

Activity title

Semaphore flags – talking to someone that is too far away to hear us

Time required

30 minutes – 1 hour

Activity summary

Making and using semaphore flags.

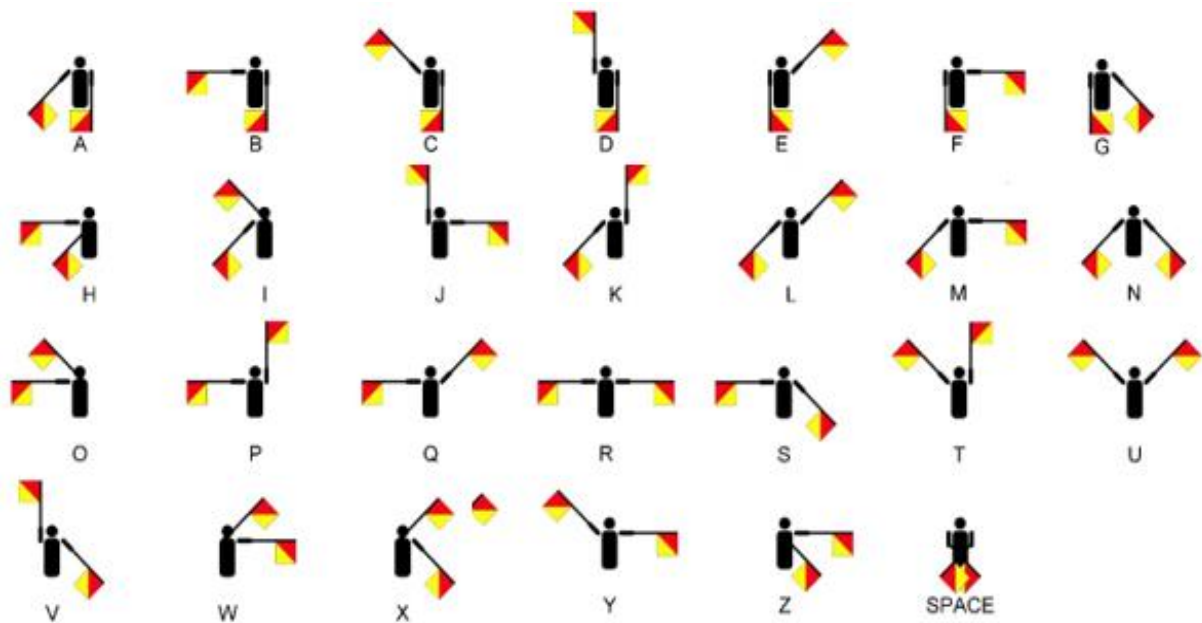
By the end of this activity, you will be able to:

Send a message to someone who is too far away to hear you.

What's this all about?

Imagine you are on a ship. You need to send a message to the crew on a nearby boat. They can see you, but not hear you, even if you shout. There is no mobile signal, as you are in the middle of the sea. How do you send the message?

You could use naval flags (explained on one of the other activity sheets), but these take time to put in order. A quicker way is to use semaphore flags. Holding the flags in different positions meant different letters. Here is **the alphabet using semaphore flags**:



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Using semaphore flags

One flag is held in each hand. Here is a word using semaphore flags:



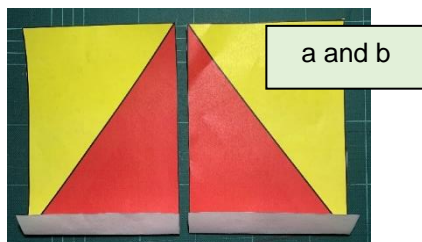
What equipment will you need?

- Semaphore Flags

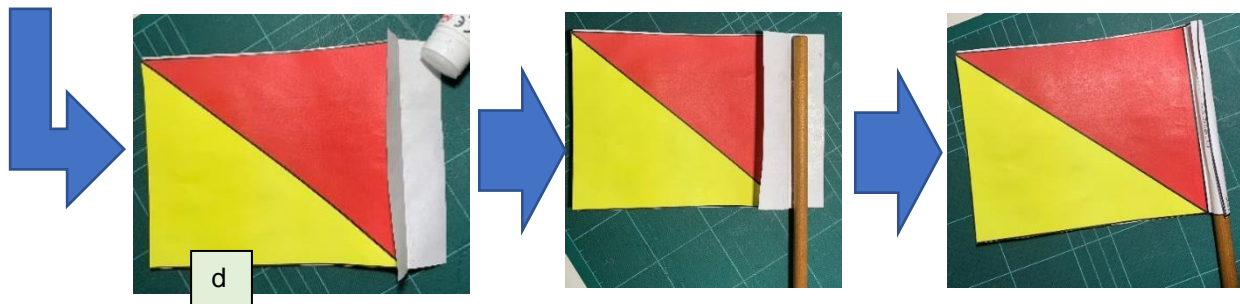
You could make your own flags using the print outs on the next two pages. You will need:

