BOS! Belgium Outdoor Shack

ACTIVATOR GUIDE

How to Conduct a Valid BCA / WCA Activation

Activator Guide – Belgian Castles Award

MINIMUM QSOS	ACTIVATION ZONE	REFERENCE FORMAT
50 (for activator credit)	max. 1 km radius	ON-xxxxx

Find a castle → Check the zone → Set up your station → Call CQ BCA → Make 50+ QSOs → Upload your log → Check your BOS! statistics.

A BCA/WCA activation combines amateur radio, outdoor activity and the cultural heritage of castles and fortresses. As an activator, you take your radio station to an officially registered BCA/WCA location and make radio contacts from within the permitted activation zone. For a Belgian activation, you use an official BCA reference, which is part of the WCA program.

1 Choose an Official BCA/WCA Reference

Not every castle, fortress or historic building is automatically a valid WCA object. You must always use an official reference. A Belgian BCA reference looks, for example, like: **ON-xxxxx**.

Before you leave, check:

- the official reference;
- the name of the castle/fortress;
- the exact location;
- the map and activation zone;
- whether the reference is active/valid;
- whether you have access to the location.

> ⚠️ **Important:** Do not use a self-created reference. Only an official BCA/WCA reference can be used for a BCA/WCA activation.

2 Check the Activation Zone

This is one of the most important aspects of a valid BCA activation. For BCA, your complete station must be located within the permitted activation zone. For the Belgian BCA rules, the activation zone is determined using the official BOS! maps. As a general BCA rule, the activation zone is a maximum radius of **1 km** around the registered reference.

Example — You are activating BCA ON-12345.

- 700 metres from the reference point → ✅ this can be valid.
- 1.8 km from the reference point → ❌ this is outside the standard BCA activation zone.

Therefore, always check the BOS! maps before starting your activation.

3 Your Complete Station Must Be Inside the Activation Zone

It is not sufficient for only you to be inside the zone. Make sure that your complete radio station is set up within the permitted activation zone. This includes:

- Transceiver
- Power supply/battery
- Antenna
- Coax and equipment

Example — You are standing with your transceiver inside the 1 km zone, but your antenna is outside the activation zone → ❌ do not do this. Position your station so that your complete setup is inside the valid activation zone.

4 Check That You Have Permission to Enter the Location

A BCA/WCA reference does not automatically give you the right to access the castle grounds. The location may, for example, be:

- private property;

- a castle park;
- a museum;
- a protected monument;
- military property;
- a restricted or closed domain.

Always respect the access regulations. If you are not allowed to enter the actual grounds, find a legal location within the official activation zone.

5 One Activation Can Cover Multiple BCA/WCA References

This is an interesting possibility within BCA. When one location is within the valid activation zones of multiple WCA/BCA references, one activation may, under certain conditions, be valid for multiple references.

Example — ON-00123 (Castle A) and ON-00456 (Castle B). If the official activation zones overlap and your station is located within both valid zones, the activity may qualify for both references.

> ⚠️ **Attention:** You must check this in advance on the official BOS! maps. Never assume that two nearby castles can automatically be activated from one location.

6 Announce Your Activation

An announcement is not only useful for you, but also for the chasers. For example:

Field	Example
Activator	ON3XXX/P
Reference	BCA ON-00123
Location	Castle Example
Date	28 September 2026
Start	08:00 UTC
Bands	40m / 20m / 2m
Modes	SSB / FM / CW

You can announce your activation through the BOS! agenda and other amateur radio channels.

7 Set Up Your Station

Once you arrive, check your position first, using GPS, smartphone or BOS! maps. Check that you are actually inside the valid zone. Then:

1. Set up your antenna.
2. Connect your transceiver.
3. Check your SWR.
4. Check your battery.
5. Start your logging software.
6. Check the date and UTC time.

8 Start the Activation

Once everything is ready, call CQ.

> “CQ CQ, this is ON3XXX portable, activating BCA ON-00123.”
>
> “CQ BCA, CQ BCA, this is ON3XXX/P, ON-00123.”

Mention your BCA/WCA reference regularly. This prevents confusion among the chasers.

9 What Should You Exchange?

A valid radio QSO consists at minimum of a correct exchange of the callsigns and a signal report.

> Activator: “ON4ABC, you are 59.” — Chaser: “Thank you, 59.”

The activator must be able to correctly identify the callsign of the other station. Do not make QSOs where information is only passed through a third station.

10 The 50-QSO Rule for BCA Activators

For the BCA Activator Award, an important condition applies under the Belgian BCA rules: **minimum 50 QSOs per activation**. An activation must contain at least 50 valid QSOs in order to count for the BCA activator.

- Activation 1: 48 QSOs → ❌ not valid as a BCA activation for the activator.
- Activation 2: 50 QSOs → ✅ valid activation.
- Activation 3: 127 QSOs → ✅ valid activation.

11 Important Difference Between Activator and Chaser

If an activator makes, for example, only 35 QSOs, the activation does not meet the 50-QSO requirement for the activator. However, the QSOs made may still be valid for the chaser.

Example — ON3XXX activates BCA ON-00123 and makes 35 QSOs. For ON3XXX: ❌ the activation does not meet the 50-QSO requirement. For the chasers: ✅ the individual QSOs may still count. Therefore, it is important to log and upload an activation even if you make fewer than 50 QSOs.

