

# Speaking in Colors



While at sea in 1812, ships like *USS Constitution* used signal flags to communicate with one another. Every nation had its own signal flags. For every day of the year, the US Navy specified a different combination of flags to identify a ship as American.

When a captain spotted another ship on the horizon, he raised the US Navy's code signal of the day to find out if the distant ship was a friend or an enemy. If the ship did not respond, or did not raise the proper code, the captain knew it was not an American ship.

Today, there is an international set of flags that can be used at sea or in harbor to help ships communicate.



## Make your own coded message!



1

Choose a word or phrase you would like to spell, such as your name or a nautical word like "anchor," "ship," or even "*USS Constitution*".

2

Print and color the provided decoding chart. Use this chart to draw the signal flags that make up your word.

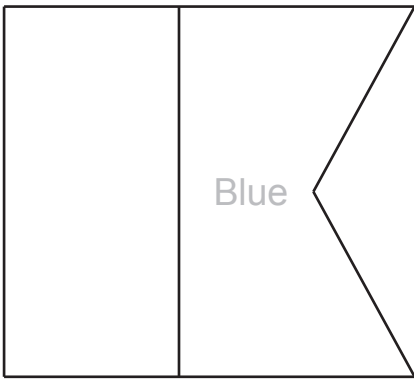
3

Challenge your friends and family to decode your message!

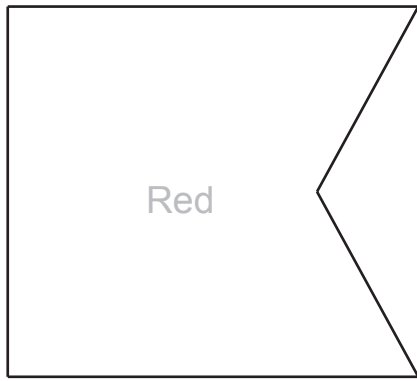
## Think about it...

Sailors on board *USS Constitution* worked twenty hours a day, often straight through the night (a time when it was impossible to see flags in the distance). How do you think men on different ships were able to communicate with each other when it was dark?

A



B



C



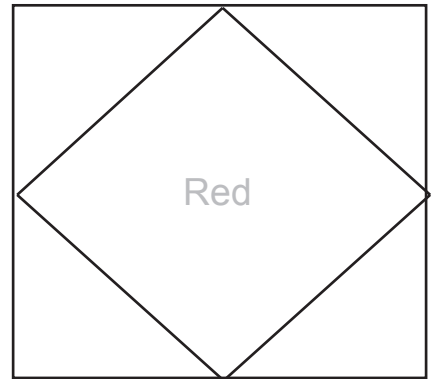
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E



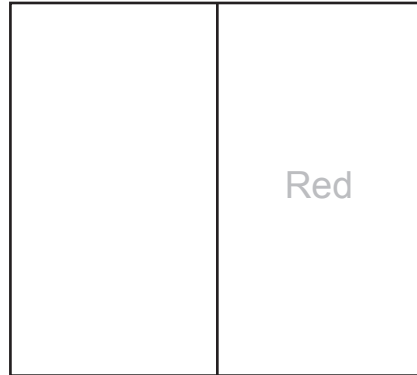
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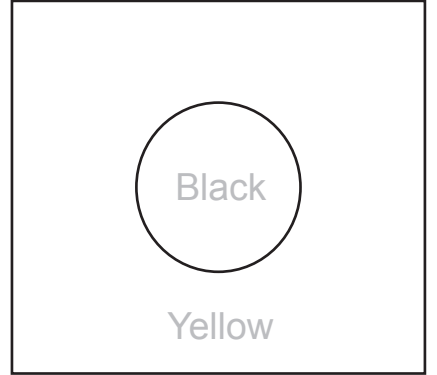
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H



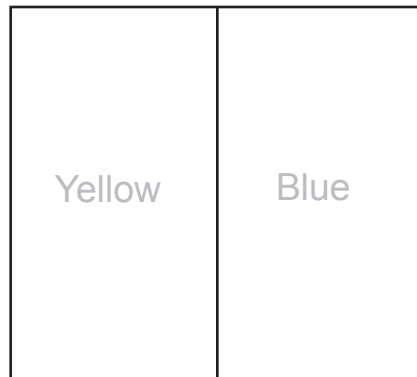
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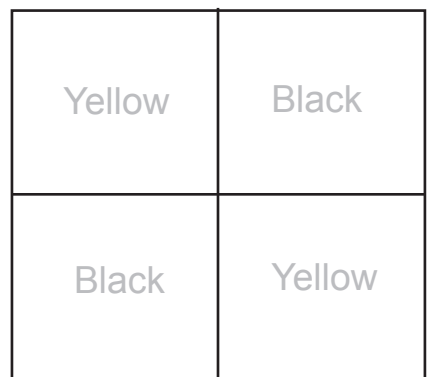
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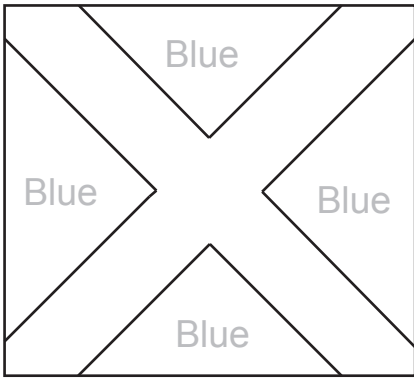
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L



