



SOTA Starter Guide – Chasing Summits

To start chasing SOTA summits, head on over to <http://SOTAwatch.org> to see current and upcoming activations. The upper part of this page displays active spots and the bottom lists upcoming activations and their proposed times, frequencies and modes. SOTA has spread worldwide and there is now activity around the clock. Recent discussions on the SOTA forum are displayed in the right-hand column. Here are a few tips to get you started.

If you hover over a spot or an alert, it will display the activator’s name and the summit’s name, elevation and point value.

Summit references may look confusing at first, but they are easy to decipher. The first part before the ‘/’ is the SOTA association. This is usually a country or a state. The next two letters signify a region within an association and then the numeric designator for the summit. For example, W4C/CM-001 is:

- W1 – New England
- NL – New Hampshire Lakes Region
- 024 – Blue Job Mountain

Make a note of the summit reference in your log so that you will have it when you are ready to upload your contacts to the SOTA database.

If you would like to know more about the summits being activated, click on a summit reference to view the Summit Information page. Here you may find all sorts of useful information on the summit. There are links to online maps as well as user supplied information.

You will often find directions, trip reports, photos and other information listed.

When you are ready to upload your contacts, click on the Database link in the main menu. There are several ways to get your contacts into the SOTA database, but the easiest way to get started with is the manual entry form on the website.

Please note: You will need to create an account on each SOTA site (SOTAwatch, Database, Reflector) to be able to post spots and alerts, log contacts or join in on conversations about SOTA gear, activations and more.

Fine Print – The SOTA General Rules and Association Reference Manuals have all the nitty gritty info about SOTA and should be read for full details and rules – www.sota.org.uk

Copies of this guide and other SOTA resources can be downloaded from <http://smkymtns.com/>

Latest Spots >> [more spots](#) | [new spot](#)

Tue 20:09	W1DMH on W1/NL-024	14.347 SSB
	Operator: Doug	
Tue 20:00	Summit: Blue Job Mountain, 414m, 1 point. (null) (Posted by W1DMH)	7.182 SSB
Tue 20:01	W1DMH on W1/NL-024 (null) (Posted by W1DMH)	7.18 SSB
Tue 18:51	KB1RJC & D on W8V/PH-001 Merle & Herm calling CQ here now. (Posted by WOMNA)	14.347 ssb
Tue 18:44	NA6MG on W6/CT-001 W6/CT-246 539 in NC (Posted by N4EX)	14.061 cw
Tue 18:44	NA6MG on VP8/EF-001 W6 CT246 MT LEWIS (Posted by N6JZT)	14.061 cw

Upcoming Activations >> [more alerts](#) | [new alert](#)

Wed 05:00	ZL/VK3ARR on ZL1/AK-023 time approx. Looking for EU LP S-3 S+4 (Posted by RBNHOLE)	7-ssb,14-ssb,14-cw
Wed 07:00	F5UKL/P on F/PO-169 +/-30mn. 73! (Posted by F5UKL)	7-cw->28-cw
Wed 07:00	VK1DA on VK1/AC-041 14.320-ssb,14.061-cw,7.028-cw,7.09-ssb VKFF0845 (Posted by VK1DA)	
Wed 09:00	GW4CFS/P on GW/SW-008 Monitoring S20 maybe SW-012 later if time (Posted by G4CFS)	7-ssb,7-cw,145-fm
Wed 09:00	F8FEO/P on F/AM-354 +/- 30 Min (Posted by F8FEO)	7.032-cw,14.063-cw
Wed 09:30	HA1AG/P on HA/DD-008 Team: HA1AG-HA3NU-HA5LV-HA5MA. Note who is at the key/mic. (Posted by HA5LV)	7-21cw-ssb



SOTA Starter Guide – Activating Summits

Activating SOTA summits is a fun way to combine hiking and ham radio, but there are summits that will meet everyone's level of fitness or mobility. Everything from drive-up summits to technical mountaineering exists in the SOTA world. To activate a summit for SOTA and claim your points, you will need:

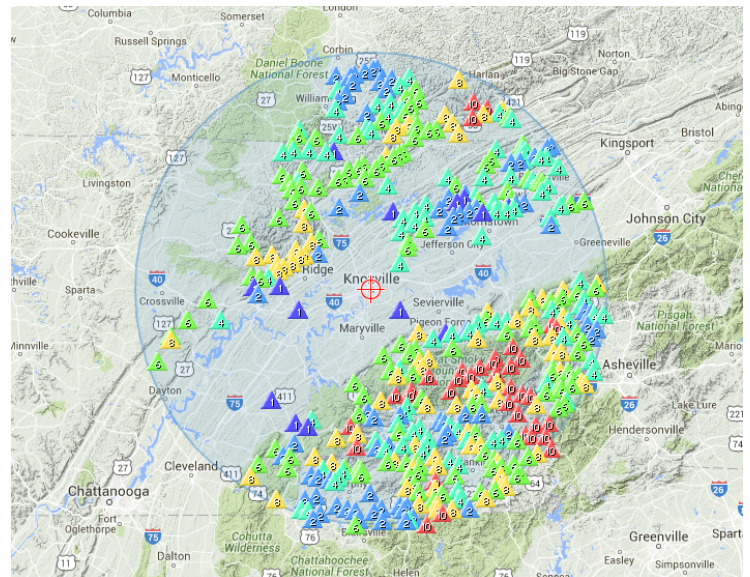
1. A portable radio, antenna and power,
2. a SOTA summit with legal access and
3. a successful activation with at least 4 QSOs.

SOTA Activator's Station – Most activators use a lightweight setup like a FT-817 or KX3 with an easily deployable wire antenna. But, if your gear meets these requirements and you are willing to haul it, go for it!

1. Must be run off of portable power, e.g. batteries or solar panels. No generators allowed and all equipment must be carried to the operating location.
2. No part of the station may be connected to your vehicle.

SOTA Summit – Only certain mountains qualify to be SOTA summits, and not all of the summits listed may be legally accessible by everyone (think gated communities, private property, etc.). But don't worry, there are plenty of summits left to go around. The Mapping and Summits links at the top of SOTAwatch.org are the true start to any of my activations.

Mapping – This website has way too many features to describe here, but I use the Range feature a lot. This is a screenshot of all the summits within a 70 mile radius of Knoxville, TN. That is a total of 438 summits!! Try this tip to find the summits that probably have easy access. In the tools panel to the left of the map, select activation counts. The more times that a summit has been activated, the better the chance it is a drive-up or only a short walk.



Summits – These are like Wikipedia pages for SOTA summits. If someone has activated a summit before, they may have left you lots of info here. Directions, access/parking fees, links to websites, photos, GPS tracks, Cell/APRS coverage etc.

SOTA Activation – Before your activation, post an alert on SOTAwatch.org with your planned activation time, frequencies and modes. Any bands or modes are permitted and encouraged. If possible, please try to operate on 40 and 20 meters to give everyone a chance to chase you.

In addition to the equipment rules above, you must be operating within the 'Activation Zone' of the summit. The Activation Zone (AZ) varies by association but it is roughly 80 vertical feet. Think of it as a 80' tall hat covering the summit. If it is covered by the hat, then it is within the AZ. This gives the activator a bit of leeway in choosing a QTH for either safety, comfort or maybe a better view.

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