

CipherTrace Rule Book

1. Event Overview

Cipher Trace is an immersive, story-driven online puzzle competition where participants become digital detectives investigating a fictional cybersecurity breach.

Clues are hidden across social media platforms, a custom website, and multimedia content such as images and audio files. Through social-media sleuthing, symbolic ciphers, QR fragments, and creative decoding challenges, participants progress through multiple rounds to uncover the final truth.

The event blends cybersecurity concepts with creativity, logic, and attention to detail, offering an engaging and interactive experience.

2. Event Format

- Mode: Online
- Timeline:
 - ROUND 1: 9th January 2026 (6 PM IST) to 10th January 2026 (9 AM IST)
 - ROUND 2: 10th January 2026 (1 PM IST) to 10th January 2026 (7 PM IST)
- Participation: Individual only
- Platforms Used:
 - Social media platforms associated with the Women in Tech Society
 - Official CipherTrace Website

3. Event Structure

The event will be conducted in two rounds:

Round 1 – Social Media Investigation

- Clues will be released across the social media platforms associated with the Women in Tech Society (LinkedIn & Instagram).
- Registered participants must analyze cipher, emoji codes, hidden text layers, visual patterns, QR fragments, etc.
- The final input/flag submission for Round 1 must be entered through the input box on the official CipherTrace website.
- To ensure accessibility, all relevant links and clues will also be shared with all participants.

Round 2 – Pixel Lab

- Qualified participants will gain access to the “Pixel Lab” on the CipherTrace website.
- This round includes audio clues, symbolic ciphers, visual anomalies, hidden patterns, etc.

- Final answers must be submitted through the website within the stipulated time.

Note: Successful completion of Round 1 qualifies participants for Round 2.

4. Rules and Regulations

1. CipherTrace is a strictly individual participation event. Team participation is not allowed.
2. Participants must log in and register only using their official student email ID.
3. Only one submission per participant per round is allowed. Any attempt to make multiple submissions/use multiple accounts/bypass submission restrictions/etc, will result in immediate and direct disqualification.
4. No edits, resubmissions, or corrections will be permitted under any circumstances.
5. Access to Round 2 will be granted only to participants who successfully qualify in Round 1.
6. Eligible participants will receive Round 2 access details exclusively via their official student mailbox. No alternative access requests or modes will be entertained.
7. Sharing of clues, flags, answers, access links, credentials, or any clues with others during the event is strictly prohibited.
8. The use of unfair means, including but not limited to automation tools, bots, external assistance, collaboration, or unauthorized resource is not allowed.
9. Any attempt to tamper with, exploit, or manipulate the CipherTrace website, social media content, or event infrastructure will lead to immediate disqualification.
10. Participants are expected to maintain ethical, respectful, and professional behavior throughout the event.
11. Any violation of the Code of Conduct by a participant at any stage of the event will result in disqualification and will be addressed by the Event Organizers and the Paradox Team.
12. The decisions of the Event Organizers and the Paradox Core Team shall be final and binding in all matters related to the event.

5. Evaluation and Scoring

- Participants will be evaluated based on the accuracy of submissions.
- In case of a tie, the time stamp of submission will be considered for the tie breaker.

6. Registration and Communication

- Registration will be conducted through the official Paradox registration portal.
- Event instructions, links, and updates will be shared with registered participants prior to the event through the official communication channels (GSpace, Mails).

7. Technical Requirements

- Stable internet connection
- Access to a web-enabled device
- Ability to access the CipherTrace website

8. Certificates and Prizes

- Participation certificates will be provided to all the registered student.
- Winning Certificates will be awarded to top performers.

9. Frequently Asked Questions

- a. Who can participate in CipherTrace?

CipherTrace is open to **all students of IIT Madras, BS Degree Programme** who have registered for the same.

- b. Is CipherTrace a team event?

No. CipherTrace is an individual participation event. Each participant must register and compete independently.

- c. Is the event conducted online or offline?

The event is conducted entirely online.

- d. Which platforms will be used during the event?

Clues will be released on social media platforms associated with the Women in Tech Society and on the official CipherTrace website. All submissions will be made through the CipherTrace website.

- e. What if I do not have access to certain social media platforms?

To ensure accessibility, all relevant links and clues will also be provided on the CipherTrace website.

- f. What kind of skills are required for this event?

The event focuses on logical reasoning, observation, pattern recognition, and creative problem-solving. It is designed to be beginner-friendly.

- g. How many rounds are there?

CipherTrace consists of two rounds.

- h. How are winners decided?

Winners are selected based on the accuracy of submissions. In case of a tie, the faster submission will be ranked higher.

- i. Are participants allowed to use external tools or references?

Participants may use the QR code scanner, a calculator, as per the need. However, automation, unfair means, or sharing of answers is strictly prohibited.

j. Will participation certificates be provided?

Yes. Participation certificates will be issued to all registered participants.

k. Where will official updates be shared?

All official communication, updates, and announcements will be shared through the event's official channels only.

l. What if a participant does not receive the Round 2 access email?

Participants are advised to check their spam and promotions folders. If the issue persists, they may contact the event coordinators through the official channel within the stipulated time.

10. Queries & Communication

In case of any queries related to the event, participants may connect with the following Event Organisers:

- Jiya Thakker (Head) - [24F3001258 JIYA B THAKKER](#)
- Adrika Ghosh (Deputy Head) - [Adrika Ghosh](#)

Note:

- a. The primary and preferred mode of communication will be the official G-Space groups created for the event.
- a. Participants can email or message the organisers via G-Space for queries related to CipherTrace.
- b. Participants are requested not to spam, repeatedly message, or misuse the personal contact details of the organisers.
- c. All queries should remain professional, relevant to the event, and respectful at all times.
- d. Any attempt to misuse contact channels may be viewed as misconduct.