


Flaghoist Spelling Alphabets

A 
Alpha/Alfa

B 
Bravo

C 
Charlie

D 
Delta

E 
Echo

F 
Foxtrot

G 
Golf

H 
Hotel

I 
India

J 
Juliett

K 
Kilo

L 
Lima

M 
Mike

N 
November

O 
Oscar

P 
Papa

Q 
Quebec

R 
Romeo

S 
Sierra

T 
Tango

U 
Uniform

V 
Victor

W 
Whiskey

X 
X-ray

Y 
Yankie

Z 
Zulu

Flaghoist spelling alphabets use individual flags to represent letters, numbers or specific messages for visual communication between ships.

Originating in the seventeenth century, these systems became formalised by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, notably through British naval codes and the Commercial Code of Signals in 1855. Today, the International Code of Signals continues this tradition as a global standard for maritime communication.

Flags allowed ships to coordinate operations, request assistance and identify themselves when verbal or radio communication was impossible. In naval battles and merchant trade, flag signalling was vital for fast, clear and standardised communication across nations. Even with modern technology, flaghoist systems remain in use as ceremonial or emergency backups.

How the System Worked

Ships hoisted flags in sequence on masts to spell words or convey specific codes, using distinctive colours and shapes for visibility. Substitute flags represented repeated letters to simplify displays. Whether spelling full words such as HELP or raising a single flag for urgent signals, flaghoist alphabets offered a reliable way to maintain communication across the open sea.