- Thin sticks, such as bamboo or twigs
- PVA glue or a glue stick
- Scissors

If you have no flags, you could just use your arms. Flags are used as they can be seen clearly from further away.

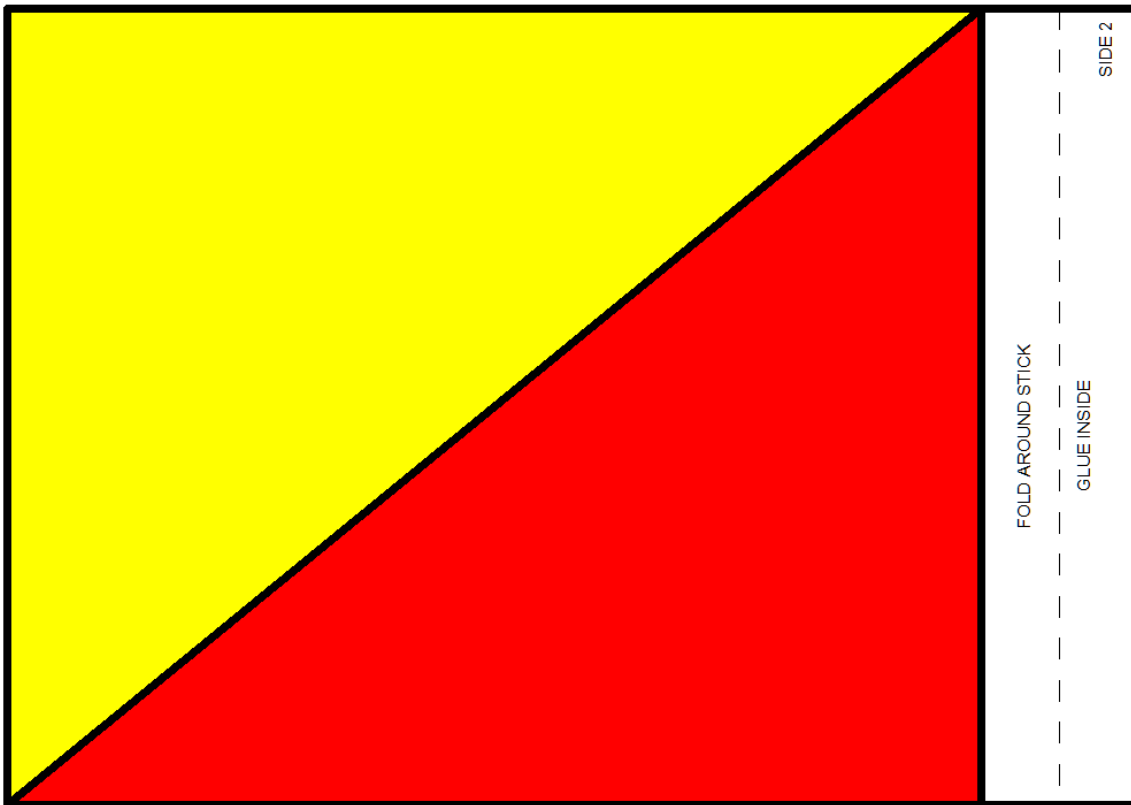
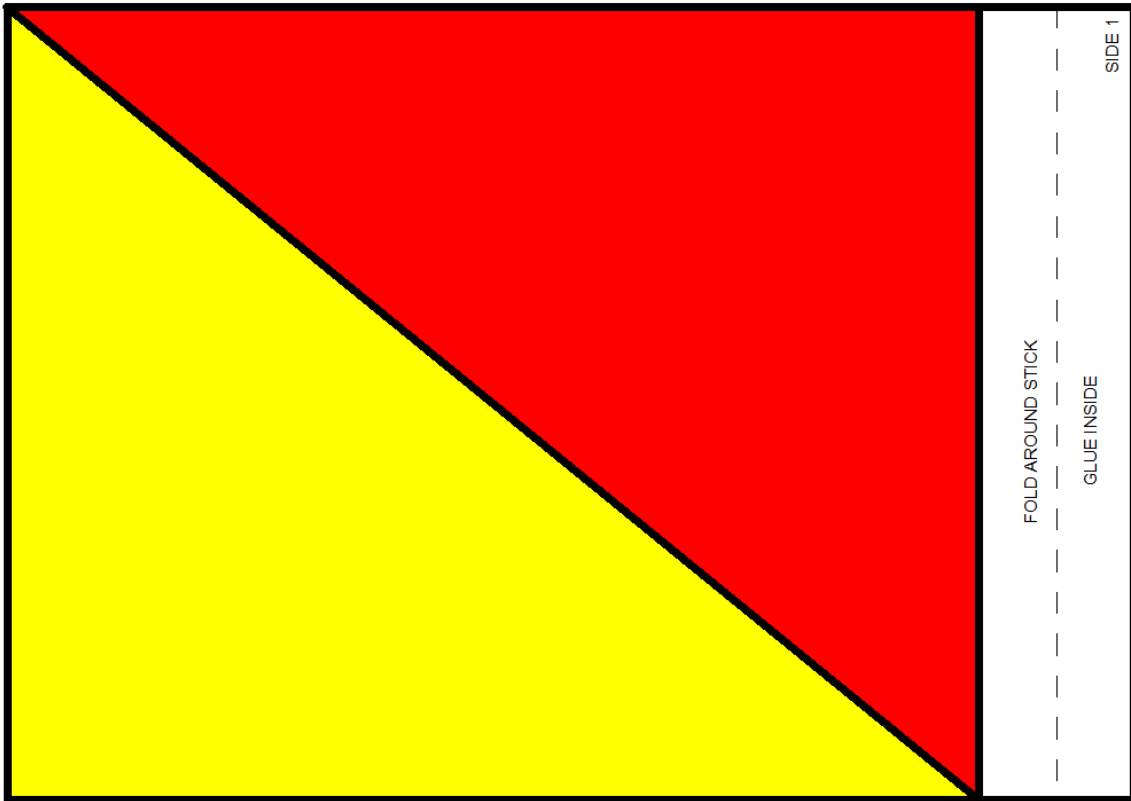


