

Lesson 1

The Braille Alphabet

1.1 In General

Braille is a system for tactile reading and writing. It uses characters formed by combinations of six embossed dots that are arranged within the *braille cell* in two vertical columns of three dots each. A simple braille character is formed by one or more of these dots, and it occupies a full cell or space.

For convenience, the dots of the braille cell are referred to by number and correspond to the keys on a braillewriter.

Braille Cell

1 ● ● 4
2 ● ● 5
3 ● ● 6

Braillewriter

U U U [[[[]]]] U U U
3 2 1 4 5 6

1.2 Braillewriters, Computer Braille Programs, and Braille Slates

There are three methods of braille transcription—braillewriter, computer using a special braille program, and slate and stylus. The braillewriter and the computer work in much the same way in that they use six keys corresponding to the braille cell as shown above.

When a braille slate is used, the embossing appears on the underside of the paper. Therefore, the writing is done from right to left, so that when the page is turned over it can be read from left to right. For this reason dots 1, 2, and 3 are brailled at the right-hand side of the braille cell on the slate; dots 4, 5, and 6 at the left-hand side, as shown in the alphabetical index of braille signs in Appendix B.

1.3 The First Ten Letters of the Alphabet

The first ten letters of the alphabet are formed by using the upper and middle dots of the cell, and they are the foundation of the braille system.

Memorize the following letters by their dot numbers and configurations.

a b c d e f g h i j
1 ● : 1 2 ● : 1 ● ● 4 1 ● ● 4 1 ● : 1 2 ● ● 4 1 2 ● ● 4 1 2 ● : 2 ● ● 4 2 ● ● 4
: : : : : : : : : :
: : : : : : : : : :
: : : : : : : : : :

Drill 1

Thoroughly familiarize yourself with the first ten letters of the alphabet by brailleing the following words. Reading across, start each line in the first cell. Leave one blank cell (space) between words. Your work on this and all subsequent drills should not be submitted to the instructor for correction. Instead, check the accuracy of your work by comparing it with the correct braille form in the accompanying supplement, *Drills Reproduced in Braille*.

acid acacia badge beige babe cage
deface dice ebb egg fad fief gag gage
hag hajji hide hie id if idea jag jade

1.4 The Second Ten Letters of the Alphabet

The second ten letters of the alphabet are formed by adding dot 3 to each of the first ten. Thus, *k* is formed by adding dot 3 to *a*, *l* by adding dot 3 to *b*, and so on.

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j
⠁	⠃	⠉	⠑	⠅	⠋	⠗	⠈	⠊	⠎
k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t
⠅	⠃	⠍	⠑	⠝	⠏	⠒	⠞	⠟	⠤

Drill 2

Practice the letters learned by brailleing the words in the following drill.

kick kneel lair llama manor melon mammal
noise notice orange orphan popcorn pope
possessor qoph rapport rascal sassafras
tattletale tragic trio tort ticket tide

1.5 The Last Six Letters of the Alphabet

The letters *u*, *v*, *x*, *y*, and *z* are formed by adding dots 3 and 6 to the first five letters. Thus, *u* is formed by adding dots 3 and 6 to *a*, and so on. The letter *w*, dots 2-4-5-6, does not fit into this pattern because Louis Braille devised the braille system in France in the mid-19th century, and the French alphabet did not then contain the letter *w*.

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				
⠠	⠡	⠢	⠣	⠤	⠥				

Drill 3

When you have learned the final six letters of the alphabet, braille the following words for practice.

quiz ukulele ultimatum vacillate vaguely
 wigwag wield weird xylem xebec yolk yew
 zebra zombie zoological zygoma ooze maze

READING PRACTICE

Read the following phrases and write them out in longhand. Do not submit this work to your instructor. Compare your work with the print version in Appendix A.

⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠
⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠
⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠
⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠
⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠
⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠
⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠
⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠
⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠
⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠
⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠	⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠

EXERCISE

Prepare the following exercise and submit it to the instructor for correction. *Read down the columns.* Starting on line 1, begin each phrase in the first cell of a new braille line. Do not skip lines; you should have 25 phrases on the first page and 23 on the second. If you are using a braillewriter, be sure that you position every page correctly by pushing down on the line-space key (farthest key to the left) one time before you start to braille. Add your name in braille at the end of the exercise or as your teacher directs. (Correspondence students: For the convenience of our braille-reading instructors and non-braille-reading clerical staff, add your name in braille and print at the end of each exercise.)

jazz tunes	olives or onions	quizzes puzzle me
he prays daily	vivid pictures	labor battalions
feigns surprise	icicles drip	unbelievably calm
a frisky poodle	dull adjectives	home sweet home
fidgety filly	bridle a pony	fireflies flit
raw recruits	wise philosophy	brass knuckles
quixotic exploits	six textbooks	mimic a madman
electric elevator	lovely velvet	angry gangs
queue up	yuletide joy	pretty rosebud
zany zebra	pretty anemone	prompt appraisal
build a wigwam	true blue	bacon smells salty
gigantic gorilla	blood circulates	nocturnal bird
attractive tie	mutual respect	extra axe
lovely lullaby	did he dig deep	big felt yurt
wry wit	a brook murmurs	
jubilant hallelujahs	weird spectacle	
gooseneck lamp	xiphoid process	

