

# code it! scytale decoder



## maker checklist

paper, pen, scissors  
straight edge (paper)  
can or cardboard tube  
just a bit of tape

## this is one of the oldest decoders in history!

you might want to pronounce it *sky-tail*, but it actually rhymes with *Italy*.

it's an ancient Greek decoding tool that means *baton* because of the shape. it was used to send secret messages, often on a battlefield, when enemies were at war. a code was written on a long strip of paper or skin then wrapped around a cylinder (or baton). when the paper was unwound from the cylinder, the code was all jumbled. both the sender and the recipient had to have a cylinder of the \*exact\* same size in order to be able to read the message.

## HOW TO

- 1 **measure and cut paper into strips** about 1/2 inch wide. tape strips paper together end to end, to make a very long strip to wrap around the soda can.
- 2 **tape one end of the paper to the top** of your can, at a slight slant, and wrap the strip all the way around the can. tape to hold in place.
- 3 **now write a short, secret message** straight across the paper. then, unwind it, and fill in the rest of the paper with letters, numbers and symbols. you'll have a strip of paper that looks like nonsense.
- 4 **share the paper strip with a friend**, and see if she can decode it! when she wraps the paper around a can of the exact same size, the letters will line up and she will discover your secret message.



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