- Carefully cut out the flags using scissors – each flag has two sides.
- Fold the tabs up.
- Turn side 1 over and put glue on the back of the coloured part glue. **Do not glue the tabs.** Glue the flags together, making sure the colours match.
- Fold the tabs out and apply glue.
- Place your stick between the tabs, fold over the tabs and glue the stick in place,
- Repeat steps a to h to make your second flag.



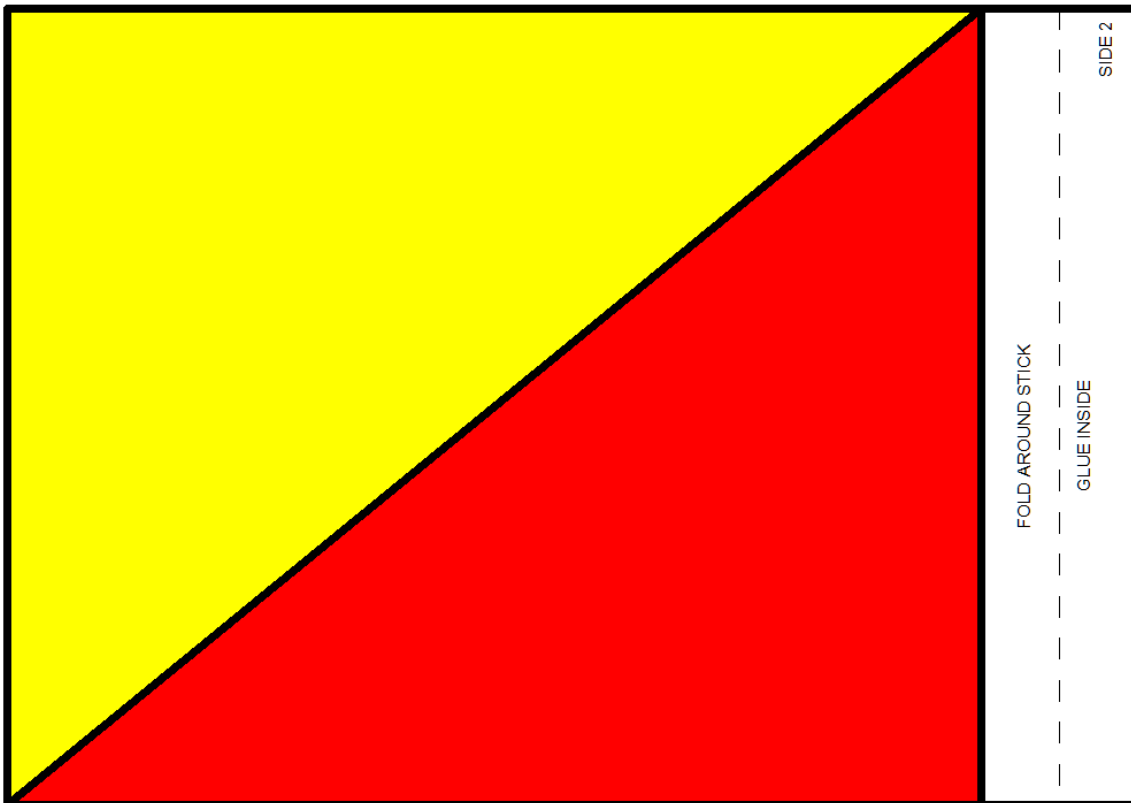
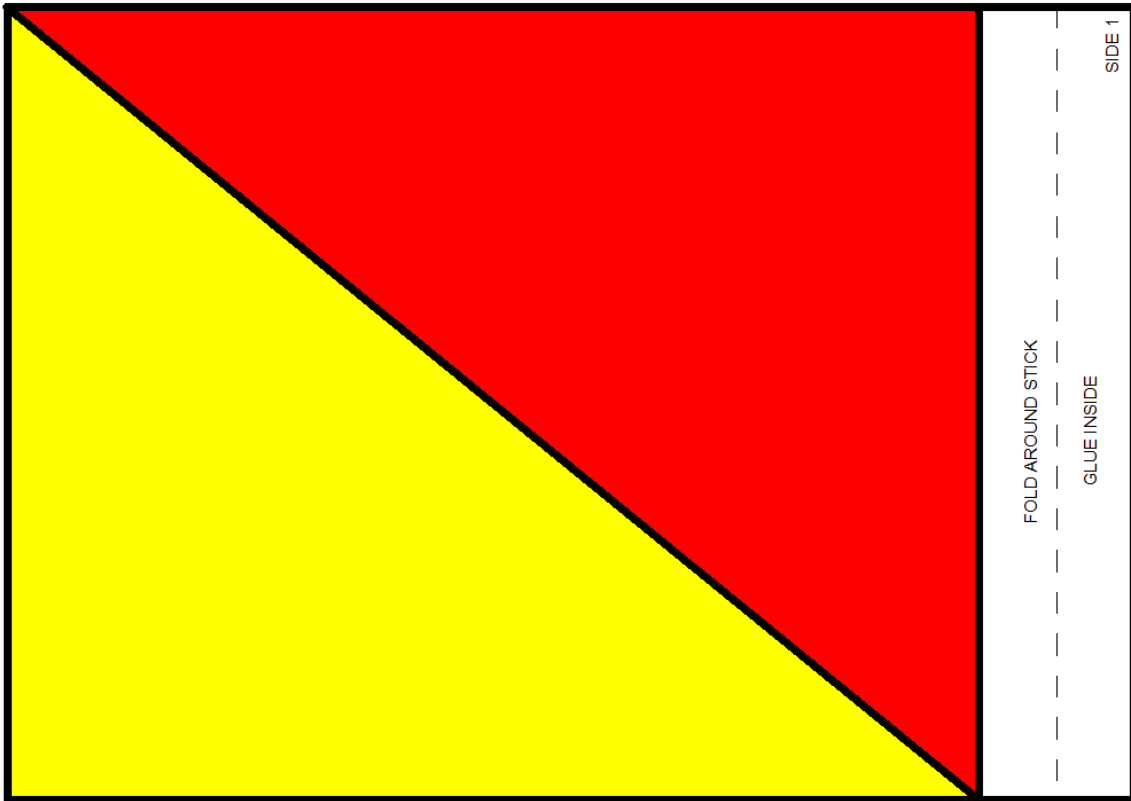
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Flag Semaphore Template Flag 1



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Flag Semaphore Template Flag 2



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Now try this

1. Semaphore words

Use the semaphore alphabet to work out what this word is:



