



Thinking Day on the Air 2023 18 & 19 February

The aim of Thinking Day on the Air (TDOTA) is to encourage girls to make guiding friendships with members of other units and to introduce them to amateur radio.

TDOTA will always be on the third complete weekend in February. TDOTA first formally took to the air in 1985 to celebrate 75 years of guiding, so the event has been going for more than 25 years.

Taking Part

To take part you will need to:

- find a radio amateur
- find a suitable venue
- plan at least a month in advance

To find a radio amateur look for your local club:-

- ask in the library
- contact the Radio Society of Great Britain 01234 832700 or their web site with a list of local clubs at www.rsgb.org
- ask Scouts who run JOTA in October

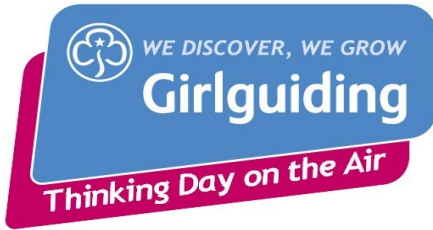
The licensed radio amateur can apply for a special call sign for the TDOTA station. This will normally be GB0 or GB2 followed by 3 letters. You can help choose these three letters to be significant to your area, location or group. Foxlease tries to get GB2FOX for example.

Licensed radio amateurs are usually very pleased to use their equipment to set up a station. Your local Guide Headquarters may provide a suitable venue, especially if other activities are planned to run alongside the station. Some amateur radio clubs have a meeting place with aerials already in place which will reduce set up time for the radio amateurs.

A special event station allows non-licensed people, such as Guides and Brownies, to exchange greeting messages with any licensed radio amateur throughout the world.

The contact remains under the control of the licensed radio amateur who advises on procedure. The special call sign allocated usually increases the number of contacts.

Add your station details to the list of stations taking part at:-
www.guides-on-the-air.co.uk/station-list.html



Pre-event Preparation

Practising passing greetings messages before the event will prove useful. It should give the girls confidence to speak slowly and fairly loudly. It is also more interesting to the receiving station if the messages are slightly different and give an idea of the local activities; weather etc, especially to overseas contacts.

The girls will find it useful to have access to the International Phonetic Alphabet, so they can spell unusual words phonetically. Don't forget common English first names and place names may sound extremely unusual in distant countries.

Everyone will find it easier to have their message written out, although some Guides, Rangers and Leaders may be able to 'talk' from a 'cheat sheet', a list of topics or questions to ask.

Below is a suggested message for a Brownie to 'fill in the blanks'

Hello, my name is

I am a Brownie in the Brownie Unit

I am in the Six

The best part of Brownies is:-

.
.

My favourite animal is

What is your favourite animal?

Thank you for letting me talk to you.

Happy World Thinking Day from

Rainbows can be encouraged to say their name and one other thing about themselves.

Remember Safe Space, anyone with a suitable radio can listen in, so ensure the girls consider the following points

- never give surnames
- never give addresses
- never give personal details, height, hair/eye colour
- never give family names or details, maybe just the number of brothers or sisters.

It is helpful to have some QSL cards available at the beginning of the event so that they can be completed as early contacts are made. (See below)



The Event

Under the terms of the licence, all stations must be open to the public. Therefore consider security, not only for the girls, but also the radio equipment which is expensive and portable.

Please note most radio amateurs may not have a DBS check. You will need to check with your County/Region and ensure that their policy is followed. Also you should ensure that there are sufficient DBS checked personnel available to prevent the possibility of one to one contact with non-checked people.

Depending on the activities provided, 1 to 2 ½ hours is a good length of time for a session. Do make sure you provide adequate supervision as fiddling with the wrong knob can be dangerous and expensive!

Guiding wear should be worn, especially if your local press are due to attend, or if taking your own photos.

Some licensed radio amateurs have special equipment, which adds extra interest:

- slow scan television (SSTV) allows reception and transmission of pictures using a computer.
- satellite communications; to communicate with others or receive images such as weather pictures.
- 'Packet Radio' : a form of data transmission which uses computers
- radio direction-finding equipment (fox hunting). This is an outdoor activity.

The licensed radio amateur will explain what is available.

