

General Course Instructions

Purpose and Scope

This manual is designed for use in the correspondence course in English braille transcribing conducted by the Library of Congress, National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS), and for use by instructors of braille classes. The course is intended to familiarize the student with the braille system, with braille contractions and their usage, and with the rules of braille transcribing. Rules are set forth by the Braille Authority of North America (BANA) and published in *English Braille American Edition (EBAE)*. *EBAE* became the authorized braille code for use in the United States as of January 1, 1959, and it contains all the rules of braille for general literature.

A source citation appears in brackets following each main heading in this manual. This citation refers to the rule and section of the latest edition of the official code, *English Braille American Edition 1994*, or to *Braille Formats: Principles of Print to Braille Transcription (BF)*, upon which the information in the following material is based. *See* and *see also* references refer to sections within this book.

Great care has been taken to ensure that none of the sentences in the drills and exercises in this manual contain words that require the use of contractions not yet studied. While greatly restricting the choice of words and types of sentences in the earlier lessons, this practice helps prevent the student from acquiring the habit of brailleing words incorrectly.

Throughout this manual examples are presented in simulated braille (dots reproduced in print). The student is directed to study them carefully. They show how the rules work in practice and also peculiar situations where a rule is inapplicable. When simulated braille is not used in examples, contractions are shown enclosed within parentheses.

Appendixes at the back of this manual contain materials useful as references throughout the course. Appendix A gives the correct print for the simulated braille reading exercises that appear at the end of the first eleven lessons. Appendix B is an alphabetical index of braille signs showing two ways in which braille configurations may appear: (1) when produced on a braillewriter or embosser where the dots are impressed from the under side of the page and appear as they will be read, and (2) when produced on a slate and stylus where the slate user creates the dots "in reverse" by pushing down on the paper with a stylus, working from right to left and then turning the paper over to read. Appendix C is a list of typical and problem words that shows print words broken into syllables, and the same words in simulated braille using the correct contractions.

Most of the problems that are likely to be found in the transcription of general literature are presented and discussed in this manual, and upon successful completion of the course, the student should be competent to deal with these problems. However, no attempt is made here to train the student in the transcription of specialized materials. Therefore, before attempting to braille a textbook of any kind, the transcriber must be thoroughly familiar with the rules provided in the latest revision of the *Braille Formats: Principles of Print to Braille Transcription*. If called upon to braille technical material on mathematics or science, the transcriber first must study the latest revision of *The Nemeth Braille Code for Mathematics and Science Notation*. The transcription of music must be in accordance with provisions set forth in the most recent edition of the *Braille Music Code*. Materials requiring the translation of

computer symbols and notations are done according to the rules in the *Computer Braille Code*. These publications may be purchased from the American Printing House for the Blind, 1839 Frankfort Avenue, P.O. Box 6085, Louisville, KY 40206.

As the language grows and changes, so too must the rules that govern the production of braille. BANA meets regularly to review the rules and make periodic changes. When rule changes are approved, they will be incorporated into this instruction manual by means of replacement pages. Students taking the course by correspondence will automatically receive up-to-date material. Teachers of braille transcription classes should contact NLS to get copies of replacement pages for their students.

All persons using this manual are invited to submit comments, criticisms, or suggestions regarding it to the Braille Development Section, National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Library of Congress, Washington, DC 20542. These will be studied carefully and given serious consideration in the preparation of any revision.

How to Enroll

Contact the Braille Development Section, NLS, (1-800-424-8567) to obtain an information packet explaining the braille transcription course and an application form.

Equipment

The following equipment and supplies will be required for use by the student:

- The latest editions of *Instruction Manual for Braille Transcribing* and *Drills Reproduced in Braille*, provided free of charge from NLS to U.S. citizens and residents enrolled in the course.
- The latest edition of *English Braille American Edition*, also provided free of charge from the NLS to U.S. citizens and residents enrolled in the course.
- A collegiate edition of any reputable dictionary less than ten years old.
- Braille transcription paper measuring 11 x 11½ inches. A good source for braille paper is the American Printing House for the Blind, 1839 Frankfort Avenue, P.O. Box 6085, Louisville, KY 40206. If paper is ordered locally, specify 90-lb. card stock with the grain running along the 11-inch dimension.
- A braille eraser, available from the American Printing House or from Howe Press, 175 North Beacon Street, Watertown, MA 02472.
- A braillewriter, a 40-cell braille slate and stylus, or a computer using a direct-input braille program. Direct-input programs require the user to braille using only six keys, much in the same manner as when using a braillewriter. Translation programs, where the user types in the material on a standard keyboard and the type is then translated into braille, are not allowed for use in this course. Exercises must be submitted in hard copy (embossed) braille. Simulated braille will not be accepted.

