

CODEBUSTERS B
Core Knowledge Event
Inquiry Committee Trial Event

1. **DESCRIPTION:** Teams will cryptanalyze and decode encrypted messages using cryptanalysis techniques for historical and modern advance ciphers.

TEAMS OF UP TO: 3

EVENT TIME: 50 MINUTES

2. **EVENT PARAMETERS:**

- a. Teams must bring writing utensils and may bring up to three (3) non-graphing, nonprogrammable, non-scientific 4-function or 5-function stand-alone calculators.
- b. No resource materials, except those provided by the Event Supervisor, may be used.
- c. The Event Supervisor will provide scratch paper for each team to use.

3. **THE COMPETITION:**

- a. This event consists of participants using cryptanalysis techniques and advanced ciphers to decrypt and encrypt messages on a written exam.
- b. All teams will begin the event simultaneously at the indication of the Event Supervisor.
- c. Teams must not open the exam packet nor write anything prior to the “start” signal, nor may they write anything after the “stop” signal.
- d. Participants are allowed to separate the pages of the test to be free to answer the questions in any order, working individually or in groups, attempting whichever of the questions seem right for them.
- e. The code types that may be used on the exam at Invitational and Regional competitions are as follows:
 - i. the Atbash Cipher (in English, not Hebrew)
 - ii. the Caesar Cipher, also called a shift cipher.
 - iii. Mono-alphabetic substitution using K1, K2, or random alphabets as defined by the American Cryptogram Association (ACA)
 - (1) Aristocrats with a hint - messages with spaces included, and with a hint
 - (2) Aristocrats - messages with spaces included, but without a hint
 - (3) Aristocrats - messages with spaces and hints, but including spelling/grammar errors
 - (4) Aristocrats - messages with spaces and including spelling/grammar errors but no hints
 - (5) Patristocrats with a hint - messages with spaces removed, and with a hint
 - (6) Patristocrats - messages with spaces removed, but without a hint
 - iv. Affine cipher – encrypting plaintext or decrypting ciphertext given the a and b values.
 - v. the Vigenère Cipher – encrypting plaintext or decrypting ciphertext given a key.
 - vi. the Baconian Cipher – decrypting ciphertext encoded with the a b values represented as one or more letters, glyphs, symbols, or character rendering variations (e.g., bold, underline, italic).
 - vii. Xenocrypt - no more than one cryptogram can be in Spanish
 - viii. the Pollux and Morbit Ciphers – decrypting Morse code ciphertext encoded as digits and spaces given the mapping of at least 6 of the digits.
 - ix. The Rail Fence Cipher – decrypting transposed text given the number of rails.
- f. The code types that may be used on the exam at State and National competitions are as follows:
 - i. All Invitational and Regional code types
 - ii. Xenocrypt - at the state and national levels, at least one cryptogram will be in Spanish.
 - iii. Cryptanalysis of the Vigenere cipher with a “crib” of at least 5 plaintext characters
 - iv. Cryptanalysis of the Affine Cipher with a “crib” of at least 2 plaintext characters.
 - v. Cryptanalysis of The Pollux and Morbit Ciphers with a “crib” of at least 4 plaintext characters
 - vi. Cryptanalysis of The Rail Fence Cipher with a “crib” of at least 5 plaintext characters and a range for the rails.
- g. For aristocrats, patristocrats, and xenocrypts: no letter can ever decrypt to itself.
- h. No more than 2 cipher questions will be an encryption on the exam.
- i. The exam packet will include a resource sheet with the Morse Code Table, English/Spanish letter frequencies, Vigenère table, Baconian mapping and modulus inverse tables as needed for the questions on the exam.
- j. The first question of the exam will be timed.
 - i. The first question will be the decoding of an Aristocrat as defined by rules 3e.iii.(1) or 3.e.iii.(2).
 - ii. A team member should signal when his or her team has broken the cryptogram.
 - iii. Before the exam begins, the event supervisor will announce the nature of the signal that must be used (e.g., shouting “bingo”, or quietly raising hand).

- iv. The time in seconds, to the accuracy of the device used, to solve the cryptogram will be recorded by the event supervisor or designee.
- v. If a team gets the timed question wrong, they may attempt to answer the question repeatedly without penalty. The Timing Bonus will be calculated from the start of the event until the question is successfully answered by the team with two or fewer errors, or until 10 minutes has elapsed. After 10 minutes, the timed question can still be answered but the Timing Bonus is zero.

4. **SCORING:**

- a. The high score wins. Final score = Exam score + Timing Bonus.
- b. Based on difficulty of the question, correct answers for each question will earn a clearly indicated number of points.
 - i. The general point distribution by question type is:
 - (1) An “easy question” = 100-150 pts
 - (2) A “medium question” = 200-300 pts
 - (3) A “hard question” = 350-500 pts
 - (4) A “very hard question” = 550-700 pts
 - ii. For questions such as cryptograms, with answers composed of letters, the final points will be determined based on the number of errors found.
 - (1) Two or fewer errors will result in full credit
 - (2) Each additional error results in a penalty of 100 points
 - (3) The penalty will not exceed the value of the question. For example, a 400-point question with 5 errors is worth 100 points whereas the same 400-point question with 7 errors would be worth 0 points, not -100 points.
 - iii. The scores for each question will be added to determine the exam score.
- c. A Timing Bonus can be earned based on the number of seconds it takes a team to correctly decode the first question. The Timing Bonus is equal to $4 \times (600 - \text{number of seconds})$. For example, 6 minutes = $4 \times (600 - 360) = 960$ points.
- d. Scoring example: Team A earns 3600 points on the exam and solves the timed question in 435 seconds.

Exam Score	=	3600 pts.
<u>Timing Bonus</u> $4(600-435)$	=	<u>660 pts.</u>
Final Score		4260 pts.
- e. Tie Breakers: For teams that are tied, select questions predetermined by the event supervisor, will be used to break the tie using the following criteria in this order: score, degree of correctness and attempted.

Recommended Resources: The Science Olympiad Store (store.soinc.org) carries the Problem Solving/Technology CD; other resources are on the event page at soinc.org.