

# Understanding Morse Code

Morse code is a type of character encoding that transmits telegraphic information using rhythm. Morse code uses a sequence of short and long dots (dits) and dashes (dahs) to represent the letters, numerals, punctuation and special characters of a given message. The speed of Morse code is measured in words per minute (WPM) or characters per minute.

It was originally created for Samuel F. B. Morse's electric telegraph in the early 1840s. Morse code was also extensively used for early radio communication beginning in the 1890s.

For emergency signals, Morse code can be sent by way of improvised sources that can be easily "keyed" on and off, making Morse code one of the most versatile methods of telecommunication in existence.



The universal signal for "help needed" is SOS, which can be relayed by sound or by light. It consists of three short sounds or flashes (S); three long sounds or flashes (O); and, again, three short sounds or flashes (S). When signalling the help message, ensure:

- The a dash ("dah") is three times as long as a dot ("dit")
- You allow the length of a dit between letters
- You practice when you are not in an emergency situation

There are a number of ways to signal for help using morse code when stranded:

- Carry a mirror or a torch and send flashes by reflecting sunlight
- Bring a whistle when hiking to sound for help
- Carry an aerosol-powered air horn while boating to signal for help
- Use the light from your mobile if there isn't a mirror or torch handy