

International Morse Code

It is the information age where we can send bits and bytes of data around the world in the speed of light. **Why do we need the Morse Code?** That is a great question.

Morse code is a means of sending messages through binary mediums. Unlike the digital binary system of “0” and “1”, Morse code uses dots “.” and dashes “-”. Combination of dots and dashes makes up letters, numbers, and punctuation marks. It is the most widely recognized method of signaling in the world that can possibly get through when all other medium fails. Even barely audible transmission of Morse code can be deciphered, whereas a voice transmission of similar strength will be unintelligible. Lastly, it is not limited to dots and dashes, since Morse code can be sent by using a flashlight, a flag, or by blinking your eyes.

One such incident when the Morse code saved a life was during the Vietnam War. American prisoners of war were forced to talk on film and announce that they were treated humanly and are in good condition, one of the interviewed soldiers was blinking his eyes in Morse code without the knowledge of his captors. American authorities were able to decipher the word “TORTURE”.

Samuel Morse

It was Samuel F.B. Morse who conceived of the Morse code with the help of Leonard Gale and Alfred Vail. Morse overheard a conversation about electromagnets while on board a ship in 1832 and conceived of an idea of a telegraph.

When he completed his telegraph and applied patents for it in 1837, he originally had series of dots and dashes to represent numbers and a number-word dictionary to convert the transmitted numbers into words. But later he discarded his dictionary and opted instead to represent each letter with their very own combination of dots and dashes.



It wasn't until 1843 when the U.S. Congress decided to fund his efforts and built a line from Baltimore to Washington D.C. The rest was history.

The Code

It is quite difficult to study to code alphabetically, so a grouping of the coded letters are presented below that makes more logical sense. A dot is read as “Dit” and a dash is read as “Dah”.

1 ° - - - -	6 - ° ° ° °	Period ° - ° - ° -	Hyphen - ° ° ° ° -
2 ° ° - - -	7 - - ° ° °	Comma - - ° ° - -	Slash - ° ° - °
3 ° ° ° - -	8 - - - ° °	Question ° ° - - ° °	Quote ° - ° ° - °
4 ° ° ° ° -	9 - - - - °	Semicolon - ° - ° - °	
5 ° ° ° ° °	0 - - - - -		
E °	R ° - °	K - ° -	P ° - - °
I ° °	L ° - ° °	Y - ° - -	X - ° ° -
S ° ° °	F ° ° - °	Q - - ° -	
H ° ° ° °			
T -	A ° -	C - ° - °	
M - -	W ° - -	N - °	
O - - -	J ° - - -	D - ° °	
		B - ° ° °	
G - - °	A ° -		
Z - - ° °	U ° ° -		
	V ° ° ° -		

So to read the word “READ” in Morse code:

° - ° ° ° - ° ° DiDahDit Dit DiDah DahDiDit

Conventionally a Dah is as long as 3 Dits. Each symbol is separated by a space as long as a Dit, each word is separated by a space as long as a Dah, and each sentence is separated by a space as long as 7 dits.

The speed at which code is sent is counted as Words Per Minute (WPM) similar to typing keystroke. To measure your Morse code speed, send a series of five letter words and they don't necessarily need to be words at all. Another way is by sending the word “Paris” the required number of times per minute.

References

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<http://www.morsehistoricsite.org/>. January 28, 2005.

Philippine Amateur Radio Association. Amateur Operator's Review Manual: So You Want to be a Ham. N.P.: Philippine Amateur Radio Association, Inc. 1993.