

California QSO Party

CQP 2026: Fun Contest Challenges

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Contests within CQP 2026

CQP 2026 will include four fun challenges:

1. Time Challenge
2. Parks on the Air (POTA) Challenge
3. Video Challenge
4. Sunday Challenge

These are side contests that run concurrently with the main CQP event. They are intended to inspire additional motivation by participants and highlight recognition of participants in worthy areas.

We will offer unique awards to the winners of these challenges.

Participants do not need to sign up for any of these challenges before CQP.

There are no changes to main CQP rules, categories, overlays, scoring, awards and main results files. All of that will continue unchanged in CQP 2026. These are additional side challenges to enjoy.



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Time Challenge Rules

Eligibility:

- Single-Operator and Single-Operator Assisted entrants
- Any power level
- Log submitted to CQP and judged to be a valid, scored log

Accolade:

8 Champions - 4 inside California and 4 outside California

Winners determined by **highest total number of QSOs** after log checking.

6-Hour Time Champions - one inside California and one outside California

- Operate 1 minute to 360 minutes (0-6 hours) in CQP 2026.

12-Hour Time Champions - one inside California and one outside California

- Operate 361 minutes to 720 minutes (6-12 hours) in CQP 2026.

18-Hour Time Champions - one inside California and one outside California

- Operate 721 minutes to 1080 minutes (12-18 hours) in CQP 2026.

24-Hour Time Champions - one inside California and one outside California

- Operate 1081 minutes to 1440 minutes (18-24 hours) in CQP 2026.

Awards:

- Gourmet California cheese gift pack to champions inside the USA
- California cheese board as alternate award if any champion lives outside the USA

Reporting:

- Top 10 list in results for all four operating time windows



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Time Challenge Award



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Time Challenge Alternate Award



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Parks on the Air (POTA) Challenge

Eligibility:

- All entrants who operate CQP 2026 from a Parks on the Air (POTA) reference and follow both CQP and POTA rules
- Any power level
- Log submitted to CQP and judged to be a valid, scored log
- Log submitted to pota.app (see detailed rules below)

Accolade:

Winners determined by **highest total number of QSOs**.

Inside California:

- Top 5 Single-Operator or Single-Operator Assisted POTA entries
- Top 1 Multi-operator POTA entry

Outside California:

- Top 1 Single-Operator or Single-Operator Assisted POTA entry

Awards:

- In progress. This document will be updated with details when CQP 2026 POTA awards are finalized.

Reporting:

- All POTA entries will be listed in dedicated POTA results tables.



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POTA Challenge Rules

Stations that operate from one or more Parks on the Air (POTA) references may enter the CQP POTA Challenge.

1. POTA contacts for this challenge must be valid contacts from one or more POTA references, with logs submitted to pota.app and processed successfully prior to the CQP log submission deadline.
2. If all contacts in a CQP log submission are POTA contacts from the same reference, either include a SOAPBOX line of "POTA" followed by the POTA reference activated (e.g. "SOAPBOX: POTA US-1138") or specify the POTA reference in the online log submission form.
3. If a CQP log submission includes both POTA and non-POTA contacts, or contacts from more than one separate POTA reference (e.g. a Mobile entry passing through multiple parks, or an operation from a park one day and home another day), then for each POTA reference activated, include a SOAPBOX line of "POTA" followed by the POTA reference activated and the number of **CQP** QSOs from that reference, e.g. "SOAPBOX: POTA US-1138 75". The total number of CQP QSOs from all POTA references in the log submission will be combined.
4. QSOs made by a CA county-line station each count as a single QSO for purposes of this challenge.
5. For stations operating from a location that overlaps multiple POTA references (a POTA "*n*-fer"), and for park-to-park QSOs where the other party is in multiple simultaneous POTA references, each QSO only counts as a single QSO for purposes of this challenge. If activating an *n*-fer, only list one of the references in the SOAPBOX line or online submission form for that activation.
6. Awards will be offered. Stay tuned for updates to this document.
7. Operation must follow all rules of the CQP and of POTA and each QSO claimed for the challenge must be valid for both CQP and POTA.



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Video Challenge Rules

Eligibility:

- Any entrant except checklogs
- Any power level
- Log submitted to CQP and judged to be a valid, scored log
- Upload your video to YouTube and send the link to cqp.chairman@gmail.com by November 1, 2026. If you are unable to upload your video to YouTube, please email cqp.chairman@gmail.com for help.

