

Q-signals reference

Common Q-codes used in amateur radio. QTH, QSL, QRM, QRZ, and more explained.

Q-code shorthand used in amateur radio and maritime communications.

Common Q-signals in amateur radio

Q-signals originated in maritime radiotelegraphy as shorthand codes. Amateur radio adopted the most useful ones. Each Q-signal can be a question (with a question mark) or a statement.

Most frequently used

Q-SIGNAL	AS A QUESTION	AS A STATEMENT
QRZ	Who is calling me?	You are being called by...
QTH	What is your location?	My location is...
QSL	Can you confirm receipt?	I confirm receipt
QSY	Shall I change frequency?	Change frequency to...
QRM	Are you being interfered with?	I am being interfered with
QRN	Are you troubled by static?	I am troubled by static
QSB	Is my signal fading?	Your signal is fading
QRP	Shall I decrease power?	Decrease power / low power operation
QRO	Shall I increase power?	Increase power / high power operation
QRT	Shall I stop transmitting?	I am stopping transmission
QRX	When will you call again?	I will call again at...
QRV	Are you ready?	I am ready

Less common but useful

Q-SIGNAL	MEANING
QSO	A radio contact (conversation)
QST	General call preceding a message addressed to all amateurs (the ARRL journal takes its name from it)
QRA	What is the name of your station? / My station name is...
QRG	What is my exact frequency? / Your frequency is...
QRI	How is my tone? / Your tone is...
QRK	How readable is my signal? / Your signal readability is...
QRS	Shall I send more slowly? / Send more slowly
QRQ	Shall I send faster? / Send faster
QRU	Do you have anything for me? / I have nothing for you
QSA	What is my signal strength? / Your signal strength is...
QTR	What is the correct time? / The time is...

The unofficial one

Q-SIGNAL	MEANING
QLF	Are you sending with your left foot?

QLF is not in any official list and never was. It's traditional CW humor for rough sending, and operators have been needling each other with it for generations. If someone sends it to you, mind your spacing. Some hams answer "QLF? I was!"

Usage in practice

Most hams use only a handful of Q-signals in daily operating:

"What's your QTH?" = Where are you located?

"QRZ?" = Who's calling? (used by the station in charge of a frequency)

"I'll QSY to 14.250" = I'll move to 14.250 MHz

"QRM on this frequency" = There's interference here

"Running QRP today" = Operating low power

"QRT for dinner" = Signing off to eat

"QSL via bureau" = Confirmation card sent via the QSL bureau system

Q-signals are used on both CW and voice, though on voice some operators consider them lazy shorthand when plain language would be clearer.