

# A Simple Way to Send a Secret Message

## JJ Luna

From time to time, someone will ask me why I do not use encryption on my website or in my emails. Here are some of the reasons:

- I hate learning curves.
- I like to keep things simple.
- Using encryption might raise a red flag.
- I fear that some encryption systems may have back doors.

Nevertheless, the following tips are useful when I need to send a secret message to someone via a note, a text, or an email. This requires a code or cipher. To most folks, the words code and cipher are interchangeable. There is, however, a significant difference. A code replaces whole words with other words or symbols, whereas ciphers replace individual letters with other letters or symbols. Let's start with ciphers.

### Caesar Cipher

I first used the Caesar Cipher in 1937, when I was in the fourth grade. After I had mailed in 8 cereal box tops, I received my "secret decoder ring." Suddenly, I was able to send secret messages to my cousin during classes in school. Even if the teacher intercepted a note, it would be useless to him or her. The ring had a fixed alphabet next to a ring with an alphabet that turned. The code was simplicity itself, as this illustration shows:

```
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  
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 A
```

To write in cipher, you simply move each letter one (or more) spaces ahead. If one space ahead, IRS will become KTU. If moved two spaces ahead, "I love Susie" becomes "KNQXGUWUKG."

Secure? It was secure enough back in the days of Julius Caesar. He is said to have used this cipher in his private correspondence, as well as with his army officers. For that reason, this system is known today as the Caesar Cipher. One reference on the internet says that the code was not broken for 800 years. I can find no proof of that, but in any event, it was not broken for centuries despite its simplicity. (Most of Caesar's enemies were probably illiterate anyway. Others must have assumed that the messages were written in an unknown foreign language.)

If you would like to send a [cipher ring](#) as a gift to a young child, this is what they look like:



## Pigpen Cipher

A step up from the Caesar cipher is the Pigpen cipher. Using the [Pigpen cipher ring](#) below, "XYZ" turns into three strange symbols. As with the Caesar Cipher, many different settings can be set, merely by moving one of the two rings.



## Simple Codes

To repeat: A code replaces whole words with other words or symbols while ciphers replace individual letters with other letters or symbols. Ciphers are used for security, but not all codes are used for that purpose. For example, "Morse code" was never meant to be used for sending secrets.

The same is true for truckers, who use the 10 code. Samples:

<b>10-4</b>	Ok, Message Received
<b>10-12</b>	Visitors Present
<b>10-21</b>	Call by Telephone
<b>10-32</b>	I will give you a radio check
<b>10-100</b>	Need to go to Bathroom

For purposes of security, the easiest use of a code is to merely replace one word with another. This simple substitution was often used between spies during WW II. In some cases, they are still in use today. For example, my daughter who lives in Portugal, communicates with her son—my grandson—using a code because he lives and works in a nation where evangelizing is

against the law (as was the case when we moved to Spain's Canary Islands in 1959). Here's an example (with fictitious details, of course).

Message from my grandson to my daughter: "I just moved to an area near the northeast corner of Paraguay. Four friends were with me at the library yesterday."

My daughter reads this as, "I just moved to an area near the northeast corner of Iran. About forty friends were with me at a meeting yesterday."

Both parties, of course, agree beforehand on the code words. In my daughter's case, her son comes home every year on vacation, at which time new words are added. Last I heard, they have 38 code words in use.

### **Practical Applications That You Can Use Today:**

Home Address:

The most important single lesson in my book HOW TO BE INVISIBLE is to never associate your name with your home address. What to do, then, if you must send your address to someone who is coming to meet you? They will want to plug your address into a phone or a navigation unit using GPS. You could call them and give them the address, but then they will plug it into their GPS. Later, they might pass it on to others.

Personally, I just send the address of someone near by. My explanation is that my house does not show up on a GPS yet, but call me when you are close—I will meet you there. (In effect, you are using your neighbors address as a type of code for your own address.)

Date of Birth or Social Security Number:

If required, for some reason, to send your social security number, send the first six digits only. Explain that the other four will come later, from a different email address, and will refer to something else. Tell them to just ignore everything except the final four digits. (Here, you are using your second email like a code to conceal the remaining information.)

Code Words Between You and a Friend:

Need to communicate something secret or private? Use the same system my daughter uses, with each of you having a list of the code words. This substitution code may be useful when writing about guns, drugs, mistresses, or whatever.

### **Request:**

If you find this useful, or if you have a question, let me know.

Jack Luna  
<http://JLuna.com>