

Family Activity: Hieroglyphic Codes

Provided by the Art Institute of Chicago Department of Museum Education

Ancient Americans used a system of picture symbols, or hieroglyphics, to record information. In this activity, you will create your own picture alphabet and send secret messages that only your friends can decode.

Activity

Before you begin, look at the hieroglyphs on the ancient American objects.

Materials Needed:

- Paper
- Pencil
- Ruler
- Colored pencils or markers
- Envelope

Steps:

1. On a sheet of paper, draw a grid with 26 spaces (one for each letter of the alphabet).
2. In each space, write one letter and draw a simple picture as its symbol. This is the key to your hieroglyphic code. Make a copy of the key for a friend.
3. Compose a message to your friend using the picture symbols you created and seal it in an envelope decorated with more of the symbols. Be sure to include the copy of the key so that he or she can decode your message.

Glossary

hieroglyphs, hieroglyphic (*n*, pl; *n*)

characters based on recognizable, representational shapes used in a system of hieroglyphic writing; a system of writing mainly in pictorial characters