



Special Event Stations – simple outline guidance

The Special Event Station (SES) is one of our shop fronts for promoting the hobby. How we engage the public and what we show them, impacts their curiosity and our effectiveness at recruiting new interest in amateur radio.

These events are fun to do but need to be properly organised. We hope this simple guide will help, but you make use of it entirely at your own risk. We have a more comprehensive guide for RSGB members and Affiliated Clubs in our [SES Cookbook](#)

Logistics – planning your special event

Unsurprisingly, good planning improves the chances of a successful event. Please don't make the mistake of turning up on the day on the assumption that everything will work, because it almost inevitably won't...

If you spend time planning in advance and use checklists to ensure nothing is missed, you'll be more confident and can focus on attracting the public and enjoying yourself during the event!

Site selection is very important, with lots of things to consider for antennas, power, access, safety and so on.

Demonstrations

Have interactive demonstrations of various facets of amateur radio, not just voice SSB. For example, data modes (particularly when linked to an automated world map), maybe a simple portable station, and of course the perennial favourite at SES events – Morse code.

Voice SSB and FM obviously have their place but also consider whether they are appropriate for the event, given acoustic noise and so on.

Presentation – people and approach

- Avoid acronyms and specialist language. This is quite hard for those who have been in the hobby for some time as many terms are in everyday use, but even simple things like HF, rig, dipole and SSB mean nothing to those who have no knowledge of amateur radio. Practise an explanation of your demonstration (or of amateur radio generally) that uses very simple language and offers examples that the public will understand.
- The aim of the SES should be clear for all volunteers. If the aim is to encourage new blood into the hobby, the focus of volunteers needs to be on engaging visitors and delivering a specific message. For a small SES, providing one person to operate equipment while another provides the engagement with the public to explain what they're seeing and hearing is a great compromise. For larger events a team of volunteers to talk to the public is desirable.
- It's vital that volunteers carefully consider how they look and appear, so that members of the public will find them easily approachable. For example, smart-casual dress with a common name/call-sign badge or Club polo shirt, sweatshirt or fleece looks the part and simply identifies you as a member of the event team. If you always have your headset on or maybe your walkie talkies receiving loudly, this can be off-putting for the public and make interaction more difficult. Volunteers should consider what key message they wish to deliver and how to work that into their demonstration. Visitors typically spend only a short time at an SES so it's important to provide the key message quickly and not overload them with information.
- Consider the age, backgrounds, and interests of your target audience (specifically for public events).
- The best volunteer demonstrators are the ones who demonstrate something they know and enjoy.



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It's important to 'show' visitors what amateur radio can do rather than telling them. *Make it hands on, relevant and fun*. The 2024 licensing conditions enable non-licensed people to get on the radio under supervision, so make the most of this great opportunity to let people try amateur radio for themselves

Presentation – environment

- Consider the layout of the SES or demonstration and how it looks to approaching visitors. The quality of the set up and materials together with the attractiveness of the layout is important. Well-designed banners and leaflets and something as simple as tablecloths can give an SES or demonstration a professional, attractive look.
- Use someone at the front of your space to draw people in and provide initial engagement. This person can then hand off to another volunteer whose specialism may match a general interest of the visitor.
- Pay attention to visitor accessibility and volunteers' attentiveness to potential visitors. Note that the layout and openness of the demonstration area can be critical to drawing people over the threshold. Dark areas and groups of volunteers huddling together will discourage visitors to interact.
- Avoid simple communication blockers such as volunteers sitting with their backs to the visitors or wearing headphones.
- The use of sound is quite a draw, especially the sound of Morse code. Set up speakers so passers-by can hear signals coming from the radio.

Safety and insurance

- Whether you are attending a large public event or simply running a small Special Event Station, safety must be paramount as the public are involved.
- You will almost certainly need a Health & Safety Risk Assessment and Public Liability insurance so you, your volunteers, and your visitors are protected from harm. An [EMF Assessment](#) must also be done.
- You can find [information](#) and [examples](#) of risk assessments on the RSGB web site. Details of [RSGB Affiliated Club Public Liability insurance](#) can also be found along with the necessary [Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy](#) guidance

Publicity

- This is vital, both before and after the event. Consider all channels open to you, from your local newspapers and online news channels, social media, community noticeboards, and so on.
- For larger events consider local and community radio stations who could well be interested in publicising the event on air or sending someone along to interview you.

More information

- All of this, and more, is explained in detail within the [illustrated SES Cookbook](#).
- Three types of SES are explored - small and group events, to the major ones organised for national or international events, drawing on the experience of Cray Valley Radio Society and others.
- The [SES Cookbook](#) is available to members and affiliated clubs

If you or your club are considering any kind of SES activity, from a small two-person event to an international multi-operator station, [this guide](#) will help you to deliver a successful event.