

Lesson 20

The Trial Manuscript and Certification

Upon completion of Lesson 19 the student has been introduced to all of the rules of literary braille. In order to demonstrate that the rules have been mastered and to achieve national certification, the student is now asked to prepare and submit a manuscript to the Library of Congress.

20.1 In General

The certification manuscript must consist of at least thirty-five full braille pages, including preliminary pages, taken from a general reading book. Several partial pages adding up to twenty-five braille lines count as one page. If a transcription includes a dedication page that contains less than twenty-five braille lines but all other pages are full, thirty-six braille pages must be submitted.

Just as with the lessons in this instruction manual, the manuscript must be prepared using a braillewriter, a slate and stylus, or a computer using a direct-input braille program. Manuscripts prepared using translation programs, where the material is typed in, are not permitted.

This is a test of the rules of literary braille format. Consequently, a manuscript prepared using textbook-style pagination will not be accepted.

All manuscripts must be submitted in single-sided embossed form. Interpoint (braille on both sides of the page) will not be accepted, nor will computer disks or simulated braille. If the copy has been produced on a computer and embossed, remove all sprocket strips, separate and collate the pages, and remove all blank pages. The manuscript should be submitted so that it is ready to read. It is not necessary, but it may be bound with a spiral binding. Thermoformed copies of the manuscript will not be accepted. It is highly recommended that, if possible, the student keep a thermoformed copy of a manuscript that was prepared on a braillewriter.

A copy of the print book used for the certification manuscript, or photocopies of the pages transcribed including all of the preliminary pages contained in the print copy, should accompany the manuscript. The print copy will be returned along with the evaluation report and the original braille pages.

20.2 Choosing a Book for the Manuscript

The book selected for the manuscript should not be so technical in nature that the student must concentrate on technicalities rather than on producing neat and accurate braille. On the other hand, it must not be so rudimentary that it does not present average vocabulary and sentence structure. The book chosen for the manuscript *must contain a table of contents* and use a level of vocabulary approximately equal to a high school text.

The manuscript should resemble a complete braille book as closely as possible. It should be transcribed using a 40-cell braille line and a running head. When the required number of pages have been transcribed, end at a logical place such as at the end of a

paragraph. Points will be deducted if the manuscript ends in the middle of a sentence. The words **THE END** should be placed on the last page in the prescribed manner.

20.3 Structuring the Book

Structuring is the term used for carefully perusing and making decisions as to how to handle the basic braille layout of the book. It is very important that this be done for every book before starting to braille. Structuring ensures consistency throughout a braille version. When structuring the book that you have chosen for the manuscript, look for such things as dialect, special typefaces, foreign words and phrases, quoted material, preliminary page setup, headings, graphs, tables, etc. Decide how you are going to handle each item *before* you start to braille. Also decide upon the running head and centered or cell-5 headings. If there are items in the book that you are not comfortable with, such as maps or flowcharts, choose a different book for the manuscript.

20.4 Beginning Pages

All pages at the beginning of a book, such as a dedication, acknowledgments, preface, author's note, foreword, table of contents, introduction or prologue, should be included in the braille transcription—with one exception. None of the items discussed under *19.2(g) Cover/Jacket Material* are to be included in the manuscript.

The title page should be prepared following the instructions in Lesson 19 with each line centered. After certification, future title pages should be prepared at the direction of the agency for which the transcriber works.

If the student is affiliated with a transcribing group, that group's name is listed on the title page, as shown in the example in 19.2b. If the student has no group affiliation, only the transcriber's city and state are listed.

Because the manuscript is a facsimile of a complete book, place the words **In One Volume** instead of Volume 1 on the title page. The contents page should contain only the chapters and pages that actually appear in the thirty-five pages of the manuscript. Do not braille the entire table of contents.

A special symbols page and a transcriber's notes page should be included if appropriate.

20.5 Hyphenation

Although some agencies no longer require that words be divided between braille lines, maximum use of the braille line is expected in the manuscript, and therefore words should be divided. Use a dictionary or speller/divider no more than ten years old to check for proper syllabication. If an unusual proper name cannot be found in a dictionary or a listing of biographical names, it is best not to divide it between lines. Carry the entire name to the next line. This should be explained in the letter to the evaluator (see *Letter to the Grader*, below). Refer to 2.5a for general guidelines regarding hyphenation.