Braillewriter. While there are a number of braillewriters on the market, the Perkins brailier has been found to be an eminently satisfactory machine. Purchase information and instructions for its operation are available from the distributor, Howe Press, 175 N. Beacon Street, Watertown, MA 02472.

Slate and Stylus. If a braille slate and stylus are to be used, we recommend the 40-cell board slate that is available from Howe Press. This braille slate consists of two pieces, a hinged metal guide and a flat wooden board. The bottom portion of the metal guide has four rows of indented braille cells. The top portion has four rows of cutouts that fit exactly over the indented cells and serve as a template for the stylus. Two pegs on the underside of the guide fit into regularly spaced holes at the left and right sides of the wooden board.

Insert the guide into the set of holes nearest the top of the board, with the hinged side at your left. Before inserting the paper, open the metal guide as you would a book. At the top of the board there is a metal clasp with two prongs on the lower piece. Place the paper well up over the prongs, with its left edge against the hinge of the guide and the 11½-inch dimension of the paper running from left to right. To make sure that the paper is inserted straight, keep the bottom of the paper exactly parallel to the lower edge of the board. Snap the clasp shut and close the metal guide over the paper. The prongs of the clasp hold the paper in place, and the holes made by the prongs make it possible to replace the paper in exactly the same position when necessary.

The point of the stylus is used to press the paper into the indented cells, thus forming the desired dots. In doing so, hold the stylus in a vertical position, rather than at a slant, in order to ensure a clear, firm dot. Four lines of braille can be written with the guide in the first position. When these lines have been written, move the guide down into the next set of holes without removing the paper. Continue in this manner until the entire page has been completed.

Use and Preparation of Drills, Reading Practices, and Exercises

Drills and reading practice. Material in this manual is divided into twenty lessons. Lessons 1–17 each contain one or more drills, and the first eleven lessons each have a reading practice. These are designed solely to give the student practice in applying the rules covered in the preceding section. Students enrolled in the Library of Congress correspondence course should *not* submit these drills to the instructor. The braille supplement, *Drills Reproduced in Braille*, which accompanies this manual, contains correct transcriptions of all drills. In order to derive maximum benefit from them, it is imperative that the student first braille the drill and then compare the results with the corresponding drill in the supplement. The reading exercises should be written out in longhand before comparing them to the printed versions found in Appendix A. For further practice, the print version of the reading exercise can be brailled and then compared with the simulated braille in the lesson.

Exercises. The exercise at the end of each lesson is designed to test the student's ability to deal with problems presented in that lesson and also to serve as a review of previous lessons. These exercises must be submitted to the instructor for examination and correction. Students enrolled in the correspondence course must submit *each* exercise to the instructor on braille paper. Exercises submitted on thermoform paper or in simulated braille will not be accepted. Only one exercise at a time should be submitted. Those students who are taking instruction

elsewhere need submit only the trial manuscript, as described in Lesson 20, to NLS for certification by the Library of Congress.

Some of the lessons can be divided into two parts. Where this is possible, a note has been added indicating the proper breaking point. The exercise has then been arranged so that the first half of the exercise contains only items that have been studied in the first part of the lesson.

Braille page margins and line length. The Library of Congress requires that books produced under its sponsorship be transcribed on pages measuring 11½ inches wide and 11 inches long. This also applies to students of the transcription course when submitting exercises and/or the trial manuscript. Volumes with insufficient margins at the left side present serious binding problems; therefore, the Library of Congress requires a left-hand margin of *at least* one inch. The right-hand, top, and bottom margins should measure at least one-half inch. *These measurements allow for a page of twenty-five lines with 40 cells per line.*

In order to ensure proper margins and a clear copy of the entire braille page by thermoform duplication, the margins on a Perkins braillewriter, which has a 42-cell per line capability, should be set so that it is not possible to braille in the first cell at the left margin or in the last cell of the line.

