

# CRYPTOGRAM CRACKING: ONE-PAGE REFERENCE (ARISTOCRAT / SIMPLE SUBSTITUTION)

**Best for:** puzzles where spaces and punctuation are preserved (and each symbol = 1 letter).

## QUICK START

- Confirm it is a simple substitution:  
spaces/punctuation stay, symbols repeat like letters.
- Write the ciphertext with clear word breaks;  
circle repeated words/patterns.
- Start with 1-letter, then common 2-letter and 3-letter words.
- Pencil in guesses; keep the key one-to-one (no letter reused).

## STEP 1 - IDENTIFY CIPHER TYPE

What you see	Likely type
Numbers only	Binary / A1Z26 / number code
Letters shifted	Caesar / ROT
Letters + keyword feel	Vigenere / polyalphabetic
Symbols/glyphs with spaces kept	Aristocrat (use steps below)

**Warning:** if the message is under ~28 characters, multiple solutions can fit.  
Gather more text using the same key if possible.

## STEP 2 - WORD PATTERNS

Pattern	What to try first
1-letter	A, I
2-letter	OF, TO, IN, IT, IS, AS, AT, ON BY, WE, US, HE, ME, MY
3-letter	THE, AND, FOR, ARE, BUT, NOT, YOU, WHO, WAS, HAS, OUT, HER, HIS, OUR

Common prefixes	Common endings
T-, A-, I-, S-, RE-, UN-, IN- DIS-, PRE-, CON-/COM-	-E, -S, -D, -T, -ED, -LY, -ING -TION, -MENT, -NESS

## APOSTROPHES:

- 'S IT'S, HE'S, SHE'S, LET'S, WHO'S, THAT'S  
WHAT'S, HERE'S, HERE'S, THERE'S, WORLD'S
- 'N'T DON'T, CAN'T, ISN'T, WON'T, AIN'T, DIDN'T, WASN'T  
AREN'T, HASN'T, HADN'T, DOESN'T, HAVEN'T, WEREN'T  
MUSTN'T, NEEDN'T, COULDN'T, WOULDN'T, SHOULDN'T
- 'D I'D, HE'D, WE'D, IT'D, YOU'D, SHE'D, WHO'D, THEY'D, THAT'D
- 'M I'M
- 'RE WE'RE, YOU'RE, THEY'RE, THERE'RE
- 'VE I'VE, WE'VE, YOU'VE, WHO'VE, THEY'VE  
MUST'VE, COULD'VE, WOULD'VE, SHOULD'VE
- 'LL I'LL, WE'LL, HE'LL, IT'LL, YOU'LL, SHE'LL  
WHO'LL, THEY'LL, THAT'LL, THERE'LL
- O' O'CLOCK

## KEY TEMPLATE IN ALPHABETIC ORDER (FILL IN AS YOU GO)

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z

## KEY TEMPLATE IN LETTER-FREQUENCY ORDER (FILL IN AS YOU GO)

E	T	A	O	I	N	S	H	R	D	L	C	U	M	W	F	G	Y	P	B	V	K	J	X	Q	Z

## STEP 3 - FREQUENCY

Letter frequency (rough): ETAOINSHRDLCUMWFYGYPBVKJXQZ  
Common bigrams: TH HE IN ER AN RE ON AT EN ND ST ES  
Common trigrams: THE AND ING ENT ION TIO HER HAT  
Double letters: LL EE SS OO TT FF RR NN

**Tool tip:** use GlyphGrid Analysis to count symbols fast.

*Let the computer count; you do the guessing!*

## STEP 4 - PUZZLE-SOLVING SPRINT

- Every word needs vowels (A E I O U, sometimes Y).  
If a word is all consonants, your mapping is probably wrong.
- H often follows T, S, W, or C. Q is almost always followed by U.
- Solve the most-constrained word next (the one with the most known letters). Propagate those letters everywhere.
- Use prefixes/suffixes to guess whole chunks, then verify across the message.
- If the plaintext looks impossible, backtrack one assumption at a time.

## STARTER COMBOS:

- TH- THE, THAT, THIS, THEM, THEN, THERE, THESE, THEIR, THING
- WH- WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHICH, WHO
- IN- IN, INTO, INSIDE

## PROBABLY WRONG IF EXIST:

- impossible letter combos (QQ, JJ, VV)
- too many rare letters
- words with no vowels

## IF YOU'RE STUCK

- Find the shortest repeated word (often THE/AND/TO/OF).
- Pick one guess to test (like THE), then check every place it appears.
- List unused letters; try them in the few remaining blanks.

## STEP 5 - FINAL VERIFICATION

- Read the full decrypted text as normal English.  
Does it flow like a quote/sentence?
- One-to-one key: no symbol maps to 2 letters, and no letter is assigned to 2 symbols.
- No leftover symbols; punctuation and apostrophes make sense.
- If the message is long and coherent (>~28 chars), it is almost certainly correct!