stats" categories:

Areas Worked – Contacts in at least ten and up to the maximum 19 SKM call areas;

Band-Areas Worked – Contacts in at least ten Band-Area combinations, up the maximum (more than 150);

Operators Worked – Contacts with at least ten different SKM operators up to the maximum of well over 200;

DX Entities Worked – Contacts with at least five countries outside the US, up to the maximum participating;

Canadian Provinces – Contacts with at least one Canadian Province or Territory, up to the maximum participating;

US States – Contacts with at least ten US "states" (plus DC and PR). Those who contact SKM operators in all 50 states can receive a SKM WAS QSL three-card set.

QSL Cards

An official K3Y QSL card will be available to anyone who contacts at least one SKM station. The card lists one QSO per each US call district worked (including KH6, KL7 and KP4), plus each continental DX area (AF, AS, EU, NA, OC, SA): up to a maximum of nineteen QSOs for a complete worldwide "sweep" card (see below).

WAS cards are also available for those who have contacted SKM operators in all 50 US States: fifty contacts on three cards, alphabetically sorted by State.

Cards will be distributed automatically to anyone who is a member of the SKCC QSL Bureau. Those who are not bureau members may request a K3Y QSL card by submitting a SASE (or PayPal payment for non-US) to the bureau.

More info on the SKM QSL card can be found at skccgroup.com/k3y/k3y-qsl-info

The *Straight Key Century Club* was created by Tom Peterson, KC9ECI, on January 2nd, 2006. Tom was promptly joined by Melinda Alsobrook KI4CIA, and Gordon Benjamin N6WVK. Tom began signing up new members; Melinda launched the information campaign; Gordon secured the club domain and web site. Now, on its *9th Anniversary*, SKCC is more than 13,000 strong and continues to attract new members at a steady rate. The club remains dedicated to its founders' goals of promoting the art of hand-sent Morse Code via manual telegraph keys.

For more information please visit our website at www.skccgroup.com

SKCC K3Y 2015 - 9th Anniv. SKCC K3Y 2015 - 9th Anniv.

QSL: AF2Z MODE: CW 2-WAY QSL: AF2Z MODE: CW 2-WAY

| Station | Date | UTC | Band | RST | Operator | Station | Date | UTC | Band | RST | Operator |
|---------|------|------|------|-----|----------|---------|------|------|------|-----|----------|
| K3Y/0 | 1/02 | 0134 | 40m | 559 | KE0N | K3Y/KH6 | 1/02 | 0428 | 40m | 559 | KH6ZM |
| K3Y/1 | 1/02 | 0122 | 80m | 599 | KX1NH | K3Y/KL7 | 1/03 | 2012 | 17m | 559 | KL7IDA |
| K3Y/2 | 1/02 | 0119 | 80m | 599 | W1DV | K3Y/KP4 | 1/02 | 0228 | 40m | 599 | KP4SJ |
| K3Y/3 | 1/02 | 0211 | 80m | 599 | K2DEP | K3Y-AF | 1/02 | 2309 | 20m | 569 | EA8BVP |
| K3Y/4 | 1/02 | 0149 | 40m | 599 | W4RQ | K3Y-AS | 1/24 | 1452 | 15m | 339 | 4X1WQ |
| K3Y/5 | 1/02 | 1515 | 20m | 579 | NESDL | K3Y-EU | 1/02 | 1600 | 10m | 579 | F6HKA |
| K3Y/6 | 1/02 | 0035 | 20m | 559 | W1EJ | K3Y-NA | 1/02 | 2021 | 20m | 559 | VE1PVH |
| K3Y/7 | 1/02 | 0206 | 40m | 569 | K7TKT | K3Y-OC | 1/11 | 0022 | 15m | 449 | VK4EI |
| K3Y/8 | 1/02 | 0141 | 80m | 599 | W3NP | K3Y-SA | 1/02 | 2235 | 20m | 579 | PS7AW |
| K3Y/9 | 1/02 | 0104 | 40m | 569 | NV9X | - | - | - | - | - | - |

A previous card version. QSOs now show the State for US operators.

Certificates

Downloadable certificates are available for working the Basic Sweep (K3Y/1 through K3Y/0), with endorsements for K3Y/KH6, K3Y/KL7, K3Y/KP4 and up to six WAC Continental Areas, and a QRP endorsement:



The Sweep Certificate is available for download [here](#).

SKCC Awards & C/T/S Endorsements

The contacts you make with SKM Operators are eligible for SKCC operating endorsements and awards. However, all require contacted operators' own licensed callsigns on award applications, not the "K3Y/x" call sign they used. Check the individual award guidelines for other specific requirements.

Thanks for participating in the SKCC Straight Key Month Event!

Many thanks to Dana AD5VC, SKCC Nr. 15555, for input and encouragement needed to finally get this work completed.

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