Accolade:

Best CQP 2026 Video, judged by CQP Chair N6DE

Award:

- Gourmet California cheese gift pack to winner if inside the USA
- California cheese board as alternate award if winner lives outside the USA

Reporting:

- All submitted videos that are suitable for public posting will be included on the [CQP audio/video web page](#).
- Videos will be included in a CQP 2026 YouTube playlist that will be published for the amateur radio community to view.



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Sunday Challenge Rules

Eligibility:

- Entrants who participate from a station inside California
- Callsign on the air in CQP 2026 must be active only on Sunday.
 - Sunday, October 4, 2026: 12:00 a.m. Pacific Daylight Time (PDT) to 3:00 p.m. Pacific Daylight Time (PDT)
 - Sunday, October 4, 2026: 0700 UTC to 2200 UTC
- Log submitted to CQP and judged to be a valid, scored log

Accolade:

Champions determined by **highest total number of QSOs** after log checking.

5 Sunday Champions

Champion	Class	Power Level	Station Type
1	S/O or S/O-Assisted	High	Fixed
2	S/O or S/O-Assisted	Low	Fixed
3	S/O or S/O-Assisted	Any	Expedition
4	M/S, M/2 or M/M	Any	Expedition
5	Any	Any	Mobile

Awards:

- Gourmet California cheese gift pack to champions

Reporting:

- Top 10 list in challenge results for all five Sunday Champion groups



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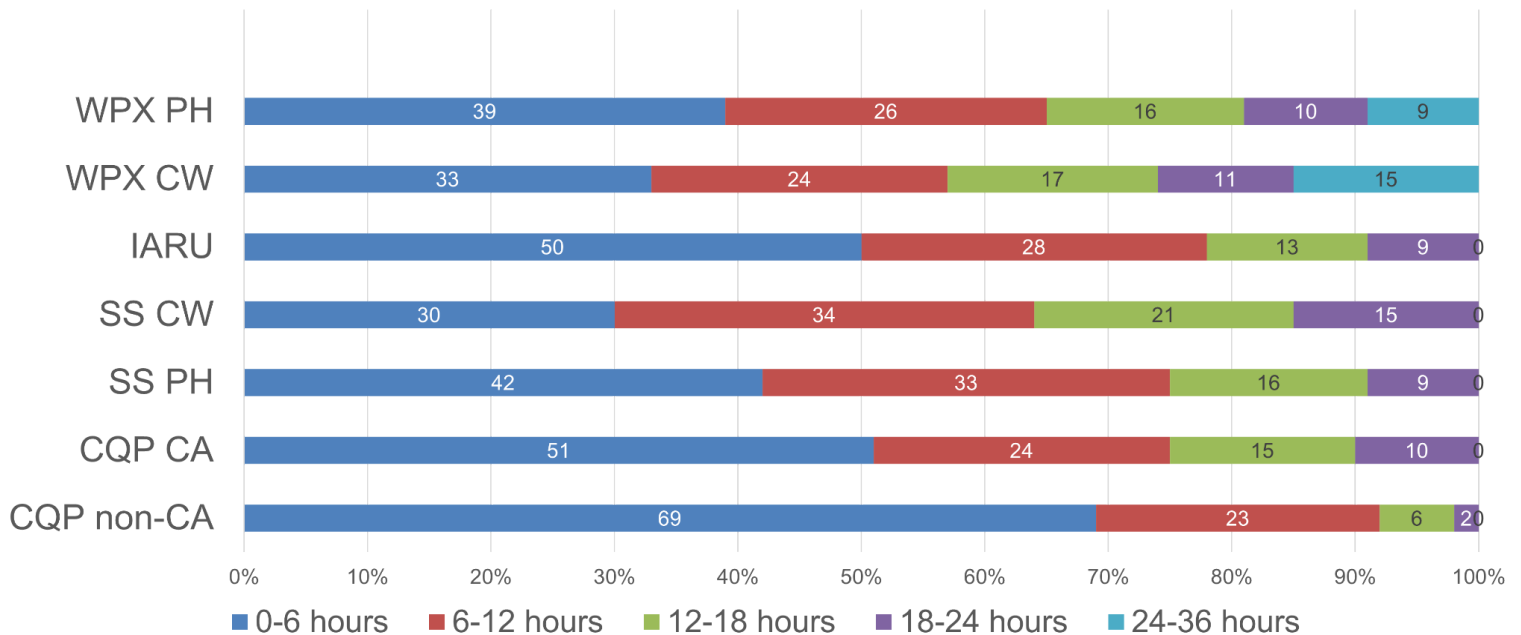
FAQ - Time Challenge

Q: Why did you create the CQP Time Challenge?