Activities

There are several activities specifically connected with operating the station for which the girls can take responsibility, these include:

- pre-event preparation
- making QSL cards
- keeping the log - record of the stations contacted
- keeping visitors informed about contacts using displays and maps
- helping to erect antenna systems under supervision
- Morse Code practice
- crafts, e.g. bead Morse Code bracelets
- simple electronic kits



QSL Cards

“QSL” is an international abbreviation meaning ‘Are you receiving?’ QSL cards are postcard-sized cards which are sent to stations contacted using the radio to confirm that the contact has been made. They give details of the contact (when it was made, frequencies used, address of sending station, the unit/group running the station and so on) and are also souvenirs.

A station may have pre-printed cards designed by a girl or Leaders, but a less expensive way is to buy a stock of plain postcards and get the girls to design individual cards giving the same basic information. Some units have competitions to find a suitable design for printing a batch of cards or for the best hand-made card. The licensed radio amateur should be able to show you examples of cards to give you some ideas.

Some Guidelines

- The station call sign must be included in the design, in letters at least one centimetre high.
- The design can be on one side of the card and the details on the other, or both design and details combined on one side (for cheaper printing and easier displays).
- The girls might like to include some “local information” on the cards, for example a drawing of the County badge or a local landmark.

During the event most girls enjoy filling in details on the cards, with a little initial help. It is particularly relevant if the girl fills in the card for the station with whom she has spoken, although younger girls might need more help with this. She may also add a brief personal message to the card.

Receiving QSL cards

In order to receive cards, you will have to send stamped addressed envelopes to the 'Special Event QSL Sub Manager'.

- Initially send 4 stamped addressed C5 envelopes.
- Mark the top left hand corner with the call sign and event date.
- Mark the bottom '1 of 4', '2 of 4' etc.
- Use the stamps which say '1st class Large' or '2nd class Large'. This means that there are not problems when the postal rates increase. The filled envelopes can be returned in order and you will know how many envelopes are left.

Stamped addressed, C5 Envelopes with call signs should be sent to the Special Event QSL Sub-Manger:

Mrs D Williams, M0LXT, 20 Neale Close, Wollaston, Northamptonshire, NN29 7UT



Sending QSL cards

Cards may then be distributed via the RSBG bureau or sent directly to the operators. Do not ask for addresses over the air - most amateurs are listed in a call sign book under their personal call sign and your amateur may have a copy. Or check www.qrz.com for an address. It may be more appropriate to send some cards direct, especially if follow-up contacts between girls are possible. Remember to send a stamped addressed envelope for a reply. The Bureau is much slower due to the large number of cards sent; it usually takes about 3 or 4 months.

Send cards out via the QSL Bureau at RSGB QSL Bureau, P.O. Box 5, Halifax HX1 9JR

Sort cards alphabetically by prefix, except USA cards which should be sorted into call areas regardless of prefix. In addition, keep countries with more than one prefix together.

When preparing cards to be posted, pack them the same way up. Do not use any separators or other markers between cards. Packages should be wrapped adequately so as not to get damaged in transit.

Keeping a Log

Radio Amateurs find it useful to record contacts in a log book for each radio used. Properly briefed Guides, Rangers and Leaders can enter information into the radio logbooks. The amateur will specify what information should be entered.

Specially printed logbooks are available and these are probably most suitable if you want to run the station every year. However an exercise book with ruled columns is acceptable and the amateur will be able to advise you on how to set out the information.

A call log sheet is enclosed in the information pack so that individuals can also keep a record of their own contacts.

Mapping Contacts

Depending on the display space you have available, it may be useful to have a world map for pinning and labelling contacts abroad, and a United Kingdom map for UK contacts. The girls can either make "flags" for each contact and stick them onto the map or use thin strings between map pins and cards at the side of the map giving call signs and locations of contact. (This is a good way to show a lot of contacts).



Craft Activities

Morse Code biscuits - use long Rich Tea biscuits, add a layer of icing then use sherbert pips as Dots and pieces of Strawberry Laces as dashes. Girls have 2 biscuits and then create for their initials.

Morse Code Bracelets - use pony beads and round 'hat' elastic. Choose three colours, one as a space, one for dot, one for dash. Start and finish with a space bead, thread on beads to spell 5 or 6 letters depending on size of wrist. Tie ends together and thread back through 4 beads each side before cutting off the ends.

