

PART III

FLAG ETIQUETTE AND VISUAL SIGNALS

The use of flags for signalling other ships goes way back to the days of sail, so why is of importance today? Well even the most advanced technology breaks down now and again. The flags also have an international standing and meaning allowing people from different nations to communicate easily. Different countries place different levels of importance to flags, some demand and enforce a strict flag etiquette while others are more lax. Below are the international maritime signals and their meaning.

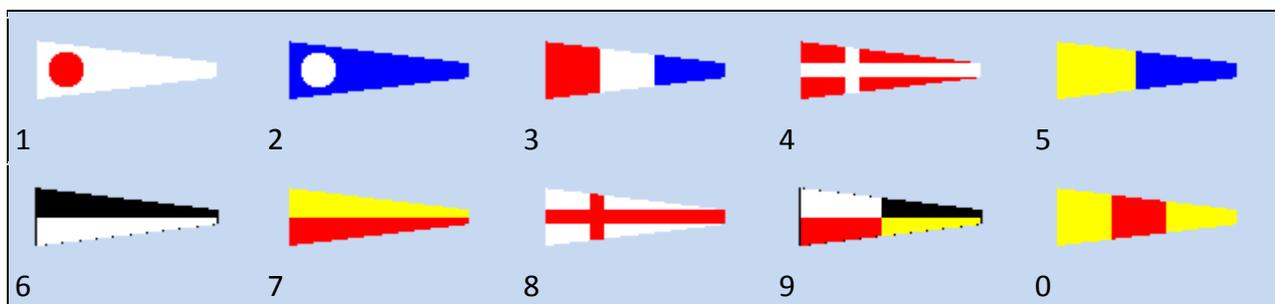
MORSE CODE ALPHABET

The International Morse Code characters are:

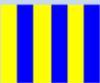
A .- B -... C -.-. D -.. E . F ..-. G --. H I .. J .--- K -.- L -.-.. M --	N -. O --- P -.-. Q --.- R -.-. S ... T - U ..- V ...- W --. X -.-. Y -.-.. Z --..	0 ---- 1 .---- 2 ..--- 3 ...-- 4- 5 6 -.... 7 ---.. 8 --... 9 -.... Fullstop .-.-.- Comma -.-.- Query ..-.-
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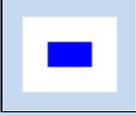
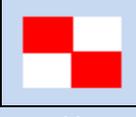
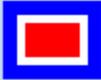
NUMERICAL FLAGS

These flags are all in the shape of pennants



ALPHABETIC SINGLE HOIST FLAGS

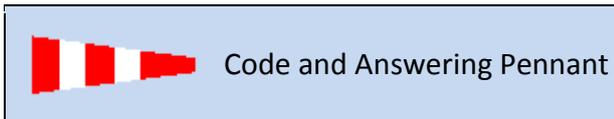
 <p>A I have a diver down please pass at slow speed</p>	 <p>B I am carrying , loading or discharging dangerous goods</p>	 <p>C Yes or affirmative</p>
 <p>D I am manoeuvring with difficulty , please keep clear</p>	 <p>E I am altering course to starboard</p>	 <p>F I am disabled, communicate with me</p>
 <p>G I require a pilot or when made by fishing vessels I am hauling my nets</p>	 <p>H I have a pilot onboard</p>	 <p>I I am altering my course to port</p>
 <p>J I am on fire Keep clear</p>	 <p>K Communicate with me</p>	 <p>L You should stop immediately</p>
 <p>M I am stopped and making no way through the water</p>	 <p>N No or Negative</p>	 <p>O Man Overboard</p>

 <p>P <i>The Blue Peter</i> All aboard the vessel is about to set sail</p>	 <p>Q My ship is healthy and I require free pratique</p>	 <p>R This flag has no set meaning</p>
 <p>S I am operating stern propulsion</p>	 <p>T Keep clear of me or when made by fishing boats I am engaged in pair trawling</p>	 <p>U You are sailing into danger</p>
 <p>V I require assistance</p>	 <p>W I require medical assistance</p>	 <p>X Stop what you are doing and watch for my signals</p>
 <p>Y I am dragging my anchor</p>		 <p>Z I require a tug or when made by fishing boats I am shooting my nets</p>

