

Challenge 1: Solution

A few observations from the scrap of paper:

1. It appears to be written in two different fonts. One of the fonts appears to be a bit darker (bold) than the other.
2. The first few characters appear to be in plaintext: "Please help" but the spacing is a bit odd.
3. After these characters the various letter groupings mostly represent letters close together on the keyboard, suggesting some "lazy random" typing. Also all the "words" are quite short, four letters or less.

The two fonts suggest some sort of binary code: Bacon's bilateral cipher, Morse, Huffman, ASCII, etc.

The random letters tells us that the actual characters may not be important, just the font used. Again, this points to some sort of binary code/cipher.

Word lengths of less than five letters suggest Morse Code is the more likely code used.

The most familiar sequence of letters in Morse Code is probably SOS (help) represented by three "dots", three "dashes", and three "dots". Our ciphertext starts with a phrase asking for help with letters in groups of three: three bold, three non-bold, three bold, three bold, three non-bold, three bold. Looks like SOS SOS where the bolder font takes the place of "dots" and the non-bold font takes the place of "dashes".

Continuing to decode leads to:

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... --- ... / ... --- ... / -.-. --- .-. - . -.-
Ple ase hel pas dfg qwe qwer jkl poi rt t fds
--- .-. / ..... .- .. --. .... - / .- -. -.. /
zxc nbvc lkjh fg ds qwe rtyu i iu re wqa
.- ... ..... -.... .-. .-. -.- / .- - /
as dfg jklh mnbv cxz poi rewq as d
-. --- --- -. / --- -. /
po iur ewq as zxc vb
-- --- -. ... .- -.- -
ut fjg lk mnb vc xzas
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Final plaintext with correct spacing put in:

SOS SOS corner of haight and ashbury at noon on Monday.