



Vol. 1, No. 10

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### Scouting's Signs and Signals

Whether you're getting help in an emergency or just sharing ideas with friends, Scouting helps you learn good ways to communicate clearly. And it's not just about speaking well.

For example, can you decode this message?

... -.-. --- ..- - .. -.-. / .. ... / ---. .-. . . -

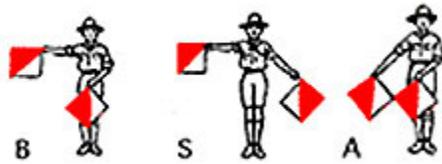
If you said "Scouting is great" then you know Morse code.

How about these hand motions?

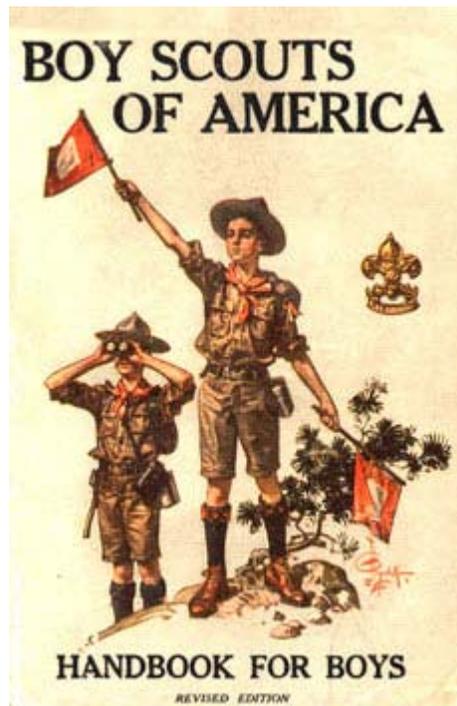


Those are *gesture signals* that mean "Faster," "Lie Down" and "Come Back."

Do you recognize this signaling system?

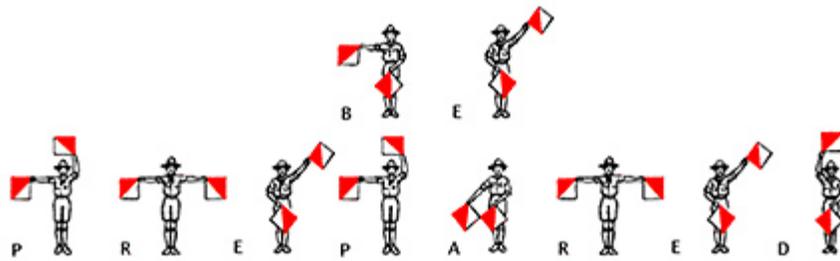


It's called semaphore, a way of communicating that was once so important to Scouting it was featured on the cover of the 1914 Handbook.



Semaphore came to Scouting from its use by naval forces signaling ship to ship. By holding flags in different positions, a Scout could send semaphore messages as far as the flags could be seen.

The message "Be Prepared" would appear this way as a Scout moved his semaphore flags:



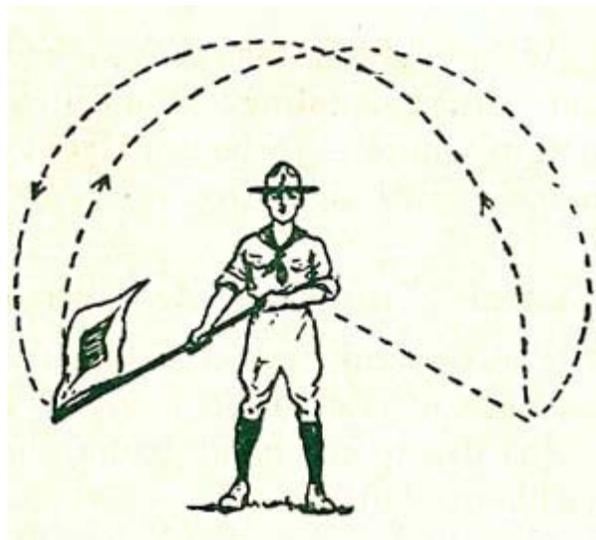
## Morse Code

Telegraph lines stretching across the continent in the 1800s provided America with its first long-distance instant messaging service. Combinations of short and long sounds--the *dots* and *dashes* of Morse code--allowed one telegraph operator to send information to another even though there could be hundreds or thousands of miles between them.

### International Morse Code - Letters

A	● —	J	● — — —	S	● ● ●
B	— ● ● ●	K	— ● —	T	—
C	— ● — ●	L	● — ● ●	U	● ● —
D	— ● ●	M	— —	V	● ● ● —
E	●	N	— ●	W	● — —
F	● ● — ●	O	— — —	X	— ● ● —
G	— — ●	P	● — — ●	Y	— ● — —
H	● ● ● ●	Q	— — ● —	Z	— — ● ●
I	● ●	R	● — ●		

Morse Code can also be sent with short and long blinks of a flashlight or spotlight, and by swinging a flag to the left for a dot and right for a dash.