SUBSTITUTES

	1st Substitute
	2nd Substitute
	3rd Substitute

OTHERS



Flags can also be hoisted in combination with others to give new meanings. Some are listed below;

AE = I must abandon my vessel

BF = Aircraft is ditched in position indicated and requires immediate assistance

CB = I require immediate assistance

CB6 = I require immediate assistance , I am on fire

CP = I am proceeding to your assistance

DX = I am sinking

ED = Your distress signals are understood

EL = Repeat the distress position

NE2 = Submarines in vicinity - keep clear

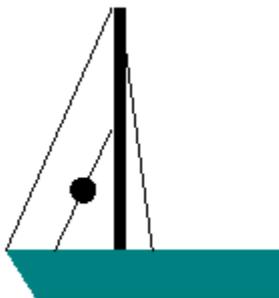
NC = In Distress

RY = Keep clear and at slow speed

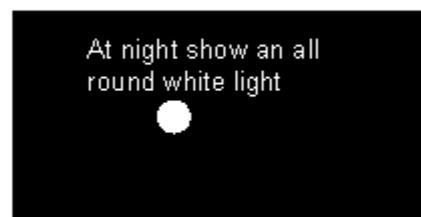
RU8 = Submarine about to surface within next 30 minutes within 2 miles of me

ANCHORING SIGNALS

The anchor ball should be raised in the forepart of the vessel, and if it will be dark, the all round white anchor light illuminated.



Day time signal for a vessel at anchor is a black ball.



The anchor light may be on the top of the mast or just above deck level. The advantage of a light at the masthead is that it is better seen from a distance. The advantage of a lower light is that it illuminates the deck for ease of moving around but more importantly, it enables other vessels to see your vessel when they are close (most people will not be looking up in the air at an anchor light 40 to 50 feet above their head when motoring in to confined anchorage).

MOTORING CONE



A motor sailing cone is the international day shape indicating that a boat is proceeding under sail when also being propelled by machinery. The motoring cone shall be exhibited forward where it can best be seen, apex downwards. A vessel that is proceeding under sail when also being propelled by machinery is for the purposes of the COLREG, a power driven vessel and should at night display the lights of a power driven vessel.

PRONUNCIATION OF LETTERS AND NUMERALS

To avoid confusion and errors during voice transmission, special techniques have been developed for pronouncing letters and numerals. These special techniques resulted in the phonetic alphabet and phonetic numerals. The phonetic alphabet is used by the operator to spell difficult words and thereby prevent misunderstanding on the part of the receiving operator. The words of the phonetic alphabet, which is a word alphabet and not a code, are pronounced in the tables below. The phonetic alphabet is also used for the transmission of encrypted messages. For example, the cipher group CMVVX is spoken "CHARLIE MIKE VICTOR VICTOR XRAY."

PHONETIC ALPHABET

Letter	Word	Pronunciation
A	ALPHA	<u>AL</u> FAR
B	BRAVO	<u>BRAH</u> VOH
C	CHARLIE	<u>CHAR</u> LEE
D	DELTA	<u>DELL</u> TAH
E	ECHO	<u>ECK</u> OH
F	FOXTROT	<u>FOKS</u> TROT
G	GOLF	GOLF
H	HOTEL	HOH <u>TELL</u>
I	INDIA	<u>IN</u> DEE AH
J	JULIET	<u>JEW</u> LEE <u>ETT</u>
K	KILO	<u>KEY</u> LOH
L	LIMA	<u>LEE</u> MAH
M	MIKE	MIKE

Letter	Word	Pronunciation
N	NOVEMBER	NO <u>VEMBER</u>
O	OSCAR	<u>OSS</u> CAH
P	PAPA	PAH <u>PAH</u>
Q	QUEBEC	KEH <u>BECK</u>
R	ROMEO	<u>ROW</u> ME OH
S	SIERRA	SEE <u>AIR</u> RAH
T	TANGO	<u>TANG</u> GO
U	UNIFORM	<u>YOU</u> NEE FORM
V	VICTOR	<u>VIK</u> TAH
W	WHISKEY	<u>WISS</u> KEY
X	X-RAY	<u>ECKS</u> <u>RAY</u>
Y	YANKEE	<u>YANG</u> KEY
Z	ZULU	<u>ZOO</u> LOO

Numbers are spoken digit by digit, except that exact multiples of thousands may be spoken as such. For example, 84 is "AIT FOW ER", 2,500 is "TOO FIFE ZE RO ZE RO," and 16,000 is "WUN SIX TOUSAND."

