



CAMP FIRE YARN NO. 7

SIGNALS AND COMMANDS

**Hidden Dispatches · Signal
Fires · Sound Signals
Words of Command · Whistle
and Flag Signals**

Scouts have to be clever at passing news secretly from one place to another, or in signalling to each other. Before the siege of Mafeking, which I told you about in my first yarn, I received a secret message from some unknown friend in the Transvaal, giving me news of the enemy's plans, the number of his men, horses, and guns. This news came in a very small letter rolled up in a little ball the size of a pill, then put inside a tiny hole in a rough walking stick, and plugged in there with wax. The stick was given to a native, who merely had orders to come into Mafeking and give me the stick as a present. Naturally, when the black native brought me the stick and said it was from a white man, I guessed there must be something special about it, and soon found the hidden letter.

I received a secret letter from another friend once. He had written it in the Hindustani language, but in English lettering. Anybody else studying it would have been quite puzzled about the language in which it was written, but to me it was clear as daylight.

When we sent letters out from Mafeking during the siege, we gave them to natives, who were able to creep out between the Boer outposts. Once through the line of sentries, the Boers mistook the natives for their own, and took no further notice of them. They carried the messages in this way: The letters were written on thin paper, and half a dozen or more were crumpled up tightly into a little ball, then rolled up into a piece of lead paper, such as tea is packed in. The native scout would carry a number of these little balls in his hand, or hanging round his neck loosely on strings. If he saw he was in danger of being captured by an enemy, he would notice landmarks round about him and drop all the balls on the ground, where they looked like small stones. Then he would walk boldly on until accosted by the enemy, who, if he searched him, would find nothing.

The messenger would wait around for perhaps a day or two, until the coast was clear, then come back to the spot where the landmarks told him the letters were lying. "Landmarks", you may remember, mean any objects—trees, mounds, rocks, or other details—which act as sign-posts for a Scout who notices and remembers them.



The natives of Australia often used signal fires to send messages.

SIGNALLING

Signalling is well worth knowing. It is good fun to be able to signal to your pal across the street without other people understanding what you are talking about. But I found it really valuable for communicating with a friend out in the wild—once when we were on separate mountains, and another time when we were on opposite sides of a big river, and one of us had important news to communicate.

Signal Fires

Scouts of all countries use fires for signalling purposes—smoke fires by day and flame fires by night.

Smoke Signals—Three big puffs in slow succession mean “Danger”. A succession of small puffs means “Rally, come here”. A continued column of smoke means “Halt”.

To make a smoke fire, light your fire in the ordinary way with plenty of thin dry sticks and twigs, and as soon as it is burning well, put on green leaves and grass, or damped hay, to make it smoke.

Special drums are used in Africa to signal from village to village.

Cover the fire with a damp blanket. Take off the blanket to let up a puff of smoke, then put it over the fire again. The size of the puff depends on how long you lift the blanket. For a short puff, hold it up while you count two, then replace the blanket while you count eight. For a long puff hold up the blanket for about six seconds.

Flare Signals—Long or short flares at night mean the same as the above smoke signals by day.

You light a flare fire with dry sticks and brushwood, so as to make as bright a flame as possible.

Two Scouts hold up a blanket in front of the fire, that is, between it and those to whom you are signalling, so that your friends do not see the flame till you want them to. Then you drop the blanket while you count two for a short flash, or six for a long one, hiding the fire while you count four between each flash.

Sound Signals

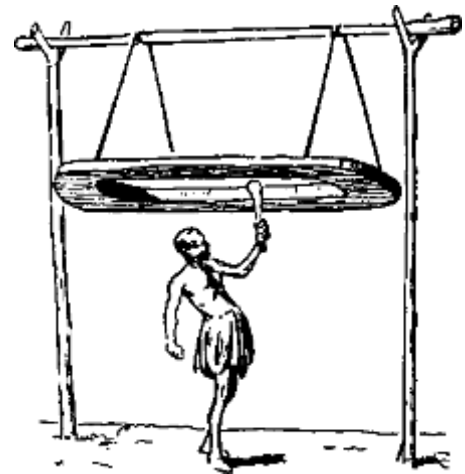
In the American Civil War, Captain Clowry, a scout officer, wanted to give warning to a large force of his own army that the enemy was going to attack unexpectedly during the night. But he could not get to his friends because there was a flooded river between them which he could not cross, and a rain storm was raging.