Radio Rita - glue 2 joggle eyes and foam feet onto a 30mm pom-pom. Cut a black chenille stick in half, use one part to make headphones, the other for arms with the ends folded for hands. Use half a cotton bud as a microphone
Add a magnet or printed ribbon.

Morse Code practise - Morse Code is not really used any more other than amateur radio, and it is not now a requirement to obtain a licence. However, children in particular seem to be fascinated by it and enjoy sending to one another.

Brian, GOUKB has put together some sets using tactile switches rather than Morse keys and details to make your own kits will be on www.ivarc.org.uk, Itchen Valley Amateur Radio Club website.

Certificates

Some stations like to give the members who took part in TDOTA a certificate of attendance. A master certificate is enclosed in the pack for you to photocopy should you wish to use this.

Don't forget pre-event publicity and that both visitors and participants will need refreshments from time to time!



Public Relations

Included in this pack you will find an example press release and tips on dealing with the media which can be used to help publicise your event. For further media help please contact your County PR Adviser. You may find it helpful to ask for parental permission for photographs to be taken for the local press, guiding and radio magazines by adding a clause to the information and consent for event/activity form. Press photographers must be restrained from taking photographs that appear to infringe the law relating to amateur radio or that will make your amateurs the laughing stock of the local club! Have a spare sweatshirt handy to cover up any inappropriate fashion logos which girls may be wearing.

Look critically at the background and try for an uncluttered plain wall. The word 'broadcast' is never to be used in connection with amateur radio and references to 'Disc Jockeys' are banned as the sending of music is expressly forbidden by the terms of the licence.

GOTA Badges

Badges for participating in TDOA are now available from Girlguiding Online Shop or Depot

They cost 85p and the code is 2148

Ask at your local depot or contact Girlguiding Online Shop

Tel: 0161 941 2237

Or you can shop online at www.girlguidingshop.co.uk





After the Event

- The licensed radio amateurs should be offered out-of-pocket expenses, such as travelling. They are usually very willing to use their time and equipment if they are kept supplied with suitable refreshments during the event.
- Complete your QSL cards and send them off to the appropriate person as soon as possible.
- Thank everyone who has helped you with the station.
- Girls or Leaders who are interested in learning more about amateur radio may be interested in the Foundation Amateur Radio Licence. The Foundation licence was launched in 2002 and consists of a course, run by local clubs. Success in the Foundation course allows limited power use on most amateur bands. Local radio clubs or the RSGB are able to provide information about courses and approved instructors in your area.
- It is not permitted to ask for money over the air or to say the QSL cards will be sent for the pledge of a donation. Sponsors per contact may be sought prior to the event and you are allowed to mention this on air. The amateur will guide you as to what is permissible.

Remember

The station is for the benefit of the Rainbow, Brownie, Guide and Ranger taking part. The way the station is conducted will reflect on Girlguiding UK. Good operating standards are good publicity for guiding - they give the Association a good name and ultimately Guides and guiding will be enriched by the experience.

For more information, contact:

TDOTA Team, guiding Development, Girlguiding
17-19 Buckingham Palace Road, London, SW1W 0PT
Tel: 0207 834 6242 www.girlguiding.org.uk

The Radio Society of Great Britain, 3 Abbey Court, Fraser Road,
Priory Business Park, Bedford MK44 3WH
Tel: 01234 832700 www.rsgb.org.uk

Useful websites

www.guides-on-the-air.co.uk

www.radio-scouting.org.uk



'CHEAT SHEET'

Some 'Cheat Sheet' suggestions to help to write a greetings message



You could divide them up between your girls and ask them to write a message using the answers to the questions and using some to find out about the station they are talking to.

How big is the place where you live?

How long have you been in Guides?

What is the weather where you are?

What are your hobbies?

When did you last go to camp? Where did you go? How long were you there? Did you sleep in tents or in a building?

What is your unit doing for Thinking Day?

Do you have any brothers or sisters?

Do you have any pets? What are their names?

What sports do you like?

What time is it where you are? (For distant stations)

What was the farthest away place you talked to today?

Do you play a musical instrument? Which one? How long have you played?

