

MiQP For First-Timers

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The Michigan QSO Party (MiQP) is an operating event held annually with Michigan as the center of attention. This paper is a quick overview for those new to MiQP, to explain what it is and to offer encouragement to jump in and participate.

First of all, what is a "QSO party"? Over the years, this term has come to define an on-the-air operating event focusing on a particular geographic area. Amateurs inside the target area (in this case Michigan) earn points towards their QSO party score for making contacts with other amateurs located anywhere, while amateurs outside of the target area get QSO party points only for contacting amateurs inside the target area.

Perhaps the next question is: "Is the MiQP a contest?" Yes it is – the entrants are participating against one other and plaques/certificates are awarded after it is over. But don't let that scare you off - the MiQP is a lot less intense than other contests you might be familiar with, such as Sweepstakes, DX contests, or even Field Day. The bands are not as crowded as during those other events, and the operating style is a lot more relaxed. It's a great venue for a first-timer to get started.



Why might you want to participate in the MiQP? First of all, it's a great opportunity to hone your HF operating skills or work the bugs out of your HF station. MiQP can provide a concentrated dose of operating that will crack the rust off your CW ability or brush up on your phone operating techniques, skills that you can use in other on-the-air activities.

The fun thing about MiQP for Michigan amateurs is that we are the center of attention. When a Michigan station calls "CQ MIQP" there will usually be several replies. Many MiQP participants make several hundred contacts during the event, even with modest stations such as barefoot transceivers and dipoles. For many, there is a tangible feeling of camaraderie as you work fellow Michiganders, some located in sparsely populated counties with exotic names like Chippewa, Missaukee, or Presque Isle.

What does it take to participate in the MiQP? All it takes is to get on the air during the MiQP period and make contacts with other participants. When it's over, mail in your log if you like so that it can be checked and your score included in the results; you may even win a certificate or plaque. If you include your radio club's name in your entry, then your score will be tabulated along with other member's scores in a separate sub-competition to determine the top club in the MiQP that year.

When does MiQP happen? MiQP occurs on the Saturday of the third full weekend in April every year. For 2007, the starting date for MiQP is Saturday, April 21st. The contest period begins at noon local time here in Michigan (1200 EDST or 1600Z) and runs for twelve hours to local midnight the same day (2400 EDST or 0400Z on April 22nd). The contest period was deliberately chosen to be easy to fit into your weekend schedule – you can get up Saturday morning, get some chores or family activities done, and sit down for an afternoon or evening of operating and still have Sunday free.

Making MiQP QSOs is easy. You operate on any of the "traditional" HF bands (i.e., no WARC bands) from 80 thru 10 meters. The exchange is your QSO number for that contact – i.e., the first is 001, the second 002, etc., plus your Michigan county. On CW, just about everyone uses the official county abbreviations from the list on the MiQP web site. Stations outside of Michigan will send their QSO number and state or province abbreviation.

Barring some sort of major propagation disturbance, you will find MiQP activity on 40M CW & SSB for the entire twelve hour contest period. This is a good band to get a mix of in-state and out-state coverage, plus it's popular with the mobile MiQP entries that move from county to county during the event. (Mobile stations can be worked again when they change counties.). During the day there is usually good activity on 20M, and lesser amounts on 15M and 10M, depending on the solar cycle. There is usually MiQP activity on 80M during the entire event (even daylight hours).

Here's how your MiQP score is calculated. Each CW QSO is worth two QSO points while a phone QSO is worth one point. Your final score is equal to the total QSO points you've accumulated multiplied by the number of multipliers (Michigan counties, non-Michigan states and Canadian provinces) you work. Multipliers are counted separately on **both** CW and phone. For example, if you work Washtenaw County (WASH) on CW and again on phone, that counts as two multipliers.

As you start out in MiQP you might just want to make QSOs and have fun, but here are some suggestions to keep in mind which should increase your score. A station may be worked once on both CW and phone on each band, so try all five bands (and both CW and phone) to look for MiQP QSOs. The lower bands (80M & 40M) are usually better for in-state QSOs, and out-state QSOs out to 500 miles or so, but try the high bands (particularly 20M) to bolster your score with US states and Canadian provinces as multipliers from out west. Also, while most people probably have a preferred mode they like to operate, in MiQP it's worth the effort to spend some time on the "other" mode to build up the multiplier count (since multipliers are counted separately by mode) to increase your score.

When MiQP is over, you have thirty days to submit your entry in order for it to count in the final results. (*Note: If you make MiQP QSOs, you don't have to send in a log if you don't want to. The people you worked in MiQP will still get credit for the QSOs you made with them.*) Paper logs can be sent to: **Mad River Radio Club, c/o Dave Pruett, 2727 Harris Road, Ypsilanti, MI 48198**. Electronic log files (ASCII text only) on floppy disk can be sent to the same address, can be submitted as attachment to an e-mail sent to LOGS@miqp.org.



What can you win for participating in MiQP? The winner in each major category plus the top Michigan club receives a beautiful 10" x 13" plaque like the one shown at left. The top single-operator score in each Michigan county making at least 50 QSOs wins a handsome certificate.

To learn more about MiQP, check out the Michigan QSO Party web site at <http://www.miqp.org>. There you will find a wealth of information including complete rules, contest forms (summary, log, and multiplier count sheets), a list of county abbreviations, results from MiQPs of past years, operating tips and links to free logging software.