NUMERICAL ALPHABET

Number	Pronunciation	Number	Pronunciation
1	WUN	6	SIX
2	TOO	7	SEV-en
3	TREE	8	AIT
4	FOUR-er	9	NINE-er
5	FIFE	0	ZE-RO

The date-time group is always spoken digit by digit, followed by the time zone indication. For example, 291205Z is "TOO NIN-ER WUN TOO ZE-RO FIFE ZOO-LOO."

SOUND SIGNALS

Definitions

- (a) The word "whistle" means any sound signalling appliance capable of producing the prescribed blasts.
- (b) The term "short blast" means a blast of about one seconds duration.
- (c) The term "prolonged blast" means a blast of about four to six seconds duration.

There are a couple of useful points:

- (i) The larger the vessel, the deeper the pitch of the sound signals.
This is a means of differentiating between the various vessels which sound one prolonged followed by two short blasts in reduced visibility.
- (ii) The larger the vessel the further away it can be heard.

Manoeuvring and warning signals

(a) When vessel are in sight of one another, a power-driven vessel underway, when manoeuvring as authorised by these Rules, shall indicate that manoeuvre by the following signals on her whistle:

- one short blast to mean "I am altering my course to starboard";
- two short blasts to mean "I am altering my course to port";
- three short blasts to mean "I am operating astern propulsion".

(b) Any vessel may supplement the whistle signals prescribed in paragraph (a) of this Rule by light signals, repeated as appropriate, whilst the manoeuvre is being carried out:

(i) these signals shall have the following significance:

- one flash to mean "I am altering my course to starboard";
- two flashes to mean "I am altering my course to port";
- three flashes to mean "I am operating astern propulsion";

(ii) the duration of each flash shall be about one second, the interval between flashes shall be about one second, and the interval between successive signals shall be not less than ten seconds;

(c) When in sight of one another in a narrow channel or fairway:

(i) a vessel intending to overtake another shall in compliance with [Rule 9 \(e\) \(i\)](#) indicate her intention by the following signals on her whistle:

- two prolonged blasts followed by one short blast to mean "I intend to overtake you on your starboard side";
- two prolonged blasts followed by two short blasts to mean "I intend to overtake you on your port side".

(ii) the vessel about to be overtaken when acting in accordance with [Rule 9 \(e\) \(i\)](#) shall indicate her agreement by the following signal on her whistle:

- one prolonged, one short, one prolonged and one short blast, in that order.

(d) When vessels in sight of one another are approaching each other and from any cause either vessel either vessel fails to understand the intentions or actions of the other, or is in doubt whether sufficient action is being taken by the other to avoid collision, the vessel in doubt shall immediately indicate such doubt by giving at least five short and rapid blasts on the whistle. Such signals may be supplemented by a light signal of at least five short and rapid flashes.

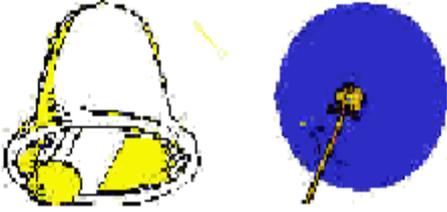
(e) A vessel nearing a bend or an area of the channel or fairway where other vessels may be obscured by an intervening obstruction shall sound one prolonged blast. Such signal shall be answered with a prolonged blast by any approaching vessel that may be within hearing around the bend or behind the intervening obstruction.

(f) If whistles are fitted on a vessel at a distance apart of more than 100 metres, one whistle only shall be used for giving manoeuvring and warning signals.

