

Critical Thinking: Secret Code

Secret codes have been around for centuries. In Roman times, Julius Caesar (one of the leaders in that time) used a simple code like you will make here. As time went on, codes became more and more complicated. Codes are still used by the military, spies, and even for things on the internet to protect your information.

A simple code takes each letter of the alphabet and replaces it with another letter, number, shape, or picture. This kind of code is actually called a cipher. The list that tells you both sides of the code is called the key. Anyone with the key should be able to read a secret message that's written in your code.

For example, if the beginning of the alphabet in a code was:

A = 4

B = m

C = ○

D = □

E = 9

Then the word "bead" in the code would be "m94□"

You take each letter in the word and replace it with the letter, number, or shape from the key.

Work with your partner to make a key for your own code. Write out the alphabet, and make a new letter, number, or shape (you could even use emoji!) for each letter. Take turns writing secret messages to each other and seeing if you can decode them using your key.