Schools Pack

Welcome!

GCHQ is the Government Communications Headquarters, one of the three UK Intelligence and Security agencies. We work alongside MI5 and SIS (aka MI6).

Our brilliant people use cutting-edge technology, ingenuity, and strategic partnerships to identify, analyse and disrupt threats to the UK.

We work on wide-ranging missions, from counter-terrorism and supporting defence, to cyber security and protecting the NHS.

Our goal is to keep our country and people safe.



#GCHQChristmasChallenge

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The Mission

Our Christmas card is a challenge!

Your mission is to crack all seven puzzles inside the card, and then use your answers to solve a final festive puzzle on the front of the card.

This challenge is designed for teamwork. At GCHQ our mission needs a mix of minds and skills, from maths, languages, analysis, computing and more... because we solve the toughest problems together.

Resources

Get ready with the following printable resources now on our website:
- Outline lesson plan
- Worksheet
- Certificate of completion
- 'We are taking part!' social media content

On Monday 7 December, registered teachers will receive:
- Welcome video from Director GCHQ
- The Christmas Challenge Card
- Hints sheet
- Answer sheet

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FAQs

How do I plan a Christmas Challenge lesson?

We've made an **outline lesson plan** for KS3 and KS4. It's perfect for a maths or computer science lesson, or an after-school club. We recommend 1 hour, ideally for groups of 4 or 5 students.

What age range is the Challenge for?

It is aimed at ages 11-18, but adults enjoy it too!

Where can I find the answers?

Follow us @GCHQ on Instagram and X. We will post hints throughout the day on Thursday 10 December.

The answers will be on our website on Friday morning, 11 December.

Can I take part on another day?

It remains top secret until 10 December, but you can do it any time after that. Watch out for spoilers online though!

Are there more puzzles?

We have published three GCHQ puzzle books!

To bring the world of GCHQ to your classroom, on our website you can find **four other worksheets** to use in class, covering maths, science, languages and history, designed by our partners Education and Employers.

How do I give feedback?

When schools register they can opt in to receive feedback forms.

We love to hear from our puzzlers. To share further comments, contact xmaschallenge@gchq.gov.uk

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