THE FOLLOWING SOUND SIGNALS WILL BE GIVEN IN RESTRICTED VISIBILITY:

	At not more than two minute intervals. Power-driven vessel, underway and making way.
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	<p>At not more than two minute intervals. Power-driven vessel, underway but not making way. (blast 2 long, I'm not going along)</p>
	<p>At not more than two minute intervals. Any of the following: A sailing vessel. A vessel fishing. A vessel not under command. A vessel restricted in ability to manoeuvre. A vessel constrained by draught. A vessel towing.</p>
	<p>At not more than two minute intervals. A vessel under tow, or the last vessel on a line of vessels under tow. (long and 3 short, tow line is taut)</p>
	<p>At not more than two minute intervals. A pilot vessel on duty.</p>
	<p>At not more than one minute intervals. A vessel less than 100 metres in length, at anchor.</p>

	<p>At not more than one minute intervals, a bell at the bow and the gong at the stern. A vessel greater than 100 metres in length, at anchor.</p>
	<p>At not more than one minute intervals. A vessel less than 100 metres in length, aground.</p>
	<p>Sounded after the anchor signal for a vessel of her size. An extra signal to give warning of the risk of collision to an approaching vessel, given by a vessel at anchor.</p>

A vessel of less than 12 metres in length is not obliged to make these signals, she only needs to make some efficient sound signal at not more than two minute intervals.

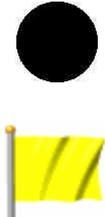
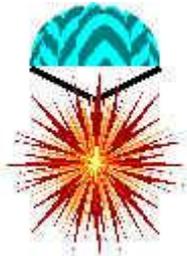
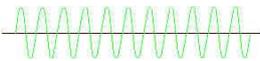
Anyone who does not make a sound signal in reduced visibility would be taking a considerable risk, and considering how easy it is to have a gas powered horn or a trumpet type horn aboard they would be very foolhardy.

DISRESS SIGNALS

These signals are the internationally recognised methods of indicating that a vessel is in distress and requires assistance. All yachts should carry the appropriate equipment necessary to make the distress signals that are suitable for the area they are navigating in.

1. The following signals, used or exhibited either together or separately, indicate distress and need of assistance:

<p>(a) a gun or other explosive signal fired at intervals of about a minute;</p>		<p>(a) Not many vessels in Europe will carry guns or explosive devices, but in other parts of the world you may come across this signalling method (just make sure they are not firing at you!).</p>
<p>(b) a continuous sounding with any fog-signalling apparatus;</p>		<p>(b) This is a very simple method of attracting attention, which requires minimum equipment but is obviously only of use when very near other vessels.</p>
<p>(c) rockets or shells, throwing red stars fired one at a time at short intervals;</p>		<p>(c) A very useful method of attracting attention when some distance from any possible observers.</p>
<p>(d) a signal made by radiotelegraphy or by any other signalling method consisting of the group . . . - - . . . (SOS) in the Morse Code;</p>		<p>(d) On small craft this is a useful back up method summoning assistance, especially if sent by a powerful signalling light.</p>
<p>(e) a signal sent by radiotelephony consisting of the spoken word "Mayday";</p>		<p>(e) This is probably the most effective method and will normally be the first means of summoning assistance. Especially, when linked to a radio with DSC capability.</p>
<p>(f) the International Code Signal of distress indicated by N.C.;</p>		<p>(f) With the size of flags carried on most vessels, you could probably shout as far as this signal could be recognised! However, once hoisted, this signal requires no further effort to be maintained.</p>

<p>(g) a signal consisting of a square flag having above or below it a ball or anything resembling a ball;</p>		<p>(g) This signal suffers from the same problem as flags. In addition, most people would probably not recognise it!</p>
<p>(h) flames on the vessel (as from a burning barrel, oil barrel, etc.);</p>		<p>(h) This may seem obvious, but the boat itself does not need to be on fire. It may be possible to light some oily rags in a bucket. This could be useful if you have used all your distress flares!</p>
<p>(i) a rocket parachute flare or hand flare showing a red light;</p>		<p>(i) Again a very useful mechanical means of summoning aid. Ensure you have sufficient for the area you will be sailing in. Also it is often recommended that parachute flares are fired in pairs with about a 5 minute gap between them. This is because the person who sights a flare may not be the skipper, by firing a second one a few minutes later, the aim is to give the person who is responsible for the decision making on board enough time to reach the bridge and to see the flare for themselves.</p>
<p>(j) a smoke signal giving off orange-coloured smoke;</p>		<p>(j) Useful up to a range of 2 miles, especially when indicating the vessel in distress to a helicopter when there are several other craft in the vicinity.</p>
<p>(k) slowly and repeatedly raising and lowering arms outstretched to each side;</p>		<p>(k) This is surprisingly effective at short range and may be all that is required when in a small vessel in busy waters.</p>
<p>(l) the radiotelegraph alarm signal;</p>		<p>(l) This is not relevant to most small craft and has effectively been replaced by the DSC system within GMDSS.</p>
<p>(m) the radiotelephone alarm signal;</p>		<p>(m) A two tone audio signal and has effectively been replaced by the alerting alarms of the DSC system within GMDSS.</p>
<p>(n) signals transmitted by emergency position-indicating radio beacons.</p>		<p>(n) For the ocean sailor an Emergency Position Indicating Position Beacon (EPIRB) is an essential piece of safety equipment. When out of range of other communication systems they will transmit a distress signal to be picked up by satellite, then pass it on to a ground</p>

