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**Next**

# How to make secret codes

William Murphy/Flickr No country currently has the country code of 35. However, many small European countries have codes that begin with the numbers three and five, namely Finland (358), Gibraltar (350), Ireland (353), Portugal (351), Albania (355), Bulgaria (359), Cyprus (357), Iceland (354), Luxembourg (352), and Malta (356). International Access Codes To place an international call, you need more than just the country code — you also need the international access code of the country you are currently in. The most common code is 00, which is used in countries such as the United Kingdom, France, Mexico, Malaysia, and India. The second most common code is 011, which is used by the United States and its overseas territories, Canada, Australia, Jamaica, the Central African Republic, and other countries. Other codes also exist, such as 010 for Japan, 009 for Nigeria, or 119 for Cuba. Country Code The country code is the next number needed to make an international call and is determined by the location of the number one is calling. For the U.S., Canada, and overseas American territories, this number is one. For Europe, this number is two- or three-digits long and begins with either a three or four. The only exception is Russia, which is simply seven. Phone Number Finally, you have the phone number itself. Depending on the country, this will usually include an area code that specifies a broad geographic area within a country, a prefix that specifies a more limited area, and a line number that provides the address for receiving phone. In the U.S., the first three digits are the area code, the second three are prefix, and the final four are the line number. Making the Call Making an international call to or from Europe, Canada, and the U.S. is almost as simple as stringing these three numbers together, although there are a few additional rules to keep in mind. If you're dialing from a mobile phone in the U.S., Canada, or Europe, you can enter a plus sign instead of the international access code. Next, enter the country code. Finally, dial the phone number. If it starts with a zero, drop it unless the number is in Italy. Special rules apply to Hungary and Russia. Keep in mind that European phone numbers vary in length much more than American phone numbers, even within a single country. Also, just like in the U.S., you can often leave out the area code altogether when making a domestic call in Europe — that is, if you're making a call from one local number to another. Consider this example. If you want to call Ireland from the U.S., first dial the American international access code, 011. Then, dial Ireland's country code, 353. Finally, dial the full Irish phone number. If it begins with a zero, drop it. Country Code Politics While country codes may seem like a dry subject, they can also be very serious. Kosovo, a country that declared its independence from Serbia in 2008, is not recognized by the United Nations, and that means it's also not recognized by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the body that assigns country codes. As a result, Kosovans must use the country codes for Monaco (377) or Slovenia (386). However, foreigners must use Serbia's code (381) instead, causing Kosovans to pay millions in phone fees. Kosovans want their own phone number, but Serbia prevents them from doing this through the U.N. and ITU. MORE FROM REFERENCE.COM Ryan Stocking and Stephen Badger Introduction & Motivation: My team was very excited to share our interest of information theory and engineering with the students of Ravenswood Middle school so we opted for an outreach based project. In addition to our video, we also made a worksheet for the kids to follow which provides more information and introduces extra concepts. We hope that our lesson teaches them about secret codes as well as how to make their messages safer. In combination with all of the other great outreach projects done this year they can learn about how entropy and information theory are used in technology that they use every day. Different Cipher Explanations: Let's say you want to send this message to your friend by writing it in code. MEET YOU LATER Our first code is called the A1Z26 cipher, because cipher is another word for code. It's very simple. It uses the numbers 1 for A, 2 for B, all the way until 26 for Z. Using this chart, our code would be 13 5 5 20 25 15 21 12 1 20 5 18 This looks like nonsense! Your friend can use this chart to decode the message, but anyone else who sees it won't know what it means. But if you don't want other people to read your message, there's a big problem. Anyone else can also use this chart to read your message. There's only one way to code and decode the message, so it's pretty easy to guess how to decode. Our next code is a little trickier to figure out. It's called a Caesar cipher. This time, we pick a secret number from 1 to 26. Let's say we picked 5. Now, we use the same table as above, but Step 1 is to change each letter into its number form. Step 2 is to add our secret number. Step 3 is to report back the letter that's above that number. If the number we get in Step 2 was more than 26, we subtract 26 and then go to Step 3. Let's go through it step-by-step for our first few letters. Our first letter is M. The number below M is 13. If we add 5, we get 18, which is below R. So we report back R. This is shown below. If we do this on the rest of MEET, we will get RJJY. Then, when we get to the Y of YOU, we change it into 25 and add 5, getting 30. We subtract 26 and get 4, so we say D. The code we will get is below. RJJY DTZ QFYJW This time, our friend also needs to know our secret number to decode the message. Since you might pick any number, then anyone who doesn't know the secret number would have to try all 26 possibilities. This will slow them down, but not very much. Our last and most advanced code is the Random substitution cipher. This code replaces every letter with a different letter, but the letters don't have to be in order. For example, we might say that A is represented by a G, B is represented by P, and so on, choosing a different random letter for each other letter. No letter should be used