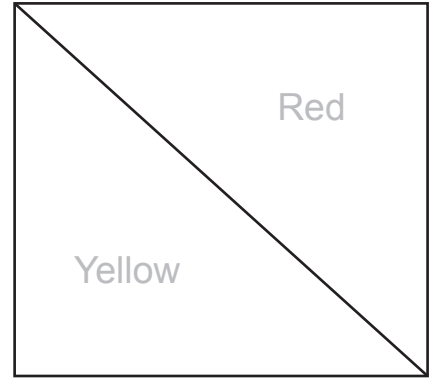
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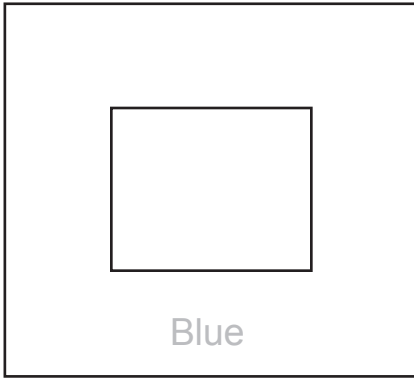
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O



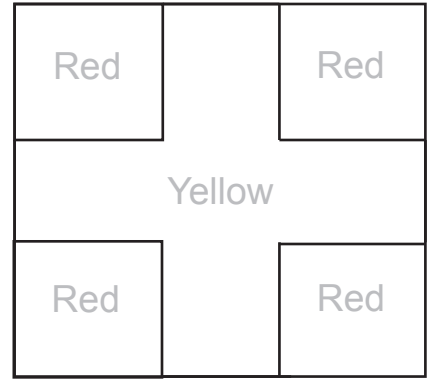
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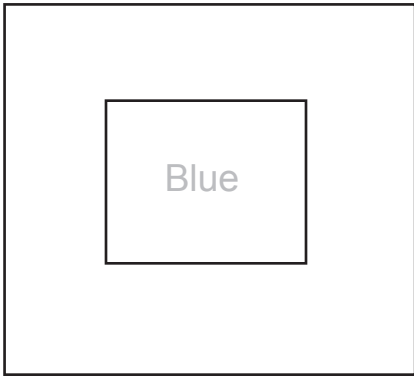
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R



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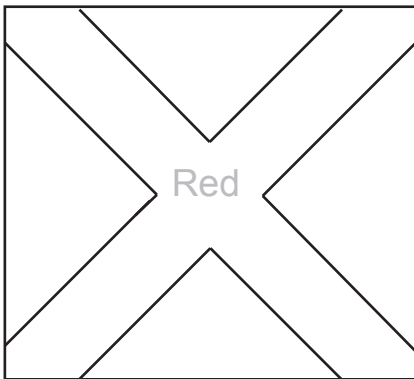
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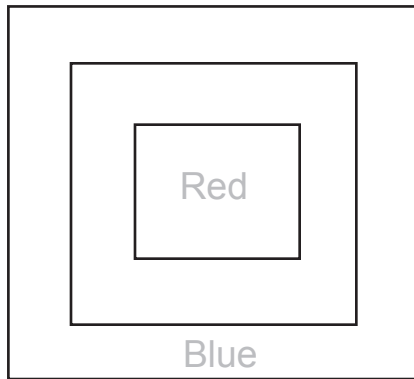
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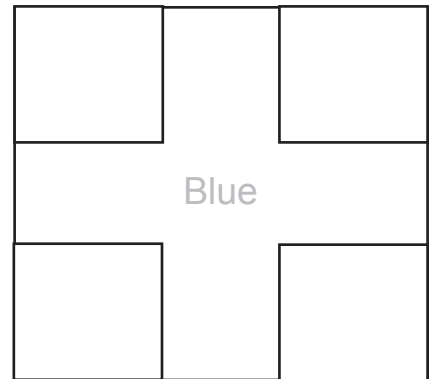
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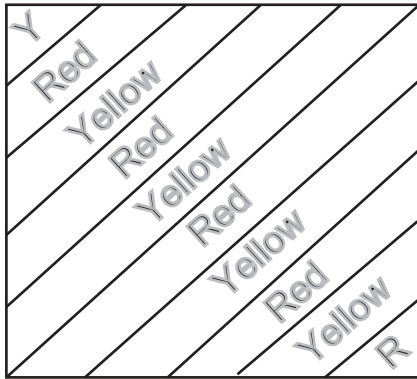
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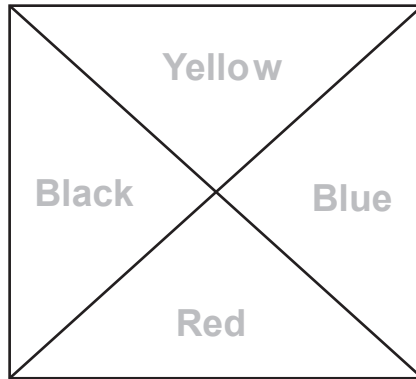
X



Y



Z



“Think About It” Answer: To communicate with other ships after sunset, sailors hung lanterns on board in different configurations.