

SYNTAXMASTER

Syntactic Theory
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Taskmaster is a British game show where contestants attempt to complete a series of challenges or, more aptly, “tasks.” This game is inspired by one of them.¹

RULES AND INSTRUCTIONS

- You will be given a board divided into two columns, as well as a deck of cards.
- In the board, the column on the left is a series of concepts studied in *Introduction to Syntax* (1103).
- Each card, in turn, has data points. Each card should be uniquely paired with a concept on the left-hand side of the board. More specifically, the data points on a card illustrate the concept that it must be paired with.
- Each concept is labeled with a symbol (e.g. ☼ and 6a), while each card is labeled with a letter (e.g. P and R).
- The symbols comprise a cipher that you will use to decode a message. The pairings between a concept and a card give you the cipher. Your ultimate goal is to the *decipher the message*.
- The message to be deciphered will be given to you only after you have completed all the concept–card pairings correctly.
- You cannot consult any materials, physical or digital.

EXAMPLE

Suppose you are given the following word to decode:



The first two concept–card pairings are done for you. These pairings tell us that the symbol ☼ corresponds to the letter P, while the symbol 6a corresponds to the letter R. This means that we can use these two letters to partially decode the word given:



Once you have completed all pairings, you will be able to fully decode the message.

Your time starts now.

¹Series 12, episode 4 (“The customised inhaler”), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NaGrc3fsvIU>, accessed: 2026–08–16. The wax seal above is inspired by the *Taskmaster*’s brand; it was generated with Google AI.