What sports do you play? Are you on a team? How long have you played?

How many girls in your unit?

How many Leaders in your unit?

Are there other activities for you to do during TDOTA besides talking on the radio?

Have you ever talked on the radio before?

What is the best outing you ever went on?

What outing have you been on recently?

What is the longest you ever stayed at camp?

Have you had a sleepover recently?

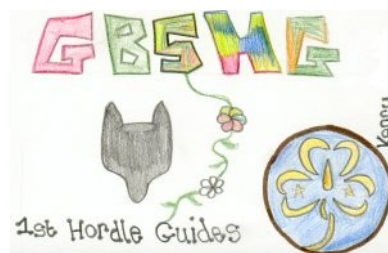
How many stations have you talked to today?

How many girls have you talked to on the radio today?



Q Codes

This is an international code used widely by civil and military ships and aircraft as well as amateur radio operators. Although originally intended to facilitate easier Morse communication, several common terms have crept through into speech. This guide will help you understand what radio operators are saying.



QSL Confirm contact



QRX Stand by - especially useful when you need to stop transmitting suddenly for a short time



QRZ? Who is calling me?

QSO Radio contact

QSY Change frequency



QTH Location

QRM Interference from other stations

QRN Interference from thunder storms or nearby electrical apparatus



QRO High power

QRP Low power



QSB Signal fading

QRT Close down



ABBREVIATIONS

There are over 100 abbreviations used by radio amateurs when making calls, here are a few common ones.

CQ - This is used in both telephony (voice) and Morse code contacts and means 'Calling all stations', or seek you!

CW - Short for continuous wave or more commonly called Morse code.

RX - Receiver

TX - Transmitter

WX - Weather

YL - Young lady (all females are young ladies, irrespective of age)

XYL - Wife

OM - Old man (all males are old men, irrespective of age)

73 - Best wishes



INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET

A	ALPHA	N	NOVEMBER
B	BRAVO	O	OSCAR
C	CHARLIE	P	PAPA
D	DELTA	Q	QUEBEC
E	ECHO	R	ROMEO
F	FOXTROT	S	SIERRA
G	GOLF	T	TANGO
H	HOTEL	U	UNIFORM
I	INDIA	V	VICTOR
J	JULIET	W	WHISKY
K	KILO	X	X RAY
L	LIMA	Y	YANKEE
M	MIKE	Z	ZULU

MORSE CODE

A	.-	N	-.	1	.-.-.-
B	-...-	O	---	2	..-.-
C	-.-.-	P	.-.-.	3	...--
D	-.-	Q	---	4-
E	.	R	.-.	5
F	...-	S	...-	6	-.....
G	--.	T	-	7	-.-.-.
H	U	...-	8	---..
I	..	V	...-	9	-----
J	.-.-	W	.-.-	0	-----
K	-.-	X	-.-.-		
L	.-.-	Y	-.-.-		
M	--	Z	---.		



CALLSIGNS

Every radio amateur has a unique call sign according to the country they live in. Each country has its own unique group of letters and/or numbers, which are also used on aircraft. In the UK we use calls starting with G or M with the following variations for the constituent countries.



G or M	ENGLAND
GD or MD	ISLE OF MAN
GI or MI	NORTHERN IRELAND
GJ or MJ	JERSEY
GM or MM	SCOTLAND
GU or MU	GUERNSEY
GW or MW	WALES

SOME INTERNATIONAL CALL PREFIXES

BELGIUM	ON	U.S.A	W or K or N or A
ESTONIA	ES	CANADA	VE
FRANCE	F	ETHIOPIA	ET
GERMANY	DA to DL	LIBYA	SA
HOLLAND	PA	SOUTH AFRICA	ZS
HUNGARY	HA	ARGENTINA	LU
ICELAND	TF	BAHAMAS	C6
LUXEMBOURG	LX	CHILE	CE
NORWAY	LA	MEXICO	XE
PORTUGAL	CT	URUGUAY	CX
SPAIN	EA	JAPAN	JA
SWEDEN	SM	AUSTRALIA	VK
SWITZERLAND	HB	CHRISTMAS ISLAND	VK9X
TURKEY	TA	NEW ZEALAND	ZL
UKRAINE	EM or EN		