

# MORSE CODE

Morse, Samuel Finley Breese (1791-1872) is famed as the creator of Morse code and was also telegraph's greatest promoter.



Morse was a well-off, well-connected artist, who had also studied chemistry and philosophy at Yale University before becoming intrigued by the telegraph. Telegraphy still needed complex wiring and he wanted a way to send messages using only one wire instead of five.

He developed a 'language' that translated letters of the alphabet and numerals into individual code 'symbols' that could travel down the same wire one after the other and be printed out at the receiving end; these formed the basis of Morse Code. In 1844, he sent his first public message, which read: 'What hath God wrought!' The subsequent development of a sounder device meant that his dots and dashes could be 'read' by ear as well as visually on paper.

Morse was extremely sociable, married twice and had many children. His invention made him popular and wealthy and he gave generously to charity, especially poor artists.

Vail, Alfred (1807-1859) is the true inventor of Morse code, as we know it today.



In 1838 he demonstrated a telegraph code he devised using dots and dashes as letters. A predecessor to Samuel Morse's code, Vail transmitted the

message "a patient waiter is no loser."

Vail was the son of wealthy industrialist, who had planned to join the Presbyterian Church on graduating from New York University, until illness forced him to change plans and invest his future in the telegraph instead. He bought a stake in Samuel Morse's telegraph, and agreed to build the system's hardware and secure the American and foreign patents.

The system had some problems printing out messages clearly, so Vail devised improvements. They didn't solve everything, and he was forced to create a completely new printing mechanism - and a new code to make it work.

This was the first time 'Morse' code was created using dashes and dots, which actually wasn't much like Morse's original code at all. So in fact the true inventor of Morse Code was Vail, but Morse - being the better-known partner and personality - kept the glory himself!

### Morse Code Table:

|   |        |   |       |   |         |    |         |
|---|--------|---|-------|---|---------|----|---------|
| A | .-     | N | -. .  | 1 | .----   | .  | .-.-.-  |
| B | -... . | O | ----  | 2 | ..----  | ,  | --.-.-  |
| C | -.-- . | P | .-- . | 3 | ...--   | ?  | ..--..  |
| D | -.. .  | Q | --.-  | 4 | ....-   | (  | -.-- .  |
| E | .      | R | .- .  | 5 | .....   | )  | -.-.-   |
| F | ..-. . | S | ... . | 6 | -....   | -  | -....-  |
| G | --. .  | T | -     | 7 | --... . | "  | .-.-.-  |
| H | .... . | U | ..-   | 8 | ---..   | _  | .--.-   |
| I | ..     | V | ...-  | 9 | ----.   | !  | .----.  |
| J | .----  | W | .-    | 0 | -----   | :  | --... . |
| K | -.-    | X | -.--  | / | -.-.-   | ;  | -.-.-   |
| L | .-.. . | Y | -.--  | + | .-.-.   | \$ | ...--.- |
| M | --     | Z | --..  | = | -...-   |    |         |

[Excerpt from "The telegraphic age dawns" by Connected Earth]