

Morse Code and the Phonetic Alphabet

Morse code is a very efficient mode of radio communication because it can be done with very low power and very simple transmitters and receivers. A Morse code radio signal will get through with one tenth of the power required for voice communications.

Morse code uses combinations of long and short sounds, usually represented and spoken as “dah” and “dit.” The duration of a *dah* is three times longer than the duration of a *dit*. The silent space between the *dits* and *dahs* in a letter is the same duration as a *dit*. The silent space between letters is the same duration as a *dah*. All but the final *dit* is usually abbreviated as *di* because that’s sort of how it sounds.

You will notice that there are no dots and dashes in this table. The reason is that we do not want to be responsible for getting you started on a bad habit. Do **not** try to learn Morse code by trying to memorize a table of dots and dashes. “A” sounds like “didah” not “dot dash.”

“So what’s the big deal?” you ask. If you memorize the dots-and-dashes you will know Morse code *by sight*. Morse code is, however, an *aural* (by ear) format. If you learn dots and dashes then you will hear the sound and have to mentally translate from sound to visual dots and dashes and then to letters. This translation step, as simple as it seems, will really hold you up. It will almost certainly prevent you from ever being able to copy a Morse code message at rates of 5 words-per-minute or higher.

Letter	Morse code <u>sound</u>	Phonetic Alphabet <i>used on voice “”phone” modes to spell</i>
A	didah	Alpha
B	dahdididit	Bravo
C	dahdidahdit	Charlie
D	dahdidit	Delta
E	dit	Echo
F	dididahdit	Foxtrot
G	dahdahdit	Golf
H	didididit	Hotel
I	didit	India
J	didahdah	Juliet
K	dahdidah	Kilo
L	didahdidit	Lima
M	dahdah	Mike
N	dahdit	November
O	dahdahdah	Oscar (“Os-cah”)
P	didahdahdit	Papa
Q	dahdahdidah	Quebec (“Ke- bec”)
R	didahdit	Romeo
S	dididit	Sierra
T	dah	Tango
U	dididah	Uniform
V	didididah	Victor
W	didahdah	Whiskey
X	dahdididah	X-ray
Y	dahdidahdah	Yankee
Z	dahdahdidit	Zulu
1	didahdahdahdah	“wun”
2	dididahdahdah	“two”
3	didididahdah	“tree”
4	dididididah	“fow-er”
5	dididididi	“fife”
6	dahdidididit	“six”
7	dahdahdididit	“seven”
8	dahdahdahdidit	“ate”
9	dahdahdahdahdit	“nine-er”
0	dahdahdahdahdah	“zero” (<i>not</i> “oh”)
.	didahdidahdidah	“period,” “decimal,” or “dot,” depending on context
,	dahdahdididahdah	“comma”
/	dahdididahdit	“stroke” or “slant bar” depending on where used