

Universal Coordinated Time (UTC)

No, the above title does not have a typo in it. When spoken it is Universal Coordinated Time, but when written it is UTC. This is the result of a conference many years ago and has something to do with various languages.

Having had several names in the past, from Greenwich Mean Time, GMT, ZULU, UTC, Military, 24-hour, whatever you call it, it is the world's time. No time zones, no seasonal time changes, just time. For Ham Radio it provides the common time base needed for accurate HF log keeping.

When using UTC we do not have to add AM or PM, nor do we add "o'clock". For example, 2000z is spoken as Twenty Hundred Hours. 0945z is spoken as Zero Nine Forty-Five Hours. The "z" indicates that the time is in Zulu (UTC) format, not local time.

With UTC there is NEVER a need to adjust or change the time due to anything but a slow running clock. Seasonal changes never happen to UTC. NEVER!

The big trouble when using UTC is in trying to convert it into your local time, mainly because your local time is not really a standard time. It is offset from UTC due to regional and political reasons that began in the mid 1800's due to the railroads. Basically, local time insures that noon happens when the sun is high in the sky.

To keep the use of UTC simple I suggest that you buy a battery-operated clock that is capable of displaying a 24-hour format be it analog or digital. Set this clock to the WWV time signal at 15.0 MHz or CHU on 7.850 Mhz, and then leave the clock alone, until the battery needs changing.

Do not trust the clock in your computer when using a computer based logging program. I have had too many bad experiences when an otherwise minor program decided it knew my time requirements better than I and changed the computer time. Because of these quirky little programs I have a large amount of QSO data entered into Logbook Of The World twice: once with the errant time and once with the corrected time. I do use a computer logging program but every once in awhile during operating times I compare my battery clock against the time displayed by the logging program.

As one of the log checkers for Museum Ships Weekend I have noticed that some operators log using local time then convert to UTC. I find it amazing how much the time difference between UTC and local time varies in one logbook. And yes, the written UTC is wrong. Imagine going through a set of paper logs looking for a call sign, not knowing the time of the QSO.

Imagine not receiving a QSL card from that very rare DX entity, all because you used the wrong conversion when going from your local time to UTC. Get a UTC clock. They're cheap!

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