



Morse Code

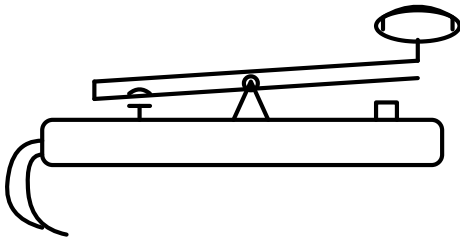
Read this page together. Then try the code on the next pages.

What it is

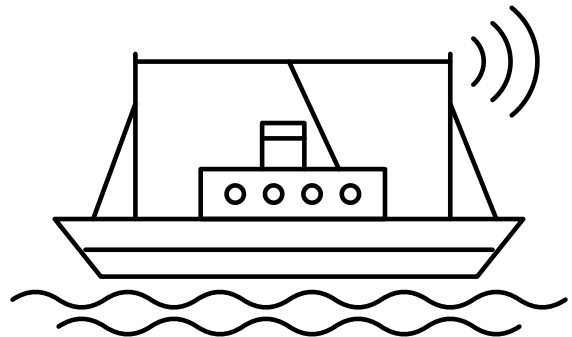
Morse code sends letters as short and long signals. A short signal is a **dot**. A long signal is a **dash**. The signals can be sounds (beeps or taps), flashes of light, or electric pulses down a wire.

A short history

- In the 1830s and 1840s, Samuel Morse and Alfred Vail built an electric telegraph and a code of dots and dashes to go with it. Messages went down long wires from town to town.
- On May 24, 1844, Morse sent a famous message on the first long telegraph line in the United States. It went from Washington, D.C., to Baltimore. It said, "What hath God wrought?" (old words for "Look what God has done!")
- The code we use today is **International Morse code**. It was agreed by many countries in 1865 and is a little different from Morse's first, American code.
- Ships at sea have no wires. From about 1900, they sent Morse code by radio, through the air.
- Amateur (ham) radio operators still use it today. You can tap it, beep it, or flash it with a light.



A telegraph key. A short press sends a dot, a long press a dash.



Ships used to send Morse code by radio, from a wire strung between the masts.

SOS ...---

SOS is the call for help: three dots, three dashes, three dots, sent with no gaps. It is easy to send and easy to know. It was agreed in 1906 and came into use in 1908. Ships all over the world used it.



The letters

Each letter has its own dots and dashes.

A ·-	H	O ---	V ...-	
B -...	I ..	P .-.-.	W .--	
C -.-.	J .----	Q ---.-	X -...-	
D -..	K -.-	R .-.	Y -....	
E .	L .-...	S ...	Z -....	
F ..-.	M --	T -		
G ---.	N -.	U ..-		
1 ·-----	2 ·-----	3 ·-----	4 ·-----	5 ·-----
6 -.....	7 -....	8 -.....	9 -.....	0 -.....

Tips

- A dash is about three dots long.
- Leave a short gap between letters and a longer gap between words.
- Say "dit" for a dot and "dah" for a dash. A is "di-dah".
- E (one dot) and T (one dash) are the shortest letters.

Try it: what do these say?

Find each letter in the chart. Write it in the box.

1	· · · □	· - □	- □		
2	· · · □	· · · · □	· · □	· - - · □	
3	· - · · □	· · □	- - · □	· · · · □	- □
4	- - - □	- · - · □	· □	· - □	- · □



Your turn

Decode a sentence

Each group of letters is one word.

—	...	.	...	...	..	— —		
...	—	— —	—	— —	...	—	— —	.

Tap your name

Write your name in dots and dashes. Then tap it on a table: a quick tap for a dot, a slow tap for a dash. Can someone guess your name?

Have a Morse code party

Invite family or friends. You need a flashlight (or a phone light) and this chart.

1. Make the room a little dark. Point the light at a wall, not at anyone's eyes. Keep the floor clear.
2. One person flashes a word: a short flash for a dot, a long flash for a dash. Pause between letters.
3. Everyone else writes down the dots and dashes, then finds the letters.
4. Take turns. Start with SOS, then try your names.

Every word took time to tap out and cost money to send, so telegrams were kept short and sweet.

Answers: 1. CAT · 2. SHIP · 3. LIGHT · 4. OCEAN · Sentence: THE SHIP SAW A WHALE