A Scout Sending Morse Code

Learning Morse code or semaphore used to be a requirement to become a First Class Scout. Today, Morse code is still an optional requirement for the Radio merit badge.



Radio Merit Badge

### **Gesture Signals**

Early Scouts knew hand signals for sending messages short distances to members of their patrol and troop. "Gesture Signals" allowed them to move quickly and to organize searches during emergencies.

## Gesture Signals

Something is lost and a Scout is sent back for it. He picks up a handful of dust or other material and throws it in the air. This means "I have found it."



Found More or Faster Lie down or Dismount Come Back Halt



What do you see? I see Nothing to fear Advance

The best-known hand signal is still in use today. When a leader raises the Scout sign, everyone in the troop knows it's time to be quiet and pay attention. The same is true of pack and den members seeing the Cub Scout sign go up.



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## Spreading the Word

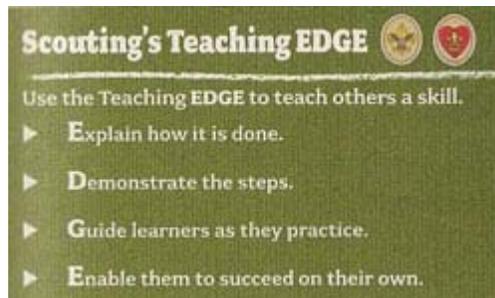
Morse code, semaphore, and gesture signals were once used to get messages through. Methods are much different today, but communicating clearly is as important as ever.

Venturers preparing for challenging adventures need solid communication skills as they organize their treks. Clear communication in the backcountry helps insure the safety and success of every

expedition.



Boy Scouts use the Teaching EDGE to share skills with others. That stands for *Explain, Demonstrate, Guide, and Enable*.



Cub Scouts earning the Communicating Belt Loop and Pin get to read, speak, write, and use a sign language.

For Webelos Scouts, the Communicator Activities Badge offers more options for boys to practice sharing ideas with others.

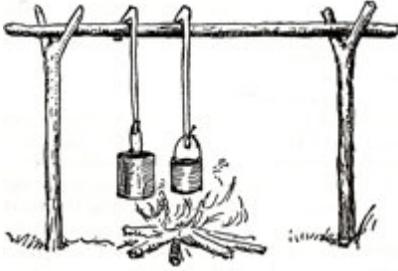
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## Write On!

Explorers keep journals. They make notes and add drawings and photographs so that they can

remember the highlights of their travels and share them with others.

The founders of Scouting were excellent authors and artists, too. Robert Baden-Powell, Ernest Thompson Seton, and Daniel Carter Beard used their drawings to illustrate their words.



Sketch by Ernest Thompson Seton



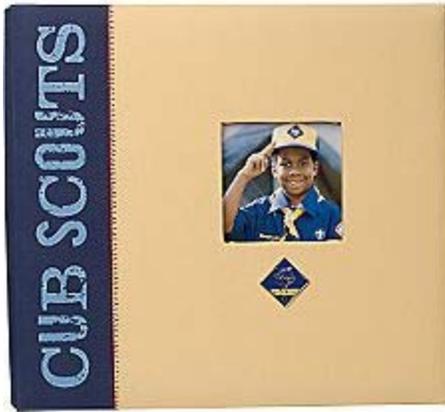
Sketch by Robert Baden-Powell



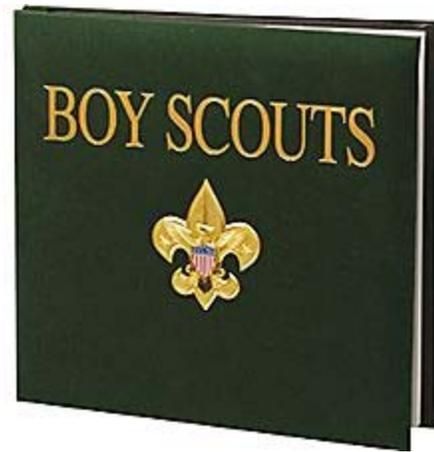
Sketch by Daniel Carter Beard

A scrapbook you make yourself can be a terrific journal of your own great adventures. It's a good way to practice communications skills, too. Fill the pages with notes, sketches, photographs, and stickers that show what is happening along your Scouting trail.

At [www.scoutstuff.org](http://www.scoutstuff.org) you'll find plenty of scrapbook materials to get started.



Cub Scouts Photo Frame Scrapbook



Boy Scouts Scrapbook

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## The Message of Scouting

Cell phones, emails, and other technologies join with talking face-to-face as today's favored means of communication. Something that hasn't changed through the years is that the message of Scouting has the same strong values as in the age of semaphore and Morse code.

The Scout Oath and Law, the Law of the Pack, and the Venturing Code clearly communicate the pathway to a life of service, virtue, and achievement. Do all you can to weave the value of Scouting into the messages you are sending to the world.

