# Morse Code Messaging

Every kids loves the idea of a secret code – especially if it means leaving parents out of the loop. Whether it's Pig Latin, invisible ink, or the impenetrable “txt msg,” secret codes rule when it comes to passing on very important information. But kids may not know that secret codes have a long and exciting history, from top-secret military matters to computer programming to cryptic criminal cases. One of the most important code systems invented is the internationally-recognized Morse code, which matches dots and dashes to letters of the alphabet.

Although Samuel F. B. Morse had patented the telegraph in 1837, it was not until 1844 that the government allocated the money to develop this revolutionary form of communication. After the telegraph system was set up, messages that had taken days or even weeks to deliver were now completed in a matter of minutes! Messages were sent through wires by tapping on keys, but kids will find it easier to distinguish dots and dashes by using flashlight signals.

**What You Need:**

- 2 pencils
- 2 pieces of paper
- 2 flashlights

**What You Do:**

1. Practice by writing out a word or two using dots and dashes for letters, as shown on the chart. You'll quickly see the advantage of keeping messages short and simple.

2. Write out a short message to your partner in Morse code, while her or she writes one to you. Leave a space between letters. For example:

   .... . .__.. .__.. __ __ __
   H E L L O

3. Take turns using the flashlights to exchange the messages. Use long and short flashes to convey dashes and dots. As you receive your partner's message, jot down the dots and dashes on paper, then decipher them!

   Morse Code Alphabet:

A . __
B __ ...
C __ . __ .
D __ . .
E .
F . . __ .
G __ __ .
H . . . .
I . .

N __ .
O __ __ __
P . __ __ .
Q __ __ . __
R . __ .
S . . .
T __
U . . __
V . . . __

J . __ __ __
K __ . __
L . __ . .
M __ __

__
W . __ __
X __ . . __
Y __ . __ __
Z __ __ . .

Beginning of transmission __ . __. __
Error . . . . . .
End of transmission . __ . __ .
period . __ . __ . __
comma __ __ . . __ __
question . . __ __ . .

**Recommended Books:**

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David C. King

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