

Edith has entered the computing laboratory and has asked John for an update on his investigations.

“I have been looking at the encoding that they have used for their sentences.”

“And?”

“Well, as you know, the rules for star space encoding are as on this sheet.”

The star space is entered by a character sequence consisting of an integral sign character followed by three circled digit characters. The space is thereafter exited in certain circumstances.

1. If the first and third circled digit characters are the same yet not a circled zero, then exit is after as many additional circled digit characters as indicated by the third circled digit character.
2. If the third circled digit character is a circled zero, then, regardless of what is the first circled digit character, the next three circled digit characters after the third circled digit character taken together determine how many more circled digit characters there are after those next three circled digit characters.
3. Otherwise, exit is after the third circled digit.
4. In expressing star space within an information technology application, if any character other than a circled digit, a space, a comma, a carriage return, a line feed is encountered before when exit would be expected then exit takes place as an error exception in the expressing of the coding in the particular situation.

“Now the thing is, they have encoded their sentences using code numbers from 883001 through to 883524 in one continuous sequence. Now that is fine because they make no mention of star space and so there is no presumption that those codes are anything to do with star space at all and they are not in any way obliged to use star space.”

“Yet?” asks Edith.

“Well, yes,” replies John, realizing that Edith has picked up on something being there. “I do not quite follow what is happening. It is as if whoever chose those codes deliberately avoided using the same code numbers as we do, yet in so doing well maybe not in so doing as they are not using star space but if they were using star space they have in effect added an additional rule to star space between rule 1 and rule 2. Yet that rule does not affect us as we do not use any double digit. Maybe it is management saying to do it with no reference at all to us or our work yet somebody in the engineering team has made sure that there is no use of the same codes that we use.”

“Can you explain that differently please?” asks Edith.

“Well, they could have just used 1 through to 524, and if they did then some of their sentences would each have the same code number as some of our sentences. Maybe they are trying to avoid their system potentially being disrupted by our system, but, well I do not know, they signal their system differently but, there seems to be something”

“So,” replies Edith “what would be the extra rule for star space that would be implied?”

John pauses and thinks, then writes down the following.

If the first and second circled digit characters are the same and also both the first circled digit character and the third circled digit character are not a circled zero, then exit is after as many additional circled digit characters as indicated by the third circled digit character.

“That is just one possibility, but it encompasses what they have done in a way that is closely related to the existing rules, and allows for some expansion. Apparently they talked about possible expansion of the number of their sentences at the press conference, so maybe they might go to 884 or 885, or maybe 773, who knows.”

“Yet do they use circled digits?” asks Edith.

“Well, no.”

“Then how would there be confusion if they used the same numbers?”

“Well, maybe it is just to be doubly sure it is all very puzzling.”

“Maybe they well someone in their engineering team is trying to tell us something. They would surely realize that eventually we would try to analyse their encoding.” adds Edith.

“Well maybe they would think that though maybe not with us doing it as soon as we are but then if they are wanting to make sure that they cannot be said to be using our work it is all very puzzling.”