

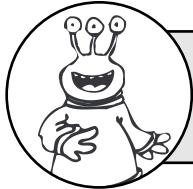
TRANSLATING AN ALIEN MESSAGE

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An Activity for the Whole Family from Project ASTRO

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- **Type of Activity:** Facilitated
- **Time to Do:** 15 minutes
- **Set up Time:** 2 minutes

WHAT'S THIS ACTIVITY ABOUT?

After gaining some experience with different kinds of simpler messages in *Decoding Radio Messages from Space*, families try their hand at decoding a somewhat more complex radio message received from an imaginary alien civilization around another star.

MATERIALS INCLUDED

- Master for Alien Message

MATERIALS YOU'LL NEED TO GET

- Copies of Alien Message (one per family)
- Pencil for each person

SUGGESTIONS FOR INTRODUCING THE ACTIVITY

It is a good idea to review the background information on SETI in the Resources section at the end of this Leaders' Guide before beginning this activity.

Now that participants understand a bit more about how we might receive a message from a distant civilization in picture form (via radio waves), they are going to have a chance to understand or “decode” a fictional one for themselves. Emphasize that this is imaginary. Hollywood's influence is often greater on families today than science's is, so it's important that they know that so far **no contact** with aliens has been made. In this activity, teamwork is important. Encourage the families to listen to all ideas before they give their final analysis.

DOING THE ACTIVITY

- Provide each family member with a copy of the “Alien Message” handout.
- Ask each family to work together to interpret the message.
- Debrief: Discuss their ideas after giving them time to explore the message. Tell the families to pretend that this is the first and only message this imaginary civilization has sent us, so we have no “key” or true answer to what the message means.
- Since we have no way to know who is right, give all families a chance to share their ideas and to comment on the interpretations of the other families.
- If they are interested in what kinds of messages we have sent in the past, are planning to send in the future, or are hoping to receive, suggest that they look on the Cosmic Decoders web site at:
<http://www.astrosociety.org/education/family/resources/decoders.html>

"Alien Message" Handout

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