

Standard phrases

A brief overview how a call is structured and a collection of commonly used words and phrases.

- Structure of a radio call
- Commonly used phrases
- NATO Phonetic alphabet

Structure of a radio call

A standard radio call usually consists of the following:

- Who do you want to talk to? (Recipient's callsign)
- Who is calling? (Your callsign)
- Brief message in standardized phrasing (What you want)

Example: Magic, Phobator 2-1, request picture.

Keep the message as **short** and **clear** as possible. As long as you talk on the radio, no one else can (does not really apply to MIDS, but in order to not overlap with someone else's call you should still keep it short).

And remember: If you don't understand all phrase or a call in general, **always ask**. If necessary, plain language is also totally acceptable in order to ensure a safe flight environment.

Procedures and certain phrasing **may vary** depending on where you are. Navy, Air Force, Civilian Airports and even different regions may use different wording or structure in their radio calls. Just make sure to inform yourself about local variations.

Commonly used phrases

This is a collection of standard phrases that are used by all NATO member states to ensure efficient communication.

Procedure Words (Prowords):

- **Affirmative:** Yes/Permission granted/Correct
- **Negative:** No/Permission not granted/Incorrect
- **Roger:** Message received and understood
- **Wilco:** Will comply, will execute the given task
- **Stand by:** Wait for further information or instructions
- **Disregard:** Ignore the (last) transmission because of wrong information
- **Copy:** Message was received; *When used with "**Say when ready to copy**"/"**Stand by to copy**" this means be prepared to note the following message down*

NATO Phonetic alphabet

Some letters may sound over a radio transmission very similar. To reduce the risk of a misunderstanding, all letters aren't spelled individually, but with a easy to differentiate, pre-determined word.



The ability to communicate and make yourself understood can make a difference in life-threatening situations – imagine for example that you are trying to alert a search and rescue helicopter of the position of a downed pilot. To ensure clear communication, NATO uses a number of well-known formats which are in general use. NATO standardization agreements enable forces from many nations to communicate in a way that is understood by all.

Some standards can be found in everyday civilian and military life. "Bravo Zulu", typically signalled with naval flags on ships at sea and meaning "well done", is also commonly used in written communication by the military, for example by replying "BZ" to an email.

Phonetic alphabet

The NATO alphabet became effective in 1956 and, a few years later, turned into the established universal phonetic alphabet for all military, civilian and amateur radio communications.

International Morse Code

Morse code transmits text through on-off tones, light-flashes or clicks. It was widely used in the 1890s for early radio communication, before it was possible to transmit voice.

Flaghoist communication

Ships use flags as signals to send out messages to each other. The use of flags, known as flaghoist communication, is a fast and accurate way to send information in daylight.



Semaphore

Semaphore is a system in which a person sends information at a distance using hand-held flags – depending on the position of the flags, the message will vary. The signaller holds the flag in different positions that represent letters or numbers.

Panel signalling

Panels are visual signals for sending simple messages to an aircraft. Using a limited code, ground forces can send messages to pilots, for example to request medical supplies.



More information on NATO's codes, signals and standards can be found on the NATO Standardization Office (NSO) website: <http://nso.nato.int/nso/> – More on the history of the NATO phonetic alphabet: <http://www.nato.int/dict/astaff/>

This poster can be downloaded at <http://www.nato.int/alphabeta/>

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Phonetic transcription is based on English pronunciation.

This also applies to numbers in a similar fashion:

0: "ZEE-RO" 1: "WUN" 2: "TOO" 3: "TREE" 4: "FOW-ER" 5: "FIFE" 6: "SIX" 7: "SEV-EN" 8: "AIT" 9: "NIN-ER"

Link to the official [NATO Page](http://www.nato.int/alphabeta/)