What would you have done if you had been Captain dowry?

A good idea struck him. He got hold of an old railway engine that was standing near him. He lit the fire and got up steam in her, and then started to blow the whistle with short and long blasts in the Morse alphabet. Soon his friends heard and understood, and answered back with a bugle. He then spelt out a message of warning to them, which they read and acted upon. And so their force of twenty thousand men was saved from surprise.

Certain tribes of natives in Africa signal news to each other by means of beats on a drum. Others use wooden war gongs.



Here is another kind of signal
“drum” used by natives of Africa.

Morse and Semaphore Signalling

Every Scout ought to learn the Morse code for signalling. It can be used to send messages by “dots” and “dashes” for some distance by flags; or by sounds, such as bugle; or by flashes (heliograph or electric light).

Semaphore signalling, which is done by waving your arms at different angles to each other, is even easier to learn. Here you form the different letters by putting your arms at different angles. Be sure to make these angles correctly. The diagram shows the signs as they appear to a “reader”. It may look complicated in the picture, but when you come to work it out you will find it is very simple.

The sender must always face the station he is sending to. He gets the attention of the receiving station by the *calling up signal* VE-VE-VE or AAAA. When the receiving station is ready, it gives the *carry on signal* K. If it is not ready, it sends Q, meaning “Wait”.

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

The MORSE code letters and numerals are made up of dots and dashes.

When the receiving station has read a word correctly, it sends E or T (for Morse), or C or A (for Semaphore). If any word is not answered, the sending station knows that the receiving station has not read it and so repeats it until it is answered.

If you make a mistake, send the *erase signal* of 8 E's, and then repeat the word.





























If you are going to send numbers, use the regular Morse numerals, but in Semaphore spell the numbers out in letters. They will be checked by being repeated back by the receiving station.

End of word is indicated by a short pause in light and sound signalling, or, with flags, by bringing them down to the front.

You finish a message by sending the *end of message signal* AR. The receiving station answers with the *message received signal* R if the message has been received correctly.

Once you know the Morse or Semaphore alphabet, all you need is practice. A Scout is not asked to send long sentences, or to send over long distances, or at a high speed. All that is expected of you is that you should know your alphabet and read and send simple sentences or words really well. Do your best, so that when it comes to sending across a big field, or from hill to hill, your message will be easy to read.

SIGNAL	MEANING AND USE
VE, VE, VE, or AAAA	Calling up signal.
K	Carry on (answer to VE if ready to receive message).
Q	Wait (answer to VE if not ready to receive message).
T or E (Morse) C or A (Semaphore)	General answer (used to answer all signals unless otherwise stated).
8 dots (morse only)	Erase (to erase anything sent incorrectly).
AR	End of message signal
R	Message received correctly (answer to AR)

A  1	H  8	O 	V 
B  2	I  9	P 	W 
C  3	J 	Q 	X 
D  4	K  0	R 	Y 
E  5	L 	S 	Z 
F  6	M 	T 	NUMERALS TO FOLLOW 
G  7	N 	U 	LETTERS TO FOLLOW (J) 

Semaphore letters are made by holding two flags at different angles.
The letters appear this way as you face the sender

If you want to write a dispatch that will puzzle most people to read, use the Morse or Semaphore letters in place of the ordinary alphabet. It will be quite readable to any of your friends who understand signalling.

COMMANDS AND SIGNALS

A Patrol Leader often has a whistle, and a lanyard or cord for keeping it. The following commands and signals should be at your fingers' ends, so that you can use them in your Patrol:

Words of Command

“Fall in” (in line).

“Alert” or “Attention” (stand up smartly).

“Easy” or “At ease” (stand at ease).

“Sit easy” or “Sit at ease” (sit or lie down without leaving the ranks).

“Dismiss” (break off).

“Right turn” (or left turn); (each Scout turns accordingly).