A: Few Single-Op participants are willing or able to operate the full 24, 36 or 48 hours available in contests. We in the contest community have the opportunity to recognize participants for outstanding performances in shorter operating periods. In the Olympics track and field events, there are seven different duration races that range from the shortest 100m sprints up to the longest with the 10km distance race. All are run on the same track, just running different distances. The sprint athletes are no less worthy than long distance runners.

Consider operating time data from multiple contests in 2023. See chart below. There is clearly an opportunity to enhance incentives and recognition to the vast majority of participants who do not operate contests full time but who are still competitive. We split the CQP Time Challenge into four quarters, similar to an NFL or college football game, or an NBA basketball game. You operate the amount of time that you're able to operate in CQP 2026. We will compare your total QSOs with other participants in your same operating time quarter. This is accomplished without changing any rules and without needing to shorten a contest.

S/O Op Time in 2023 Contests



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Q: How is operating time determined in CQP?

A: Operating time is the time you spend making QSOs in CQP. The operating time clock starts with your first QSO made in CQP. It keeps going until you have 15 consecutive minutes in your log without making a QSO. This is considered an off-time period and does not count toward your operating time. Off times are a minimum of 15 minutes long, with no maximum (your off times could be several hours long). There is no limit on the number of off times you have in CQP.

Q: How can I be the most competitive in a given time challenge?

A:

1. Operate as close to 6 hours, 12 hours, 18 hours or 24 hours as you can, and do not exceed. Watch your on-time statistic carefully during the contest. Operating 6 hours and 1 minute puts you in the 12-hour time challenge window, not the 6-hour window.
2. Operate in a way that maximizes your total QSOs. You might find that operating both CW and SSB will help. The points difference between CW QSOs (3 points) and SSB QSOs (2 points) is irrelevant just for the purposes of this Time Challenge because this challenge is scored by QSOs made, not points. Your log will be scored as normal in the main overall CQP results.
3. Review last year's CQP data graphs to decide when you should operate. See: <https://www.cqp.org/graphs.html>
4. Running high power and entering as Single-Op Assisted will likely give you a competitive advantage.
5. Review propagation and play to the strengths of your station.
6. Make sure the clock on your computer is accurate before the start of CQP and stays that way throughout CQP. If your computer is connected to the Internet, for Windows 10/11 machines, right click the time in the bottom right of your screen, click Adjust date/time, and click the Sync Now button. Alternatively for any Windows machine, download a free program called NetTime from <https://www.timesyncctool.com/> and install it. This program automatically sets your computer clock at regular intervals. Inside the NetTime program, click the Settings button and modify the Update Interval to a value more frequent than default.



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FAQ - POTA Challenge

Q: Can I enter the POTA challenge in addition to entering CQP special award categories like Expedition or Mobile?

A: Yes. Most POTA activations would likely also qualify as one of the Expedition or Mobile categories. This challenge is independent of any special award category and it is possible to win multiple such awards.

Q: Is it OK if only some of my CQP contacts are from a POTA reference and others are not (e.g. a Mobile activation passing through a National Forest)? If it OK if some of my POTA QSOs are valid CQP contacts and others are not (e.g. VHF or FT8 contacts or contacts outside the CQP timeframe)?

A: Yes. Just be sure to include the correct number of CQP QSOs for each POTA reference in the SOAPBOX lines (i.e. just the ones that you are also including in your CQP log) and make sure you have also submitted your logs to pota.app. Only count *n*-fer activations once (just give one of the POTA references), only count park-to-park *n*-fers once (since they only count as a single CQP contact), and only count CQP county-line contacts once (since they just count as a single contact for POTA). Basically, one QSO per QSO. We recognize that the POTA QSO counts may be higher than the counts listed in your CQP SOAPBOX lines.

Q: Does the required CQP exchange conflict with a POTA QSO exchange?

A: No. There is no required exchange in POTA. Any QSO that exchanges any info at all is a valid POTA QSO as long as other POTA rules are observed (e.g. no terrestrial repeaters). This is by design, so POTA is compatible with any other radio activity you might be doing from your park, including contests. You don't need to mention that you're doing POTA, you don't need to exchange park info, you don't need to be spotted on the POTA site. Just use the regular CQP exchange, although if you are calling CQ you might want to occasionally call CQ POTA to attract more callers.

Q: Can I spot myself during CQP on a POTA spotting page like I normally do when I'm a POTA activator?

