

ARRL FIELD DAY

FT8 OPERATIONS GUIDE

Many amateur radio operators are looking forward to participating in the annual ARRL Field Day. For years, many participants have used traditional modes such as SSB. However, digital modes such as FT8 have rapidly grown in popularity and now present an additional means of enjoying Field Day. And, while operating digital your contacts count as TWO points (same as CW) allowing you to rapidly increase your score.

If you are planning on using FT8 during the annual ARRL Field Day you need to avoid calling stations already worked on any given band, same as you have done while working SSB. While you might consider typing FT8 call signs into your logging program (such as N3FJP) to check for duplicates like you normally do while working SSB, that would be VERY time consuming and is unnecessary.

WSJT-X and GridTracker are fully capable of flagging new and worked stations on any given band. ***The key is, knowing how to enable this, and other powerful feature, and that is what I am going to explain.***

SETTING UP WSJT-X FOR FIELD DAY OPERATIONS

1) Place WSJT-X In Field Day Mode:

Go to **FILE, SETTINGS, ADVANCED TAB** and check **SPECIAL OPERATING ACTIVITY**. Then enter your Field Day **CLASS** and **SECTION** (such as "1D IN", for 1 Delta, Indiana) into the FD EXCH box as shown below. This places the FT8 exchange into FIELD DAY mode.

The screenshot shows the 'Advanced' tab of the WSJT-X settings dialog. The 'Special operating activity' checkbox is checked and highlighted with a red box. Below it, the 'ARRL Field Day' radio button is selected. To the right, the 'FD Exch:' field contains '1D IN' and is also highlighted with a red box. Other options include 'Fox', 'NA VHF', 'EU VHF Contest', 'WW Digi Contest', 'Hound', 'FT Roundup', 'ARRL Digi Contest', 'CQ with individual contest name', and 'Contest name: PACC'. The 'Miscellaneous' section shows 'Degrade S/N of .wav file: 0.0 dB', 'Receiver bandwidth: 2500 Hz', and 'Tx delay: 0.2 s'. The 'Waterfall spectra' section has 'Low sidelobes' selected.

ARRL FIELD DAY

FT8 OPERATIONS GUIDE

2) Dealing With The WSJT-X Internal Station Log:

WSJT-X maintains an internal log of all the FT8 contacts you've ever made. If you are going to work Field Day with a brand-spanking new WSJT-X installation that has never been used, then you are good-to-go since the program's log is empty and you can skip to the next step.

If **NOT**, then you can either go to **FILE** and select **ERASE WSJTX_LOG.ADI** (if you don't mind permanently deleting your log), or go to **FILE, OPEN FILE DIRECTORY**, and then temporarily rename **wsjtx_log.adi** as **wsjtx_log.bak**.

Note: If you rename or erase the **wsjtx_log.adi** log file, the program creates a new one that will be used during Field Day. When Field Day is over you can reinstate the original log file, assuming you saved it.

3) Ensure Stations Worked Before Are NOT Highlighted:

In order to flag **ONLY NEW STATIONS** calling **CQ FIELD DAY** on a given band, go to **FILE, SETTINGS, GENERAL TAB** and select **SHOW DXCC, GRID, AND WORKED BEFORE STATUS**.

4) Only Highlight NEW FT8 Stations Calling CQ:

Go to **FILE, SETTINGS, COLORS** and disable ALL color highlighting except for **NEW CALL ON BAND** (see below).