12 Use UTC in Your Log

A correct log is essential. **Always use UTC.**

13 Use the Correct BCA/WCA Reference in Your Log

Your log must clearly indicate which reference you are activating.

```
MY_SIG = BCA
MY_SIG_INFO = ON-00123
```

or the corresponding ADIF fields required by the BOS! Logbook. The most important thing is that the BOS! system can unambiguously determine which reference you activated.

14 Use a Digital Logbook

A laptop, tablet or smartphone makes it much easier to avoid errors. For example, you can use ADIF logging, a portable logging program, or a paper backup log.

> 💡 **Tip:** Always take a backup with you — smartphone/tablet *and* a paper logbook. A flat battery or software problem should not have to bring your activation to an end.

15 Avoid Duplicate QSOs

A station you have already worked should not simply be logged again as a new QSO. Pay attention during pile-ups.

Example — ON4ABC – 08:12 – 40m SSB. If ON4ABC calls again five minutes later, check whether it is a valid new band/mode combination before logging the station again. A good logging program can help with this.

16 Pile-Up? Stay Organized

A popular BCA reference can attract dozens or even hundreds of chasers. Use a consistent operating procedure, for example: “ON4ABC, 59, thank you. Next station.” Try not to answer everyone at the same time.

> 💡 **Tip:** Work 1 station → log → next station. This helps prevent errors.

17 Consider Using Multiple Bands

A BCA activation does not have to take place on only one band: 40m SSB → 20m SSB → 2m FM → 40m CW. This can attract additional chasers. But remember: a QSO must actually be valid. Do not simply log the same contact multiple times without a valid reason for the different band/mode combination.

18 Park-to-Park / Castle-to-Castle

A particularly enjoyable combination is working another BCA/WCA activator (you: ON3XXX/P, BCA ON-00123; other activator: ON4YYY/P, BCA ON-00456). This can form a Castle-to-Castle / WCA-to-WCA contact, depending on the applicable WCA/BCA processing. Therefore, record the other station's reference correctly in your log whenever you have that information.

19 Respect the Heritage

BCA/WCA is about castles, fortresses and historical heritage. You are therefore not only a radio amateur, but also an ambassador for the program.

Do:

- Respect the monument
- Use existing walking paths
- Do not leave any waste behind
- Do not damage trees or shrubs
- Attach antennas carefully
- Be considerate of visitors
- Park only where permitted

Absolutely avoid:

- Attaching antennas to vulnerable monuments
- Climbing walls or towers without permission
- Entering private property
- Placing cables where they create a hazard
- Damaging historic buildings

20 After the Activation: Check Your Log

Do not immediately go home without checking your log. Check: all callsigns, date, UTC times, band, mode, RST, BCA/WCA reference, no duplicate or incorrect QSOs, correct activator callsign. An incorrect callsign may prevent a chaser from receiving credit.

21 Upload Your Log to the BOS! BCA Logbook

For Belgian BCA activators, use the BOS! Logbook. Upload your log after your activation has ended. The system processes the QSOs and uses the data for BCA statistics and awards. After uploading, check **BCA → Activator Statistics**: number of activated references, number of QSOs, activation status, any missing data, your award/progress.

22 What If You Have Fewer Than 50 QSOs?

Upload your log anyway. **Example:** BCA ON-00123 – 37 QSOs. The activator does not meet the 50-QSO requirement for a valid BCA activation for the activator. However, the QSOs are not necessarily lost — the chasers may still need their contact with you for their own BCA score.

23 The Golden BCA Rule

- **OFFICIAL REFERENCE** — Use an official BCA/WCA reference.
- **CORRECT LOCATION** — Stay within the official activation zone.
- **VALID QSOs** — Make genuine, correct radio contacts.
- **50 QSOs** — For a valid BCA activation for the activator: minimum 50 QSOs.
- **CORRECT LOG** — Upload a complete and correct log to the BOS! Logbook.

24 Activation Photos + GPS Location

You must provide these as proof by email to **info@belgiumoutdoorshack.be** and/or post your activation photos + location information on the BOS! Facebook page.

Find a castle → Check the zone → Set up your station → Call CQ BCA → Make 50+ QSOs → Upload your log → Check your BOS! statistics.

This way, a day of radio from a Belgian castle becomes not only an enjoyable portable activity, but also a valid contribution to BCA and WCA.

✅ BCA Activator – Quick Checklist

BEFORE DEPARTURE

- ☐ Official BCA/WCA reference checked
- ☐ Activation zone checked
- ☐ Access arranged
- ☐ Battery charged
- ☐ Antenna checked
- ☐ Logging software tested
- ☐ Activation announced

ON LOCATION

- ☐ Within activation zone
- ☐ Complete station within the zone
- ☐ Antenna installed
- ☐ SWR checked
- ☐ UTC set
- ☐ Logging started

DURING THE ACTIVATION

- ☐ BCA reference mentioned regularly
- ☐ Correct callsigns logged
- ☐ UTC used
- ☐ Band and mode recorded correctly
- ☐ Aim to make at least 50 QSOs
- ☐ P2P/C2C QSOs recorded correctly

AFTER THE ACTIVATION

- ☐ Log checked
- ☐ ADIF exported
- ☐ Log uploaded to BOS!
- ☐ GPS location + photos emailed to info@belgiumoutdoorshack.be or posted on the BOS! Facebook page
- ☐ BCA statistics checked
- ☐ Any problems reported