

Sailing flags

The purpose of the International Code of Signals (ICS) is to provide ways and means of communicating in situations related to safety of navigation and people, especially when language difficulties arise.

This is done by establishing a standardized alphabet (the letters A to Z.)

The flags can be used as signals, in different ways:

- each flag spells an alphabetic message, letter by letter.
- individual flags have specific and standard meanings; for example, diving support vessels raise the “A flag” indicating their inability to move from their current location because they have a diver underwater and (more importantly) to warn other vessels to keep clear to avoid chopping up the diver(s) with their propellers.
- in yacht racing and dinghy racing, flags have other meanings; for example, the P flag is used as the “preparatory” flag to indicate that the race is about to start.

Use the materials you have been given to make your own flag. Write its letter, phonetic name and its ICS meaning. Or, using the bunting template, make some bunting of sailing flags.

