

The Phonetic Alphabet

This resource will help you with the following stages;

Stage 3 - I know the phonetic alphabet.

Stage 8 - I know how and when to use an airband radio.

The 'Phonetic Alphabet' is the name given to the code words assigned to each letter of the English language and used extensively in aviation radio communications. If a pilot or air traffic controller needs to say a letter over the radio, they use these code words instead.

The reason the code words are used is because a lot of letters sounds similar when heard over the radio such as B, D, E, P etc, especially if the radio quality is poor. The code words also help overcome the pronunciation of letters with different accents (language barriers). This means that everyone using the code words should be able to pronounce and understand them easily regardless of language barriers or poor quality communications.

The code words used in the phonetic alphabet weren't just chosen at random. They are the result of hundreds of different versions and many thousands of tests with 31 major languages to make sure that everyone could pronounce and understand them no matter what language they spoke.

As well as letters, some numbers have special pronunciation in the phonetic alphabet to avoid confusion. For example, nine is pronounced niner to avoid confusion with the German word 'nein' meaning 'No'.

The phonetic alphabet we use now was accepted by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO, part of the UN) in 1956 and was made the worldwide standard. It was also adopted by all militaries and is widely used other industries such as medicine or retail when relaying messages that contain letters over the telephone.



CHARACTER	MORSE CODE	TELEPHONY	PHONIC (PRONUNCIATION)
A	• —	Alfa	(AL-FAH)
B	— •••	Bravo	(BRAH-VOH)
C	— • — •	Charlie	(CHAR-LEE) or (SHAR-LEE)
D	— ••	Delta	(DELL-TAH)
E	•	Echo	(ECK-OH)
F	•• — •	Foxtrot	(FOKS-TROT)
G	— — •	Golf	(GOLF)
H	••••	Hotel	(HOH-TEL)
I	••	India	(IN-DEE-AH)
J	• — — —	Juliett	(JEW-LEE-ETT)
K	— • —	Kilo	(KEY-LOH)
L	• — ••	Lima	(LEE-MAH)
M	— —	Mike	(MIKE)
N	— •	November	(NO-VEM-BER)
O	— — —	Oscar	(OSS-CAH)
P	• — — •	Papa	(PAH-PAH)
Q	— — • —	Quebec	(KEH-BECK)
R	• — •	Romeo	(ROW-ME-OH)
S	•••	Sierra	(SEE-AIR-RAH)
T	—	Tango	(TANG-GO)
U	•• —	Uniform	(YOU-NEE-FORM) or (OO-NEE-FORM)
V	••• —	Victor	(VIK-TAH)
W	• — —	Whiskey	(WISS-KEY)
X	— •• —	Xray	(ECKS-RAY)
Y	— • — —	Yankee	(YANG-KEY)
Z	— — ••	Zulu	(ZOO-LOO)
1	• — — — —	One	(WUN)
2	•• — — —	Two	(TOO)
3	••• — —	Three	(TREE)
4	•••• —	Four	(FOW-ER)
5	•••••	Five	(FIFE)
6	— ••••	Six	(SIX)
7	— — •••	Seven	(SEV-EN)
8	— — — ••	Eight	(AIT)
9	— — — — •	Nine	(NIN-ER)
0	— — — — —	Zero	(ZEE-RO)

Source: FAA Phonetic and Morse Chart2.svg on wikimedia.org