

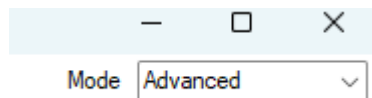
Top 10 Things New Users of VarAC Don't Know

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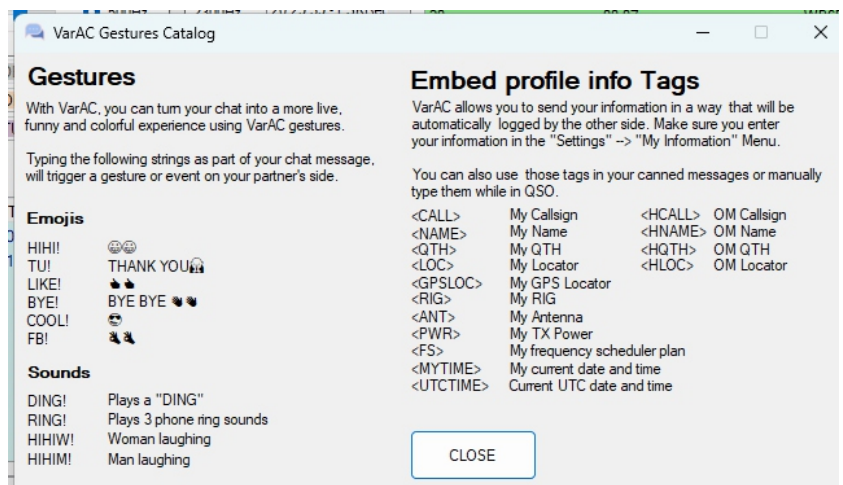
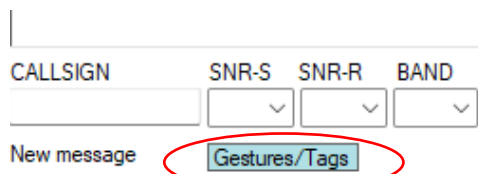
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The intent of this paper is to address often overlooked functions by new VarAC users running modern Windows computers. It is not a comprehensive guide to setting up or using VarAC. Users are referred to the manual which can be found under the Resources menu in VarAC.

Please select Advanced Mode (upper right). You can always switch back later, but everything that follows assumes you're in Advanced Mode.



1. Notice the Gestures/Tags light blue button in the lower left corner. If you click it, you'll see how to make the Emojis and use the Tags just like all the Cool Kids. Notice that you must use all caps.

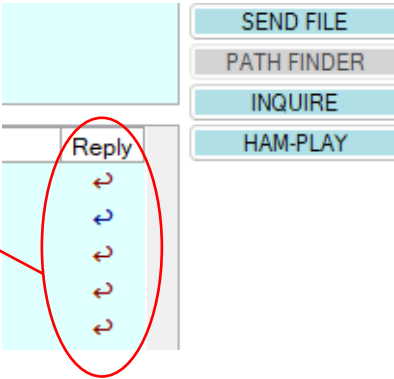


2. Two of these buttons on the right side of the screen are really important. The QSY line has a down arrow, up arrow and # button. These are how you ask someone to change to a different slot which is particularly useful if you disconnect for some reason and both stations wind up back on the Calling Frequency.

The PSK REP. MAP brings up a map in your Internet browser showing who is hearing you and whom you are hearing. If the band conditions are poor, go find something else to do!



3. The return arrows/carriage returns (↵) that appear on the right side of the Datastream window when you're in QSO are used to reference lines of the chat. Click on the ↵ of the line you want to reference, and a truncated line of text will be inserted in your message. This is really helpful when you're discussing multiple things in a chat.

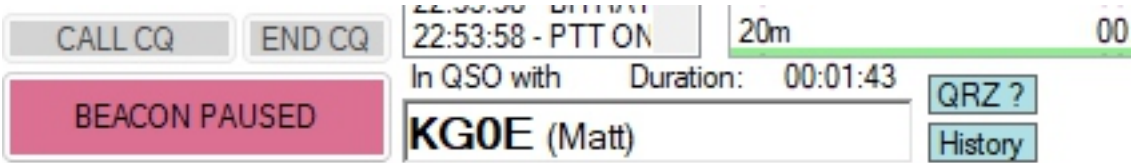


>>>> REPLIED TO: Good afternoon from Minneaota. It's a beautiful d
22:57:26 KB0US It's been cloudy and about 60F here today.

4. When you're in QSO, a QRZ? button and History button will appear just to the right of where the call sign of the person you're in QSO with is displayed in bold. The QRZ? button will bring up their QRZ.com page in your browser. You can scan their page to find a shared interested to discuss.

History is where you'll find a transcripts of all of your chats. It's also where you create QSL cards for particular chats.

Also notice that there's a chat Duration time displayed that people often don't know about.