2. Writing Semaphore

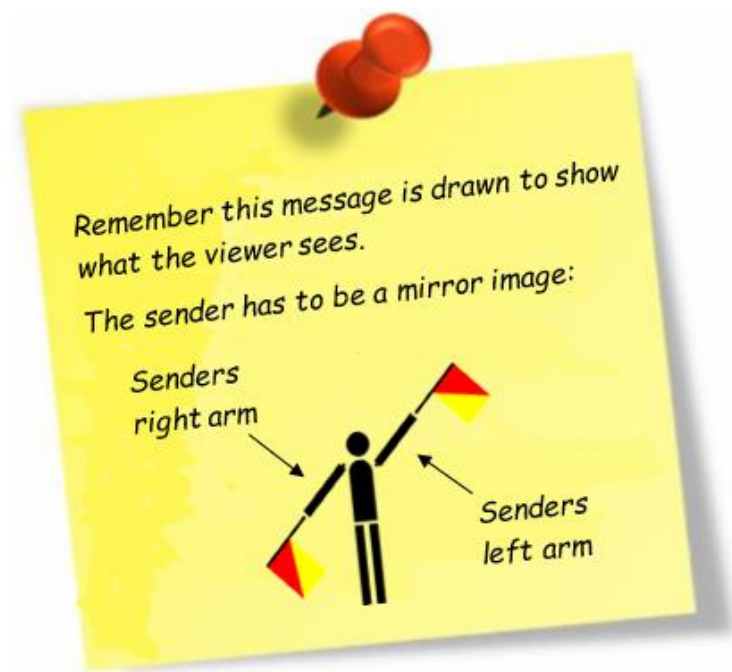
Draw the semaphore letters to spell out your name.

3. Send a semaphore message

Now write a question in semaphore. Use the flags to send the message to a friend who is far away, maybe across a garden or playground. Then get your friend then to send a reply.

Remember to include the flag position for space at the end of each word.

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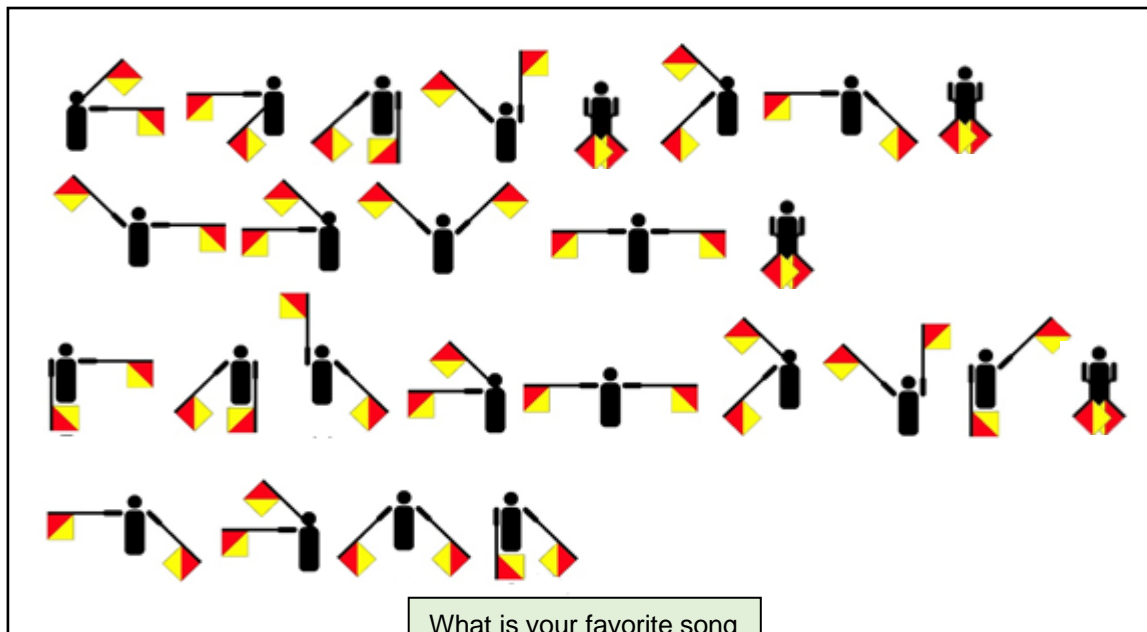
You could also...

Have a conversation with a friend via semaphore.

The following websites can be used for additional background information:

- YouTube – How to do the semaphore alphabet:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LFWQ6usrSCM>

What results are expected?



With thanks to Hawthorns Primary School, Worthing, for sharing these resources which were created as a series of activities to celebrate 150 years of the IET.