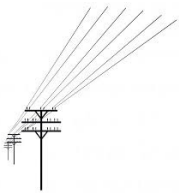

The Telegraph and Morse Code

If you want to send a message to someone in another town or another state, all you have to do is pick up the phone and dial. But it wasn't always so easy to send messages to people far away. Before telephones were invented most people wrote letters that were delivered in big bags of mail on trains or stagecoaches. It took months for a letter to travel across the country. This was too slow for important news. Soon a new invention made communication faster. It was called the telegraph.

The telegraph is a system of sending messages along a wire. A telegraph operator in one city uses a machine to tap out a message in code. The message travels along the wire as electrical pulses until a telegraph operator in another city

hears it and decodes the message. Messages could now be sent very fast between any two cities connected by telegraph wires! Chicago to Los Angeles....Baltimore to Miami....Elgin to Washington D.C.!



Morse Code Alphabet	
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	— — • •

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To send a message, the operator tapped the button...slow...or fast. Each letter of the alphabet was shown with a different combination of slow and fast taps. There was a pause between letters and an even longer pause between words. This is called the Morse Code Alphabet.

On this chart, a line (a "dash") is a slow tap and a circle (a "dot") is a fast tap. To spell out "Hi", the operator would do 4 fast taps for the H, pause for a second, and then do 2 more fast taps for the I.

Try to tap out your name. Remember to take a little break between letters.

Let's Play a Morse Code Game!

Can you decode these words? (Answers below)



How would this message be tapped out in Morse Code?



Now that you are good at Morse Code, try it with a flashlight instead of taps. Turn a flashlight on and off, fast and slow, to send each letter of your message.

Visit www.Morsecode.world/american/translator to type in your own message and hear what it would have sounded like to a telegraph operator.

Answers: (Elgin, dog, train)