20.6 Accuracy and Neatness

A high degree of accuracy and neatness is expected of the student in the preparation of the certification manuscript. Accuracy includes a thorough and exact reproduction of the print text with respect to wording, spelling, punctuation, the correct formation of braille characters, the proper use of contractions, the correct application of all rules of braille transcribing, the proper division of words, and the use of correct braille formats. Neatness includes uniformly clear dots, evenly spaced lines, and the absence of extensive or poorly made erasures. If an error has been made in page numbering, the appropriate pages must be repeated. Manuscripts containing a repetition or omission sign will not be accepted.

Omission or repetition of part of the text is undoubtedly the most serious error that can occur because it results in material that is often incomprehensible to the reader. As such an error is most likely to occur when the same word or words appear on two consecutive print lines, you are cautioned to guard against losing your place in the print copy, thereby either omitting the second line or repeating the first line.

20.7 Erasures

If the grader of the manuscript can feel an erasure, it will be counted as an error. Therefore, erasures should be resorted to only rarely. Follow the directions for erasing as presented in the *General Course Instructions* at the beginning of this book.

20.8 Editing

It is the job of the transcriber to duplicate the print copy as faithfully as possible. The transcriber is in no sense an editor and should not seek to substitute his or her judgment for that of the author as to what constitutes correct usage. This is especially true for capitalization, punctuation, and hyphenation — where there is wide variation in practice among writers and publishers. The author must be permitted his idiosyncrasies in such matters. George Bernard Shaw often used simplified spelling and omitted periods after many abbreviations.

There are occasions in print (just as in braille) when errors do occur, and these the transcriber should correct; however, this should be done with great circumspection. In correcting spelling, for example, be sure that what is shown is not simply an alternate or archaic spelling. For example, in the sentence, *Teh farmer sold his milch cows*, it is clear that the *e* and *h* in the word *the* have been reversed and should be corrected. However, although the word *milch* is archaic, it was the author's choice and should not be changed to *milk*.

20.9 Proofreading

The certification manuscript should be the work of the student and no one else. While preparing the manuscript, the pages should be proofread as they are brailled. After brailing seven to ten pages they should be proofread again. When the manuscript is finished, it is suggested that it be left alone for at least a week. The final proofreading, after the student has had a rest from the material, should expose any remaining errors. If the manuscript is generated by a computer, the pages should be carefully proofread *after* embossing.

The work *should not* be proofread by anyone other than the student. The trial manuscript is a test of the student's knowledge and ability, not of anyone else's proofreading skills.

20.10 A Letter to the Grader

A letter, in braille, to the grader from the student should accompany every manuscript. In the letter tell the grader what dictionary was used as well as anything unusual that was encountered in print such as format irregularities or unusual foreign names. If dialect was encountered in the print, if the student made an "educated guess" and divided a word that could not be found in a dictionary, or if any editing (see *Editing*, above) was done, these things should also be explained. Do not include these explanations on a transcriber's notes page. The letter is not to be counted as part of the thirty-five-page manuscript. Points will not be deducted for errors in the letter.

20.11 Mailing the Manuscript

Instructions for mailing the manuscript are on page xv of the General Course Instructions.

20.12 Grading

The following system for grading manuscripts has been adopted. A perfect manuscript will be given a grade of 100. A grade of 80 is required for certification. The list below shows how points will be deducted for errors. If the same error in the use or omission of contractions or in word division occurs consistently with respect to the same word, it will be counted only once. Format errors may sometimes be counted together as a single error. Otherwise, each error will be counted separately.

Errors and Points

Contractions omitted or misused:	2
Characters misformed (including added or omitted dots):	1
Incorrect division of words:	2
Letters inserted or omitted:	2
Text omitted or repeated:	3
Spacing errors:	2
Format irregularities:	2
Omitted or inserted punctuation or composition signs:	2
Erasures, if detected:	2

If the score on the first manuscript is between 75 and 79, the student will be asked to submit a second manuscript of twenty-five pages. If a successful score has still not been reached after a third try, the student is directed to wait twelve months and retake the transcribing course before submitting a final fourth manuscript.

20.13 Appealing the Test Results

If a student feels that points were deducted erroneously, a print or braille letter should be sent to the head of the Braille Development Section, National Library Service. Along with the letter, send the pertinent braille pages of the manuscript and the corresponding print pages.

20.14 Certification

Upon successful completion of the manuscript, a *Certificate of Proficiency in Braille Transcribing* signed by the Librarian of Congress and the Director of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped will be awarded. Library of Congress certification is a symbol recognized worldwide and something to be very proud of. GOOD LUCK!

