

Semaphore!

Semaphore flag communication was adopted and widely used in the maritime world in the 19th century. It is still used during underway replenishment at sea and is acceptable for emergency communication in daylight or using lighted wands instead of flags, at night.

Communicating With Each Other

Whether it's to one partner, or a line of people in a game of telephone, there are a few steps to get started:

1. Color each piece of paper with a red and yellow triangle, like the picture to the right
2. Tape a ruler along the red side of each flag to be your handles.
3. Use the Semaphore key below to practice sending messages. Can you spell your name, or say hello to a partner?

Optional: Make multiple sets of flags, and with 3 or more people, try communicating a message around corners. The first player signals the second, who turns and repeats the signals to an unseen third like a game of telephone. Do you think you can keep the message intact?

Materials

- 2 Pieces of Paper
- 2 Rulers
- Tape
- Red Marker or Crayon
- Yellow Marker or Crayon
- Semaphore Key



Did You Know?

- The key used to learn Semaphore positions shows the message receiver's perspective. The message sender positions their arms opposite of what's shown. For example, signaling the letter "A" means holding the left flag down, and the right flag away from the body at a low angle.
- Semaphore flags are colored differently, based on whether the signals are sent by sea or by land. Signals by sea use red and yellow flags, while signals sent by land use white and blue. Why do you think that is?