		station to start a search and rescue operation. They are also very useful to the coastal sailor, especially as a back up to the main radio and distress flares.
(o) approved signals transmitted by radiocommunication systems, including survival craft radar transponders.		(o) A radar transponder, is triggered by the signal from a search craft, and transmits a signal which shows up on the search craft's radar screen and aids fine positioning of a liferaft.

2. The use or exhibition of any of the foregoing signals except for the purpose of indicating distress and need of assistance and the use of other signals which may be confused with any of the above signals is prohibited.

3. Attention is drawn to the relevant sections of the International Code of Signals, the Merchant Ship Search and Rescue Manual and the following signals:

(a) a piece of orange-coloured canvas with either a black square and circle or other appropriate symbol (for identification from the air);		Very useful for summoning assistance from helicopters and other aircraft. Has the benefit that it will last indefinitely and can be left unattended.
(b) a dye marker.		Very useful for summoning assistance from helicopters and other aircraft. Can be easily attached to man overboard equipment or lifejackets.

All the crew of a yacht should be familiar with the use of the distress signals and where they are stowed on the vessel.

LIFE SAVING SIGNALS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH RESCUE UNITS

LIFE SAVING SIGNALS

To be used by Ships, Aircraft or Persons in Distress, when communicating with life-saving stations, maritime rescue units and aircraft engaged in search and rescue operations.



Search and Rescue Unit Replies

You have been seen, assistance will be given as soon as possible.



Orange smoke flare.



Three white star signals or three light and sound rockets fired at approximately 1 minute intervals.

Shore to Ship Signals

Safe to land here.



Vertical waving of both arms, white flag, light or flare.

OR



Morse code signal by light or sound.

Landing here is dangerous. Additional signals mean safer landing in direction indicated.



Horizontal waving of white flag, light or flare. Putting one flag, light or flare on ground and moving off with a second indicates direction of safer landing.

OR

S: ---

Morse code signals by light or sound.

R: — — —

Land to the right of your current heading.

L: — — — —

Land to the left of your current heading.

Surface to Air Signals

Message	ICAO/IMO Visual Signals
Require assistance	V
Require medical assistance	X
No or negative	N
Yes or affirmative	Y
Proceeding in this direction	↑

Note: Use International Code of Signal by means of lights or flags or by laying out the symbol on the deck or ground with items which have a high contrast to the background.

Air to Surface Replies

Message Understood.



Drop a message.



Rocking wings.



Flashing landing or navigation lights on and off twice.



Morse code signal by light.

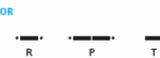
Message Not Understood - Repeat.



Straight and level flight.



Circling.



Morse code signal by light.

Air to Surface Direction Signals

Sequence of 3 manoeuvres meaning proceed to this direction.

- 1 Circle vessel at least once.
- 2 Cross low, ahead of vessel rocking wings.
- 3 Overfly vessel and head in required direction.

Your assistance is no longer required.



Cross low, astern of vessel rocking wings.

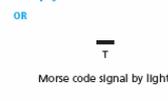
Note: As a non preferred alternative to rocking wings, varying engine tone or volume may be used.

Surface to Air Replies

Message Understood - I will comply.



Change course to required direction.

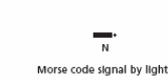


Morse code signal by light.



Code & answering pendant "Close Up".

I am unable to comply.



Morse code signal by light.



International flag "N".

Note: Use the signal most appropriate to prevailing conditions.