A: No. Self-spotting is not allowed in CQP. It is acceptable for other stations to spot you. It is also acceptable to announce your POTA park number on the air. A POTA hunter might decide to spot you and your POTA park number on the POTA spotting web page. CW operators might also want to consider using the POTA "[Scheduled Activations](https://docs.pota.app/docs/cw_guide.html#reverse-beacon-network)" page where you can list in advance your park reference and dates/times; if the RBN picks up a "CQ POTA" from you and it matches a scheduled activation, it will automatically list you on the POTA Spots page. This is not "self-spotting" as long as you set it up prior to the start of the contest. See https://docs.pota.app/docs/cw_guide.html#reverse-beacon-network for more info.



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Q: What logging software should I use in CQP?

A: It is highly recommended that you use a logger that specifically supports CQP rather than a generic logger that you might use for other POTA operations. See CQP software page at: <https://www.cqp.org/Software.html> for loggers that support the CQP exchange including tracking serial numbers and states/counties and generating the proper output files for the contest.

Export a Cabrillo file and upload it to the CQP log submission page. Export an ADIF output from your logger and upload it to the pota.app web site. If you are a single operator, the ADIF output from the contest logger should be sufficient for the pota.app log uploader; it will prompt you for any missing information such as your call, park number, and state. For multi-ops, see below.

Q: I operate the FT8 mode in my POTA activations. Does CQP allow FT8 QSOs?

A: No. CW and SSB are the only valid modes in CQP.

Q: If I also make some POTA contacts that don't count for CQP (e.g. FT8 or VHF contacts), how should I log those?

A: It's simplest to log those separately in whatever logger you normally use for POTA. You can submit the ADIF file for these contacts to pota.app separately from the ADIF file from your CQP logger, and the POTA site will combine them for purposes of your activation. There's no need to manually manipulate or merge your CQP and non-CQP ADIF files.

Q: For our multi-op, we usually use one of our members' calls as the call on the air. Will the POTA web page support this?

A: Unfortunately not. POTA supports club callsigns where the call on the air is not the same as any individual's callsign, and gives the club call credit for all the contacts and also gives each operator credit for the contacts they personally made. But they do not support the scenario where the callsign on the air is an individual's callsign but that individual did not make all of the contacts, since they do not want to mistakenly give the callsign owner credit for contacts made by others. Please see https://docs.pota.app/docs/activator_reference/activator_guide_clubs.html for more guidance and consider using a club callsign or a 1x1 callsign instead (see below).

Q: If I use a 1x1 callsign or a club callsign in CQP, will the POTA web page support them?

A: Yes. Make sure to fill out STATION_CALLSIGN and OPERATOR fields properly in the ADIF file that you upload to pota.app. Please see https://docs.pota.app/docs/activator_reference/activator_guide_clubs.html for more



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guidance. If you are using a 1x1 callsign (e.g. K6M) for a multi-operator entry, you will need to create or use a POTA club account with the regular club callsign, then add the 1x1 callsign on the POTA "My Account" page as an additional callsign just for the valid dates of your operation, as in the screenshot below. (See <https://1x1callsigns.org/> for more info on 1x1 callsigns.) If you run into challenges with this, feel free to contact john@nn6u.net for assistance.

Callsigns			
Callsign	Valid Period		
W6PW	PRIMARY	[no start date] to [no end date]	EDIT
W6P	2020-11-07 to 2020-11-07	EXPIRED	REMOVE EDIT
W6P	2021-11-06 to 2021-11-06	EXPIRED	REMOVE EDIT

Q: The CQP rules state that CW QSOs are worth 3 points each and SSB QSOs are worth 2 points each. But I'm an SSB-only operator. Does this mean I'm at a disadvantage for the CQP POTA Challenge awards?

A: No. CQP POTA award winners are determined by total number of QSOs made in CQP, not total points scored in CQP.

Q: I operated from a POTA reference but did not successfully activate the park (fewer than 10 contacts). Does that count?

A: Yes, there's no need to have the 10 contacts required for a valid POTA activation. Simply submit your log to pota.app so the QSOs appear for that park, even if it's fewer than 10.

Q: Could you provide more information about operating in a contest from a POTA park, and information about past CQP expedition and mobile stations?

A: Please watch the W1DED interview with NN6U and N6DE at:

<https://youtu.be/QuPezzuTDZ0?feature=shared>

Please also check out the the CQP audio-video page at: <https://www.cqp.org/av.html>



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FAQ - Video Challenge

Q: What content should I have in my video, and how long should my video be?

A: The topic of your video needs to be about CQP 2026 in some way. It could be content before, during or after CQP 2026, or a combination thereof. Other than that, the content is up to you and your creativity. For a wide variety of examples, see all past videos on our web page at: <https://cqp.org/av.html>

Q: Does CQP Video Challenge mean it's now allowed for me to live stream myself during CQP?