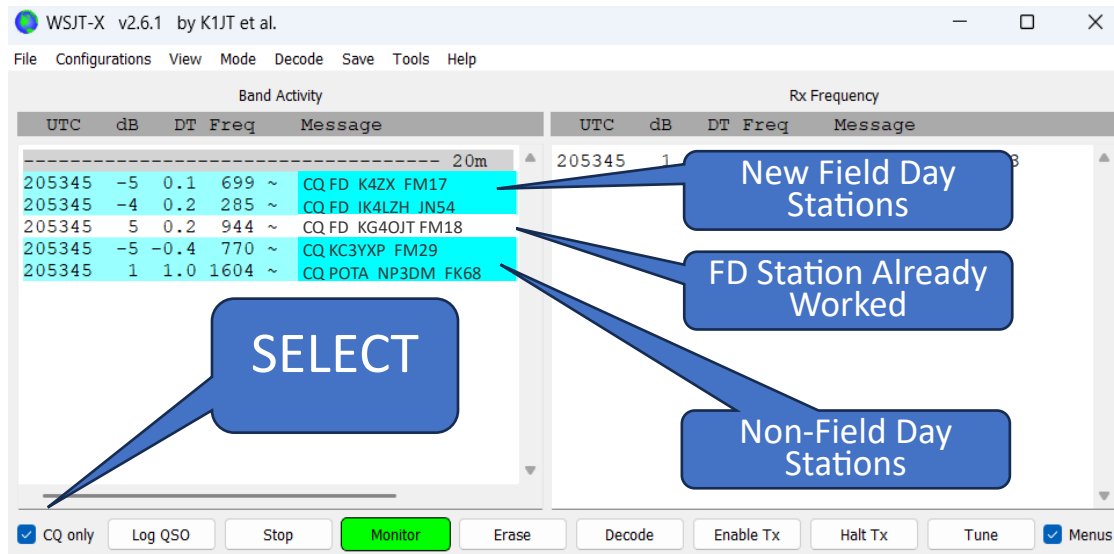


ARRL FIELD DAY

FT8 OPERATIONS GUIDE

5) Only Display FT8 Stations Calling CQ & ID Those That Are Unworked & Participating in Field Day:

On the WSJT-X front panel, select **CQ ONLY**. This assumes you will only be responding to **NEW STATIONS** calling **CQ FIELD DAY**. You can, of course, call **CQ FIELD DAY** yourself to initiate contacts if you so desire. *In that case you would want this box unchecked so you can see stations responding to you.*



Note: You can differentiate between Field Day and Non-Field Day stations by observing special designators after CQ, such as POTA and FD.

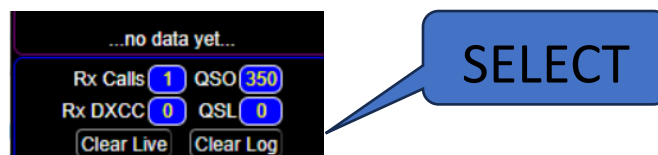
WSJT-X FIELD DAY SETUP CONCLUSION

You are now ready to go to operate in the annual ARRL Field Day while using WSJT-X. *If you will also be using GridTracker, that program also requires special setups to work properly and efficiently for Field Day operations, so, read on!*

SETTING UP GRIDTRACKER FOR FIELD DAY OPERATIONS

1) Clearing GridTracker's Internal Working Station Log.

When you start up GridTracker, it automatically loads the log files set up for your normal operations. You need to clear the working log to start out fresh at the beginning of your Field Day session. Do this by selecting **CLEAR LOG** on the front screen as shown below. This does **NOT** affect any log files.



ARRL FIELD DAY

FT8 OPERATIONS GUIDE

ADDITIONAL TIPS

- Always start up WSJT-X first, then N3FJP Field Day Contest Log, and then GridTracker.
- While WSJT-X highlights new stations on the current band, GridTracker only highlights new stations not worked on ANY band.
- Double click **ERASE** on the WSJT-X control panel after **EACH** 15 second sample to always view only the LATEST stations calling CQ. *This prevents the list from scrolling off the bottom of the page.*
- If you are calling CQ, don't sit on the **TX EVEN 1'ST** selection all day as you are only hitting perhaps 50% of the stations listening during that time slot. Occasionally unclick the box so the rest will know you are there.
- Don't feel constrained to operate on the default WSJT-X frequency band. **During contest operations the default band will be saturated** and making contacts may be difficult. Experience operators know what to do
 - Experience FT8 operators shift the base frequency up or down 2 KHz to make contacts in less congested areas slightly outside the default band.
 - For example, the default base frequency on 20M is 14.074 MHz (translating to a 14.074 to 14.077 MHz spread). Simply type in 14.072 MHz or 14.076 MHz to operate slightly below or above the default 3 KHz band.
- If, during Field Day FT8 Operations you want to work SSB, you need to shut down GridTracker, WSJT-X, and N3FJP Field Day Contest Log. Then you need to restart N3FJP Field Day Contest Log while making sure it is able to connect to your HF transceiver and is displaying the correct frequency, band, and mode.
- If, during Field Day Operations you shut down WSJT-X or GridTracker, you'll need to shut down N3FJP, WSJT-X, and GridTracker and restart them in the correct order – WSJT-X, then N3FJP, then GridTracker.

ARRL FIELD DAY

FT8 OPERATIONS GUIDE

GRIDTRACKER HIDDEN GEM

GridTracker has a **HIDDEN** feature that can **FLAG Field Day Stations Calling CQ, POTA STATIONS CALLING CQ,** and others. You can also **FLAG 13 COLONIES STATIONS, ROUTE 66 STATIONS,** and other special event stations so they are not buried in FT8 pileup. **HERE IS HOW TO FLAG FT8 STATIONS CALLING CQ FIELD DAY IN GRIDTRACKER:**

1. Go to the **CALL ROSTER** and click on the three dots “...” under **EXCEPTIONS**.
2. Select the **WATCHER** tab.
3. In the **NAME** box enter “**CQ FD**”, under **TYPE** select “**CALLING**”, click the **REGEX** box, under **CALLING** type “**CQ FD**”, and click **SAVE**.

And there you have it all FT8 stations calling **CQ FIELD DAY** will be highlighted (while those not participating in FD will not).