SECRET MESSAGES

How can you code a secret message?

Encoding a word or phrase is an example of representing data in a different way.

The practice of encoding (enciphering, encrypting) and decoding (deciphering, decrypting) is called cryptography.

Two simple ways of encoding are the 'backwards alphabet code' and the 'shifted alphabet code'. They are easy to code but equally easy to decode ('crack').

Knowing the 'key' helps the decoder translate the message.

Learning tasks

1. Write a simple message coded using a substitution of a number for each letter; for example, A=1 and Z=26. See how long it takes someone to 'crack the code' or 'decipher the message'. For example, using this code, hello would be 8 5 12 12 15

Α	В	С	D	E	F	G	Н	1	J	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
K	L	M	N	0	Р	Q	R	S	Т	
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
			ic	23						
U	V	W	×	Y	Z					
21	22	23	24	25	26					

2. Fill out the two columns below containing the letters of the alphabet. One column is in the correct order, but the second is offset each letter by 3. For example, A becomes D. Using this method, you can code words with each letter offset by 3. So 'dog' becomes 'grj'. Then make a code for someone to break. See if they can break it without knowing the key. If not, give them the key below to help them.

а	b	С	d	е	f	مه	h	 j	k	—	E	n	0	р	q	r	S	t	3	V	w	X	y	Z
D	E	F																						