

# The 10 Ways to Maximize Your FM DX in 2026

You too can feel like Shaq

By [Nick Langan](#) ·

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*[Nick's Signal Spot](#) is a new feature in which Nick Langan explores RF signals, propagation, new equipment and related endeavors.*

This was me on Monday — the Shaquille O'Neal meme.



I felt a spring in my step Monday, walking around in the 96-degree early season heat.

It was the first E-skip opening of significance on the East Coast of the U.S. In the morning, I positively identified two translators, including a 92.5 out of Peoria, Ill., operating with 38 watts.

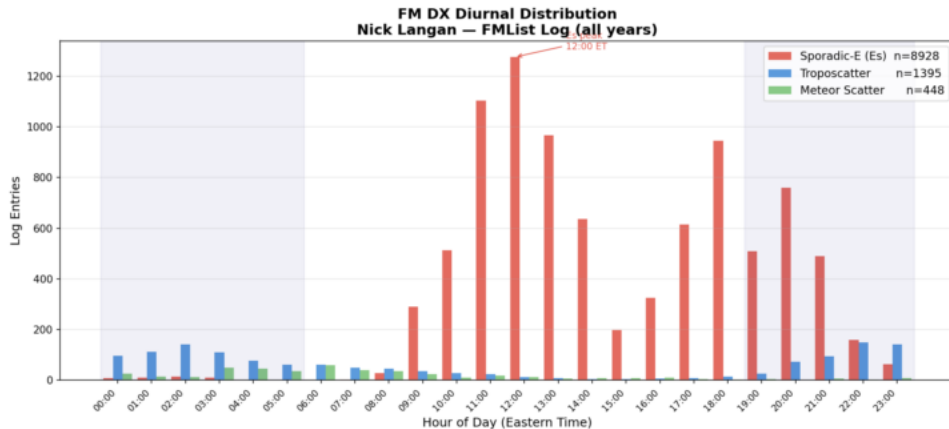
Later that morning, FM signals from Florida, as well as the Georgia and South Carolina coasts, came rolling in. A smaller evening component even fired back up toward the northern Plains.

For a first E-skip opening, it arrived right on time based on my 21 years of FM long-distance reception, or DX, observations. I recently generated a map of my loggings since 2014 that I presented to the Minnesota DX Club over the weekend; [you can view it here](#).

Because the northern hemisphere's E-skip season typically runs from mid-May to mid-August, I figured now is the perfect time for a column outlining the 10 things "I think I think" — with a nod to former [Sports Illustrated columnist Peter King](#) — that I'll be doing to maximize my FM DX this season.

1. **Use six-meter E-skip reports as your bellwether.** I use the [DXmaps real-time QSO map](#) and filter all reports to just the last 15 minutes. Not every six-meter opening is going to climb to the FM broadcast band, of course, and a single line might just indicate someone's ultra-sensitive FT8 setup. But if you see a dense cluster of activity with endpoints landing near your neck of the woods, it's a promising sign.
2. **Leverage live crowdsourced logs.** FMList features many operators in North America and Europe who log their catches in real time. [Use their 30-minute map](#) to see openings as they occur. I'd also encourage you to register for an FMList account; this allows you to set up intelligent alerts that notify you when your specific region is likely to be impacted.
3. **Start low, but target commercial channels for easier IDs.** If you are monitoring early E-skip activity, start at the bottom of the band. The non-commercial segment of 88–92 MHz is a great place to hunt, though those stations can be tough to identify outside of the top-of-the-hour legal ID — especially if you don't have an RDS-capable receiver. Instead, try a lower-end commercial frequency like 92.9 MHz. It features ample, high-power targets neatly spaced across the U.S., making it a favorite of mine, provided it's clear of local signals in your area.
4. **Record your DX — but have a storage strategy.** Most software-defined radio software can record an entire swath of the RF spectrum into a single IQ WAV file, allowing you to essentially replay an opening in its entirety later — including the RDS data! However, the files are massive. If you record blindly, reliving the opening in real time becomes incredibly cumbersome. Use FMList as a guide to pinpoint exactly when the peak openings happened, and harvest just those chunks. Be ready to delete files you don't need or you'll quickly stack up a mountain of external hard drives, a feeling all too familiar to me.
5. **Embrace diversity phasing to fight band crowding.** As I recently explained to the fine folks at the Minnesota DX Club, there are more signals on the air than ever before — particularly translators, LPFMs and non-coms. Channels that were wide open a decade ago are now cluttered. To combat this, I rely heavily on the diversity phasing capabilities of the [SDRplay RSPDuo](#). This is, of course, dependent on whether you have the space to mount two separate antennas. It has been a game changer. Frequencies I had completely written off have been reborn. It isn't perfect — the RSPDuo can be sensitive to intermod from nearby transmitters, and for a local signal, say within about 20 miles, nulling it out is tough. But for fringe signals or adjacent-channel interference, the results are impressive.
6. **Try software-based cancellation if you are limited to one antenna.** If you can't set up a dual-antenna array, check out the co-channel canceller feature in the [Airspy SDR# software](#). Remarkably, this tool even works retroactively on pre-recorded IQ WAV files.
7. **Don't obsess over antenna height.** The old DX axiom is "height equals might." All things being equal, I'd certainly love to stack my antennas as high as possible. But with today's crowded airwaves, extra height sometimes just lifts the overall noise floor — and

in DXing, the noise floor is everything, as [James Careless' recent report also details](#). I've had success even with meteor scatter using my Yagis mounted a mere 10 feet off the ground. While this low-profile setup won't always work for weak tropospheric ducting, it can unearth clean channels during an E-skip opening.



A look at the time of day that my DX receptions have occurred in Tabernacle, N.J., since 2014. With E-skip, there is a morning and late afternoon peak.

8. **Track the diurnal peaks.** With E-skip, we typically see two distinct propagation peaks throughout the day, as the historical charts of my own DX logs reflect: one in the morning, and a second wave in the late afternoon and evening. Plan your radio shack time accordingly.
9. **Automate when you are away from the desk.** You can't always be sitting at the controls, so take advantage of [modern autologging technology](#). I am constantly peering at my automated logs throughout the workday. Additionally, hardware like the [SDRplay nRSP-ST receiver](#) serves as an incredible tool for remote, off-site DXing.
10. **Don't sleep on portables and car radios.** I invite you to [check out the TEF6686 receiver](#) if you have not already, and when an E-Skip opening is really cooking, a factory car radio can make a highly suitable receiver.

Stick to this list, and if we get the necessary cooperation from the propagation gods, you too can feel like Shaq!