twice. Our cipher might look like this. Now, our secret code will be NVVD SLC HGDVU This code would be very hard to guess. You could choose any of 26 letters for A, then any of the 25 remaining letters for B, and so on. There are 26 x 25 x 24 x 23 x 22 ... possibilities for this code, or 403291461126605635584000000. This is more than the number of stars in the universe, so you're probably safe from anyone trying all of them. Advanced Topic: Frequency Analysis Unfortunately, our codes might not be as secure as we hope. One reason is because of frequency analysis. Notice that in our random substitution cipher, every time the same letter is encoded, it is represented by the same letter. In the example code, A will be represented by a G every time it comes up. A savvy observer might notice that certain letters are more common in the alphabet than others. This chart shows roughly how common each letter is. As you can see in the chart, the most common letter is E. Notice that this was also true in our message, since there were 3 E's. On the contrary, J, Q, X, and Z are quite rare. The savvy observer might guess that the most common letter in the code corresponds to an E. In our code above, they might see the 3 V's and correctly guess they correspond to E, and then they can decode any other V's as E's. Our code also has two T's which are represented by D's. Since T is the second most common letter, they might be able to guess that when they see a D, they can decode it as a T. If our message was long enough, frequency analysis is a powerful technique that would give someone a reasonably good chance of guessing at least part of the code. Worksheet: Example 1 What kind of cipher shifts every letter by the same number of positions? Example 2 Decode this A1Z26 code: 14 9 3 5 10 15 2 ! Example 3 If a Caesar cipher encodes the word SECRET as HTRGTI, how many positions were shifted? Using this shift, what is the decoding of YJAXJH? Example 4 Use the random substitution cipher from the How To Guide to decode this message, and encode your response. E HLMV RLDVF PVRGSFV: 1 Write out words in reverse. This is a simple way of encoding messages so they can't be understood at a glance. A message like "Meet me outside" written in reverse would instead be "eem em edistuo." Note: Though this code can be easily solved, but it can be useful if you think someone is trying to peek at your message.[3] 2 Reflect the alphabet in half to encipher messages. Write out the letters A through M in a single line on a piece of paper. Directly beneath this line, write out the letters N through Z also in a single line. Change each letter of messages to the opposite letter of the two lines of letters you have written out. By using a reflected alphabet, the message "Hello" would instead become "Uryyb." [4] Advertisement 3 Try pigpen cipher. Draw a tic tac toe grid on a piece of paper. Write out the letters A through I in the grid going from the left to right, top to bottom. In this example: The first row is made up of the letters A, B, C. The second is made up of D, E, F. The last row is made up of G, H, I.[5] 4 Create a second tic tac toe grid with dots. Draw another tic tac toe grid beside the first one. Fill the grid in with the letters J through R, similarly to the first grid. Then mark dots in each space of the grid of each row as described: In the first row, starting on the left, place a dot in the top right corner (letter J), on the bottom middle side (letter K), and in lower left corner (letter L). In the second row, starting on the left, place a dot on the middle right side (letter M), on the bottom middle side (letter N), and on the middle left side (letter O). In the second row, starting on the left, place a dot in the upper right corner (letter P), on the top middle side (letter Q), and in the upper left corner (letter R).[6] 5 Write out two X shapes beneath each grid. These two X shapes will also be filled with letters to complete your pigpen cipher key. In the second X, place dots in the open spaces surrounding where the X crosses so there is a dot on each side of the center of the X. Then: In the first (undotted) X shape, write S in the top of the X, T on the left side, U on the right, and V on the bottom. In the second X shape, write W in the top of the X, X on the left side, Y on the right, and Z on the bottom.[7] 6 Use the grid surrounding the letters to write in pigpen cipher. The grid shapes (including dots) surrounding letters are used as substitutes for the letters themselves. Use your pigpen cipher key to translate messages into and out of pigpen.[8] 7 Use a date shift cipher. Choose a date. This might be something with personal significance, like a birthday or the day you graduated college, but it could be something impersonal, like the birthday of George Washington. Write out the date as an unbroken string of numbers. This is the number key. For example, if you were to use George Washington's birthday (2/22/1732), you would write it as 2221732. If you've already agreed to use a date shift cipher with someone, you can accompany enciphered messages with a clue (like "Washington") for the number key.[9] 8 Encipher your message with the date shift number key. Write out your message on a piece of paper. Underneath the message, write out a single digit of the number key for each letter of your message. When you reach the last digit of the number key, repeat the key from the beginning. For example, using George Washington's birthday (2/22/1732): Message: I'm hungry Enciphering:I.m.h.u.n.g.r.y.2.2.1.7.3.2.2Shift letters according to the number key, as in... Coded message: K.O.J.V.U.J.T.A.I.1019 Use a secret language, like Pig Latin. In Pig Latin, words that start with a consonant sound switch that sound to the end of the word and add "ay." This holds true for words start with a cluster of consonants. Words that start with vowels just get "way" or "ay" added to the end of the word. Consonant initial examples: pig = igpay ; me = emay ; too = ootay ; wet = etway ; hello = elohay Consonant cluster initial examples: glove = oveglay ; shirt = irtshay ; cheers = eerschay Vowel initial examples: explain = explainway ; egg = eggway ; ends = endsay ; eat = eatay[11] Advertisement



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