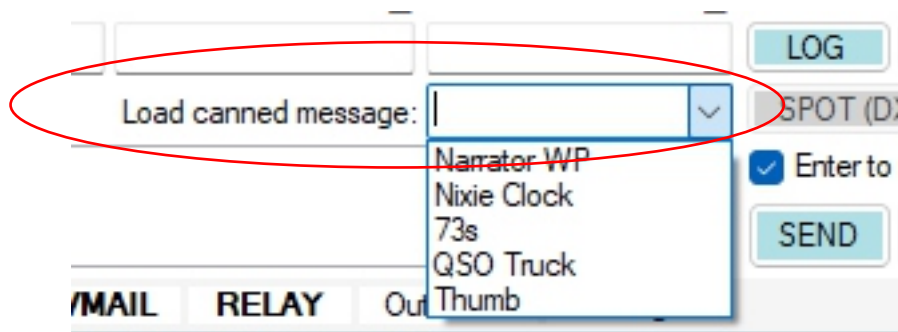
5. Sending your <INFO> populates fields at the bottom of the program that is then transferred to the log of the person you're chatting with. Also, the next time you connect with them, this information is automatically filled in which is very handy. If you don't send your name and so forth as <INFO>, they'll have to enter it manually assuming they remember to do so. If you don't want to use <INFO>, sending "Good evening. My name is <NAME> in <QTH> <LOC>" as a canned message works as well.

CALLSIGN	SNR-S	SNR-R	BAND	NAME	LOC	QTH
KG0E	-13	-15	20m	Matt	EN35LE	Hugo, MN
New message					1079 mi (73 ^g)	
Gestures/Tags						

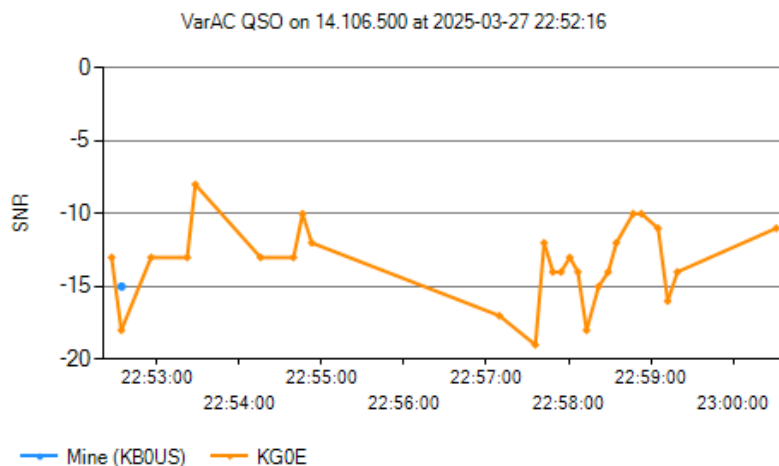
6. There is a handy drop down for canned messages on the right bottom side of the program. You can use this for sending GESTURES instead of typing them, a welcome greeting, your 73s, and so forth.

You create canned messages in SETTINGS.

Did you know you can send links and they're clickable in the chat? Creating canned messages of photos or web pages that interest you can be a good way to make richer chats. <https://imgbb.com/> is a free site for hosting images.



7. The Graph button appears when you're in QSO and many new users miss it. It shows the SNR(dB) trend for you and the station you're connected with. This is useful in judging when band conditions are improving or deteriorating.



8. New users often miss "Appearance and Sounds" under Settings. Here is where you can increase font size and change colors for better readability should you desire. There is a Dark Mode you can try. There are a number Sounds you can enable or disable. This is also where you control the Narrator.

Also of note is that you can enable "Check spelling as you type a message (English only)"

9. It's good to think about what you're going to bring to the chat.

VarAC chats are like small talk at a party. We all have a common interest in Amateur Radio, of course, but many chats last 30 minutes or more, so expect to have a couple topics in your back pocket to toss out.

The first thing is to update your QRZ.com page with photos of your station and antennas. Also, add photos and information about other things you are doing both inside and outside Amateur Radio. As examples, I've discussed rock bands, flying, the Flying Dutchman gold mine, grain silos, woodworking, photography, 3D printing, and a variety of different sports with folks.

When you're chatting with someone, be curious and ask them questions. Perhaps this will lead to discussing topics you would have never expected.

I'll sometimes have Grok or OpenAI running in my browser and I'll ask the AI to tell me what's special about their QTH. You can also ask the AI to suggest questions you can ask them about their hobbies or profession.

Of course, don't feel obligated to chat into the wee hours of the morning. However, most users of VarAC want something a bit more than an FT8 kind of contact with working conditions and weather tossed in for good measure.

10. VarAC follows pretty much the normal flow of any QSO. The one thing that's a bit different is how the QSO is ended.

Typically, someone will say they need to go and will say 73. The other station will reply with their 73 and then add <DISC> to their message or press the DISCONNECT button.

Sometimes QSOs don't end quite so cleanly since there might be a few additional comments thrown in or a question answered. As a rule of thumb, the last person to say 73 will also do the disconnect. If you like, you can say "73 and back to you for your final and disconnect."

PLEASE NOTE: If you have a canned sign-off message with a <DISC> in it and you say 73 first, VarAC will disconnect without allowing the other station to say 73 as well. As a best practice, I'd suggest you not have a <DISC> in a canned 73 message.