

Hillingdon U3A Computer Club

December 2025

GCHQ Christmas Challenge

Hillingdon U3A Computer Club



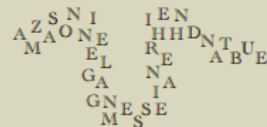
Each of the seven puzzles leads to a word, or in one case a phrase.

Write the answers into the appropriate boxes below, and then use just the letters on the front of the card to deduce a description of GCHQ's work.

6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4								

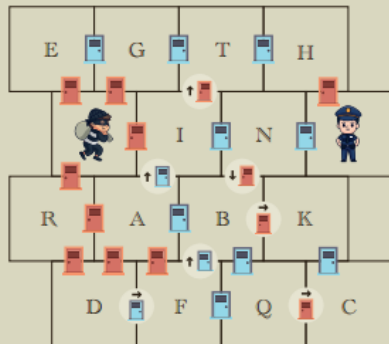
- 1 Somewhere on this card is a special seven letter word which has no repeated letters, and no letters which are next to each other in the alphabet. Can you find it?

- 2 There is some driftwood in these streams... but where should it be?



- 3 The robber has to find a route through the house. He can't go through the same coloured door twice in a row, and cannot move against any arrows.

Eventually he gets caught by the police. How was he acting?



- 4 My gifts from Santa are wrapped in pairs this year - but which one is missing?

L	I	E	A	E	E	R	S
S	W	P	P	T	R		
C	M	N	S	O	E	E	R
C	O	P	U	T	L		
N	E	K	D	A	C	N	E
P	E	N	L	A			
C	O	O	B	N	A	K	
J	O	U	R	O	O	L	
H	A	A	D	O	A	O	P
S	H	N	M	O	P	O	P

- 5 The letters in TWO UV PAIRS have the values 0,1,2,...,9 in some order, with each letter representing a different digit.

$$UV + UV + V = VAR$$

$$R \times P \times P = AIR$$

$$SO + SO = VOW$$

What is 1234567 ?

- 6 Solve this code. It has lots of four-letter words!

PIGMIHM DRP MHSIAMA QDMPM MBNDQ **UTTL~FMQQML** NBLFP HRGMP:

LTOY, ILFR, PRLR, ROOY, GRYR, TPDR, HILL, ARHB.

PDM FMUQ R SFTM QI DML IWH HRGM OTQ SRH YIT WILE BQ ITQ?

- 7 Find an appropriate 7-letter word...

✓ = letter in right place
? = letter present, but in the wrong place

✓	?	?	?	?	?	?
✓	?	?	?	?	?	?
✓	?	?	?	?	?	?
✓	?	?	?	?	?	?
✓	?	?	?	?	?	?
✓	?	?	?	?	?	?
✓	?	?	?	?	?	?

Follow us or scan the QR code to find the answers soon!



X @GCHQ

GCHQ Christmas Challenge 2025

Can you solve them and be a spy??

We'll see later



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My gifts from Santa are wrapped in pairs this year -
but which one is missing?

L S	I W	E P	A P	E T	E R	R S
C C	M O	N P	S U	O T	E L	E R
N P	E E	K N	D L	A A	C N	E T
C J	O O	O U	B R	N O	A O	K L
H S	A H	A N	D M	O P	A O	O P



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3 The robber has to find a route through the house. He can't go through the same coloured door twice in a row, and cannot move against any arrows.

Eventually he gets caught by the police.
How was he acting?

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Answers

1

Answer: **SPECIAL**

This is the only seven-letter word on the Christmas Card with the properties described, and it can be found here in the text of Puzzle 1!

2

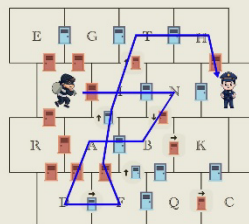
Answer: **THAMES**

The stream is made up of six sections each with a scrambled river name and an extra letter. The river names, in order left to right, are Amazon, Nile, Ganges, Seine, Rhine, and Danube. The extra letters when reversed spell THAMES. We also shaped the puzzle to look like the famous bend in the River Thames – well done if you spotted this hidden extra.

3

Answer: **IN BAD FAITH**

There is only one route through the house that takes the robber from their starting position to the police officer at the end obeying the rules given. Reading the letters in each room that the robber visits in order gives the answer.



4

Answer: **SOCKS**

In each of the five rows, we have written the names of two related gifts. These names use one letter from each of the boxes in its row, in order. However, one of each pair of gifts is missing a letter. The pairs of gifts and missing letters in each row are:

1. **S**LIPPERS and SWEATER
2. **C**OMPUTER and **C**ONSOLE
3. **N**E**C**KLACE and **P**ENDANT
4. **C**OO**K**BOOK and **J**OURNAL
5. **H**AN**D**SOAP and **S**HAMPOO

The missing letters are the missing gift – Socks – a common Christmas gift that comes in pairs!