“Patrol right turn” (or left turn); (each Patrol with its Scouts in line wheels to that hand).

“Quick march” (walk smartly, stepping off on the left foot).

“Double” or “On the double” (run at smart pace, arms hanging loose).

“Scout Pace” (walk so many paces and jog so many paces alternately—about 50 of each).

Whistle Signals

When a Scoutmaster wants to call the Troop together he whistles “The Scout’s Call”, or uses a special Troop call.

Patrol Leaders thereupon call together their Patrols by giving their Patrol call. Then they take their Patrol “on the double” to the Scoutmaster.

Here are some whistle signals for Scout field games:

1. One long blast means “Silence”, “Alert”, “Look out for my next signal”.
2. A succession of long, slow blasts means “Go out”, “Get farther away”, or “Advance”, “Extend”, “Scatter”.
3. A succession of short, sharp blasts means “Rally”, “Close in”, “Come together”, “Fall in”.
4. A succession of short and long blasts alternately means “Alarm”, “Look out”, “Be ready”, “Man your alarm posts”.
5. Three short blasts followed by one long one from Scoutmaster calls up the Patrol Leaders—i.e., “Leaders come here!”

Any signal must be instantly obeyed at the double as fast as you can run—no matter what other job you may be doing at the time.

Hand Signals

Hand Signals—which can also be made by Patrol Leaders with their Patrol flags when necessary:

Hand waved several times across the face from side to side, or flag waved horizontally from side to side opposite the face means “No”, “Never mind”, “As you were”

Hand or flag held high, and waved very slowly from side to side, at full extent of arm means “Extend”, “Go farther out”, “Scatter”.

Hand or flag held high, and waved quickly from side to side at full extent of arm means “Close in”, “Rally”, “Come here”.

Hand or flag pointing in any direction, means “Go in that direction”

Clenched hand or flag jumped rapidly up and down several times, means “Run”.

Hand or flag held straight up over head, means “Stop”, “Halt”.

When a leader is shouting an order or message to a Scout who is some way off, the Scout, if he hears what is being said, should hold up his hand level with his head all the time. If he cannot hear, he should stand still, making no sign. The leader will then repeat louder, or beckon to the Scout to come in nearer.

Make up your own signals for other commands to your Patrol.

PATROL PRACTICES IN SIGNALLING

Practice laying, lighting and use of signal fires of smoke or flame.

Practice whistle and drill signals.

Have a competition in the Patrol in concealing dispatches on the person: Give each Scout a small piece of paper and allow him to hide it on himself. Pair Scouts off and let each search the other. The one whose paper takes longest to find is winner.

Each Patrol invents its own secret code. The other Patrols try to decipher it.

Patrols compete in finding most ingenious way of sending a Morse message without use of special apparatus.

All signalling practices should be as real as possible. From the beginning separate letters can be sent and read across as wide a space as may be available, preferably out-of-doors.



Here is an English sentence you can use for practice in signalling:
“The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog”. It contains all the letters of the alphabet.

GAME IN MESSAGE CARRYING

Dispatch Running

A Scout is chosen to carry a dispatch to a “besieged” place—which may be a real village, farm or house, or someone stationed at an appointed spot. The dispatch-runner must wear a coloured rag, at least two feet long, pinned to his shoulder, and with this in its proper place he must reach his goal.

The enemy besieging the place must prevent him reaching it, but cannot, of course, go within the lines of the supposed defenders, that is, within 300 yards of the besieged place—boundaries for this should be decided upon beforehand. Anyone found within that limit by the umpire will be ruled out as shot by the defenders.

To catch the dispatch-runner the enemy must take the rag from his shoulder. They know he starts from a certain direction at a certain time—the spot should be a mile or so from the besieged town—and they may take *any* steps to capture him they like, except that they may not actually witness his departure from the starting-place.

The game may be played in a town with two houses chosen as starting-place and besieged town respectively, and the dispatch-runner can adopt any disguise (except that of a woman), as long as he wears the rag pinned to his shoulder.



The people of old had their own signals. Here's one that has meant “Attention” through all ages.