

Communications at Sea

Morse Code



Morse Code

The International Morse Code uses dots and dashes to show the alphabet letters, numbers, punctuation and special characters of a given message. When messages are sent by Morse code, dots are short beeps, clicks or flashes, and dashes are longer ones. While it is no longer routinely used these days to spell out messages, it can still be used for sending out the internationally recognised distress signal, SOS.

SOS in Morse code looks like this: ••• — — — •••

SOS officially is just a distinctive Morse code sequence that is not an abbreviation for anything, in popular usage it is associated with phrases such as 'Save Our Souls' and 'Save Our Ship'.

How to use it

Morse code can be transmitted in a number of ways: originally as electrical pulses along a telegraph wire, but also as an audio tone, a radio signal with short and long tones, or as a mechanical, audible, or visual signal (e.g. a flashing light) using devices like a torch or ship's fog horn. Some mine rescues have used pulling on a rope – a short pull for a dot and a long pull for a dash.

The lengths of the pauses

Messages can easily get confusing if you don't leave pauses of the right length and in the right places.

The length of the pause between the dots and dashes within a single character is of **one dot duration**.

The length of the pause between the letters of a word is of **three dots duration**.

The length of the pause between the words of a message is of **seven dots duration**.

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

Using something to make flashes or noises, try sending a short message to somebody. Don't forget to leave the right pauses in the right places!