HELP!
SOS is the international distress call. It doesn't actually stand for Save our Souls. The letters were chosen because they are easy to transmit in Morse code.

3 **Send messages with**

Morse code

Learn how to talk with a torch and send messages in the dark.

What you need
- Torch
- 2 pens
- 2 pieces of paper
- A partner

Instructions

1 Decide on your message. Keep it as short and simple as possible, so it's not too tricky to transmit. Then, convert your message into Morse code. Write the message on a piece of paper and then use the Morse code alphabet (right) to note the code underneath.
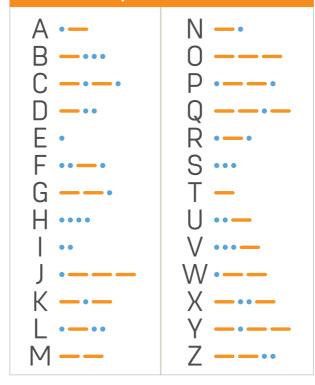
2 Switch off the lights or go outside with a grown up. Have your partner stand a few metres away with a pen and paper ready to translate your coded message into words. Then, send the letters of your message with a torch, using a quick flash for a dot and a longer flash for a dash. Leave a six-second gap between words.

3 Your partner should note down the dots and dashes, and then try to decode your message. Did they get it right? Now, try swapping over the sender and receiver roles.

Morse code alphabet

Letter	Code		Letter	Code
A	·—		N	—·
B	—···		O	———
C	—·—·		P	·——·
D	—··		Q	——·—
E	·		R	·—·
F	··—·		S	···
G	——·		T	—
H	····		U	··—
I	··		V	···—
J	·———		W	·——
K	—·—		X	—··—
L	·—··		Y	—·——
M	——		Z	——··

How does it work?

Learning how to communicate at distance without modern technology is a great survival skill. Morse code is a communication system developed by Samuel Morse in the 1830s. It was used to send messages quickly over long distances, using electrical signals travelling down a wire. At the sending station, a person called an operator tapped out Morse code messages on a telegraph machine. The messages were then transmitted down the wire, which was connected to another machine at a different station. Once people had learned it, Morse code was really quick to use because it used dots and dashes (also called dits and dahs), to represent letters of the alphabet. Messages in Morse code can be sent using light (like in this activity), or sounds such as beeps, clapping or tapping. The most famous Morse code message is the SOS distress call that's used in extreme emergencies.

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