

American Academy

The Substitution Cipher

The substitution cipher is one of the oldest known secret codes. Julius Caesar, Rome's first emperor, made this cipher famous.

Try to decipher this message:

QMKC RFGLE DGQFW GQ EMGLE ML

Here's a chart that shows how the cipher works:

C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z

The trick of it: Basically, this cipher is just a rearrangement of the alphabet. Understanding the code depends on knowing how many places the alphabet "slides" to the right. According to the chart above, the letter A becomes C, B becomes D, C becomes E, and so on. So, the "slide value" for this cipher is 2. As long as your spy pals know what the slide value is, they can interpret your encrypted messages. You can change the slide value to 3, 4, or whatever you want to keep the enemy guessing.