A: No. If you live stream, you will need to designate your CQP log as a checklog. Live streaming is not allowed for scored logs in CQP. You can still live stream, be a checklog, and send your live stream link recording to cqp.chairman@gmail.com for inclusion in the list of all videos we will publish. However, live streaming stations will not be eligible for the cheese award given to the winner of the video challenge. Only valid scored logs are eligible for the award.

Q: Where should I upload my video?

A: YouTube is highly preferable. Email cqp.chairman@gmail.com the link to your YouTube video.

Q: What if I am clueless about YouTube?

A: Send cqp.chairman@gmail.com your video in another way and let's discuss.



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FAQ - Sunday Challenge

Q: Why did you create the Sunday Challenge?

A: In most contests, the number of new callsigns available to contact on Sunday is much lower compared with the first part of the contest. This is especially the case in the ARRL November Sweepstakes, but is also the case to some extent in practically every contest. Even in CQP 2024, stations outside of California observed that they started running out of Californians to work by the end of the contest.

The Sunday Challenge was created to inject more activity and fun on Sunday in CQP 2026. The participants outside of CA would benefit by having new CA callsigns to contact on Sunday, keeping them on the air instead of quitting. Meanwhile, the participating Sunday Challenge stations in CA benefit in other ways. Plaques and first place finishes require strong participation on both Saturday and Sunday. What about the rest of the CQP participants inside CA who may not be in contention for a plaque but who still want to compete for something fun and experience the rush of fresh pileups on Sunday? The Sunday Challenge is designed for their fun too.

We in the contest community can think creatively. We can implement fun ways to improve Sunday enjoyment in contests for all participants without needing to drastically change contest rules and alter the character of each contest.

Q: Can I operate with one callsign on Saturday and start over with a different callsign on Sunday?

A: YES. There are no CQP rules prohibiting an operator from using a different callsign on the same radio at the same station location.

Q: If I sign as N6DE/SCLA in Santa Clara County on Saturday, and N6DE/SFRA in San Francisco County on Sunday, is N6DE/SFRA considered a new callsign on Sunday for the Sunday Challenge?

A: No. The base callsign is the same (N6DE). This example would be ineligible for the Sunday Challenge.

Q: If I sign 5 different callsigns on Sunday, can I combine all the QSOs I made to improve my standing in the Sunday Challenge?

A: No. Sunday Challenge champions will be determined by the QSOs in the log by the on-the-air callsign, not the operator callsign. So it is to your advantage to sign with just one callsign on Sunday.



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Q: Does the Sunday Challenge mean that I should keep my radio turned off Saturday and only operate on Sunday?

A: NO! Remember: CQP rules permit you to sign more than one callsign from the same station location and same radio. You should definitely be operating on Saturday also, when activity is usually at its peak. However, if you have family plans on Saturday which take you away from the radio, the Sunday Challenge is an opportunity for you to still compete and become a Sunday champion!

Here are seven examples of fun ways to participate in the Sunday Challenge while also being active on Saturday:

Saturday: Operate from home using your own personal callsign.

Sunday:

- Option A: Operate from home on Sunday also. Start a new log with a new callsign on Sunday, starting with serial number 1, using a club call that was not used on Saturday, or a 1x1 callsign that you reserved before the contest.
- Option B: Go mobile on Sunday in multiple counties with a new callsign that was not used on Saturday, either a club call or a 1x1 callsign that you reserved before the contest. Sign one base mobile callsign on Sunday with different county abbreviations: K6U/SCLA, K6U/SMAT, K6U/SFRA, and so on.
- Option C: Go on a county expedition on Sunday with a friend and operate Multi-Op using a new callsign.

Saturday: Operate a one-day county expedition from county #1 using your own personal callsign.

Sunday:

- Option D: Operate from the same expedition location on Sunday. Enter as another one-day expedition. Start a new log with a new callsign on Sunday, starting with serial number 1, using a club call that was not used on Saturday, or a 1x1 callsign that you reserved before the contest.
- Option E: Go mobile on Sunday in multiple counties on your way home from your Saturday expedition location. Sign with a new callsign that was not used on Saturday, either a club call or a 1x1 callsign that you reserved before the contest.
- Option F: Hit one or more POTA parks on your way home on Sunday. These would be short county expeditions, similar to being a rover in VHF contests. Sign all expedition locations on Sunday with one new base callsign not used on Saturday: K6U/SDIE in POTA park #1, K6U/ORAN in POTA park #2, and so on.
- Option G: Come home on Saturday evening. Operate from home on Sunday using a new callsign.