All references to cell numbers (for example: Start in cell 1 ...) refer to the margin in effect. Therefore, when using a 40-cell line, cell 1 will be the 2nd cell on the machine. A good way to set the margins in the braille is to insert a piece of paper into the machine; push the margin release tabs (located at the rear of the machine) open as far as possible, and, by pushing all six keys at the same time, braille a line of full cells. There should be 42 cells. This practice allows the cells to be seen or felt and the margin tabs to be set in the appropriate places.

Centering a heading. With the exception of the exercise in Lesson 1, the first line of every page of an exercise should carry a fully capitalized centered heading, called a "running head." To center a heading, first count the number of cells that the heading will occupy. Subtract that number from 40 (the number of cells on a line). Divide your answer in half and that will tell you how many blank cells should precede and follow the heading. When a heading occupies an uneven number of cells so that it cannot be perfectly centered, move the heading off center by one cell to the left. When counting the number of cells needed for a centered heading, remember to include in your count contractions, spaces, punctuation signs, and composition signs. Also remember that contractions take fewer cells than the letters they replace.

A blank line should follow the centered heading only on the first page of each exercise. All other pages should have the running head on the first line and the exercise continuing on the second line.

Page numbering. Beginning with the exercise in Lesson 3, consecutive braille page numbers should be shown at the right margin on the first line of each page (on the same line as the heading).

Erasures. Erasures should be resorted to only rarely, and then they should be made with the greatest care. In order to execute a neat erasure, place the paper on a smooth, hard surface such as a piece of glass or a mirror. Place the tip of the eraser on the dot to be erased and gently but firmly press straight down. Then move the eraser in a circular motion until the dot has been

completely leveled. Do not scrub the paper. Be certain that no adjacent dots have been lowered and, if so, reinforce them with the point of the stylus or with the braillewriter.

Because even good erasures are often detectable and confusing to the braille reader, *an erasure should not be made if it would result in a blank cell. Do not erase more than one dot in a cell. Do not erase at the end of a line or in a page number. If the grader can feel an erasure, it will be counted as an error.*

Proofreading. Careful proofreading is the key to becoming a successful transcriber. At first, a sighted student may encounter some difficulty in reading the braille that he or she produces. This situation can be helped by reading what has been brailled, letter-by-letter, and writing it out in longhand. This procedure will not be necessary for long. Soon the eyes will start recognizing clusters of dots as individual characters.

As an exercise is being done, proofread each sentence on the computer screen or while the paper is still in the machine. The exercise should be proofread again when it is complete. And finally, after letting the material rest for several days, the entire exercise should be proofread again. *The pages with errors should be redone so that the exercise, when presented to the instructor, is as perfect as the student can make it.* A pamphlet entitled *Ten Principles and Procedures for Effective Braille Proofreading* is available from the National Library Service.

Grading

After the instructor has examined each exercise, the student will receive a detailed report pointing out errors and making helpful comments and suggestions. Grading is up to the instructor's discretion. Depending upon the number and type of errors made, the student will be asked to resubmit sentences in which errors occurred, or the entire exercise may have to be repeated. When the instructor is satisfied that the student has mastered the material, a new assignment is made. In general, with the practice provided by the drills and the assistance of the instructor's reports, it should be possible for students to submit an acceptable exercise on the first or second attempt.

Certification

After finishing the lessons in this manual, certification as a braille transcriber is achieved by submission of a thirty-five braille-page manuscript to the Library of Congress. Details for preparing the manuscript, and information about the grading process, are located in Lesson 20.

Mailing Materials

Mailing exercises to NLS. All brailled exercises should be mailed to: Braille Development Section, National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, The Library of Congress, Washington, DC 20542. The braille pages should never be folded or rolled. Enclose them in a padded envelope or in a large envelope with firm cardboard sheets the size of braille paper on the top and bottom to protect the braille.

Mailing the trial manuscript. In preparing the trial manuscript for mailing, be sure that the pages are assembled in proper sequential order with the embossed side facing up. Then tie them securely together. A print copy of *all* of the front matter from the book chosen for the manuscript, a copy of all of the print pages that were transcribed, and the braille manuscript should be placed in a box or adequately wrapped to protect them from damage. Photocopies of the print are acceptable.