Lesson 12

Letter Sign

Speech Mannerisms: Stammering, Speech Hesitation or Elongation, Sound Imitations, Lisped Words, Dialect Divided Words: Syllabicated and Spelled Out Words

Note: In this and future lessons there will necessarily be references to rules in *Braille Formats: Principles of Print to Braille Transcription* on subjects not addressed in *EBAE*. While studying *Braille Formats* you may encounter inconsistencies between rules in the two books. These inconsistencies are under study by BANA technical committees. Unless otherwise stated, when in doubt follow the rules as set forth in *EBAE* and this manual when preparing lessons or a certification manuscript.

12.1 Letter Sign in General [II.12]

The letter sign (dots 5-6), also known as the letter indicator, is a composition sign like the capital sign and the number sign. It is used to indicate that a letter or letter grouping *has a letter meaning*, and is not a whole-word contraction or a short-form word. Thus, the letter *d* standing alone has the whole word meaning *do*, but if a letter sign precedes it, it is read as the letter *d*. The letter sign is also used to differentiate between letters and numbers and with roman numerals (to be studied later).

12.2 Letter Sign (Indicator) Used to Identify Single Letters [II.12]

A letter sign is placed immediately before a single, lower-case letter. If the letter is capitalized, the letter sign is placed before the capital sign. Examples:

```
Make an x. X marks the spot.
```

12.2a *a*, *i*, and *o* as letters and words. The letter sign is placed before the letters *a*, *i*, and *o* when they stand for letters, even though these letters have no contracted meaning. The letter sign is not used before the words *a*, *I*, and *O*. Examples:

```
Say the vowels, a, e, i, o, u.

I heard a child sing, "O come, all ye faithful—"

I heard a child sing to come, all ye faithful—"
```

12.2b Plural letters. [II.12.a(4)] Where print shows an *s* added to a single letter to form a plural, in braille a letter sign is placed before the letter and an apostrophe is inserted before the *s*, whether or not it is shown that way in print. Examples:

Grampa uses w's for v's.

Mind your ps and qs.

12.2c Letters that represent unknown quantities and shapes. When a single letter, or a letter with a suffix, indicates an unknown quantity or the shape of something, a letter sign clarifies the meaning. Example:

```
As the geese Ved across the sky, a group of Gen-Xers watched the children go Sing across the ice for the nth time.
```

12.2d Single-letter abbreviations. Place a letter sign before a single-letter abbreviation that is not followed by a period so that it will not be mistaken for a whole-word contraction. Example:

```
E Coli can be deadly.
```

- **12.2e Personal Initials.** The use of the letter sign with personal initials will be studied in Lesson 13.
- 12.3 Letters in Combination with Punctuation
- **12.3***a* **Letters joined to words or other letters by a hyphen.** [II.12.a(4)] A letter sign precedes any single letter that means a letter when it is joined to a word by a hyphen so that it won't be misread as a one-cell, whole-word contraction. When a hyphen or a dash joins letters of the alphabet, a letter sign precedes each letter. Examples:

```
Triple-A U-turn

The letters a-j Seats M—S saved
```

12.3b Letters with an apostrophe. [I.5.b] A letter sign is not used before a letter that is preceded and/or followed by an apostrophe when the apostrophe indicates a missing letter in a word. Examples:

```
'E went t' other way.

Aaron plays rock 'n' roll.
```

12.3c Enclosed letters

12.3*c*(1) In regular text. [II.12.a(2)] If a single letter or letter grouping is enclosed in quotation marks, parentheses, or brackets, or is printed in italics (to be studied later) — and such enclosures or typeface changes have no other purpose than to distinguish the letter or letters — in braille the letter sign is used to keep it from being read as a whole-word contraction or a short-form word, and the enclosing punctuation marks and typeface changes are ignored. Examples:

```
county highway "PD" put your (x) here
```

12.3*c*(2) **In outlines and lists.** [II.12.b(5)] Unlike enclosed letters in regular text, print punctuation is retained, and a letter sign is not used, for letters that designate topics within outlines and lists—whether items are listed vertically or horizontally. If, however, such letters are not in contact with punctuation, a letter sign is required. Examples:

```
A. Thomas Edison
              1. youth
                a) birth
                  b) siblings
                  2. education
                Refer to item [d] in the list.
......
          Refer to item d in the list.
The court decided: a. Hays was guilty; b. it was a felony; c. a ten-year sentence.
```

[Enclosed single-letter abbreviations and single letters in contact with a slash will be studied in Lesson 13.]

12.4 Letter Sign (Indicator) Used to Distinguish Names and Other Words from Short-Form Words [II.12.a(3)]

A letter sign is used before names, such as Al and Ab, and words that have the same spelling as short-form words when they fall at the beginning of a sentence, quotation, or line of poetry, or in fully capitalized text. A letter sign is also used for letter groupings, such as abbreviations, when they could be confused with short-form words. Examples:

```
Al said to his sister, "Ag, come here!"

TUESDAY: THE SMITH AND IMM FAMILIES' REUNION

Can I borrow that CD-ROM?
```

It should be kept in mind that the purpose of the letter sign is to avoid confusion of letters or letter combinations with numbers, contractions, or short-form words. If the context is perfectly clear and no such confusion is possible, the letter sign is not used. Examples:

```
the XYZ Affair

Take the frontage road (KK) home.

Please take Uncle Al home now.

SD and JY connect at W.
```

When deciding whether or not something is clear in context, remember that what might seem clear to a sighted reader is not always obvious to the braille reader because the braille reader cannot see the surrounding text. In the sentence "TN is the postal abbreviation for Tennessee." a letter sign before the TN quickly identifies the letters as an

abbreviation and not the short-form for *tonight*. However, it would not be necessary to use the letter sign before *TN* in a list of Tennessee addresses. Other examples:

```
We have a fine PD.

Some police departments aren't so good, but we have a fine PD.

John is in ag school.

John is interested in animal husbandry and will be going to ag school.
```

12.5 Letter Sign (Indicator) Used in Letter/Number Combinations [II.12.a(1)]

A letter sign distinguishes a letter from a number in a letter/number combination. Whenever a single letter (capitalized or uncapitalized) and a number are connected by a hyphen, a letter sign is needed before the letter to prevent it from being read as another number or as a whole-word contraction. Examples:

12.5*a* **Numbers followed by letters.** To alert the reader that numbers have stopped and letters have begun, a letter sign is used when a letter, a letter grouping, or a hyphen and letters, *immediately* follows a number. Examples:

```
46T 78gx 78-gx 78-gx 78-gx 78-gx
```

• Note: An exception to this rule occurs with ordinal numbers where the number is immediately followed by letters or a part-word contraction, as in 2nd and 4th. Because context makes the meaning clear, a letter sign is not used in ordinal numbers. [VII.29]

Remember that a period terminates the effect of the number sign. Thus, when a letter immediately follows a number and a period, a letter sign is not required. Example:

```
30.a.-f.
```

12.5b Numbers followed by words. When a number and a word are joined by a hyphen, as in 6-pack or 7-Up, a letter sign is not required unless all of the letters of the word could be misread as a number. Examples:

```
a 300-cab operation a figure 8-like track a figure 8-like track
```

```
we made a 6-friend pact is a 2-can case is a 2
```

- **12.5***c* **Letters followed by numbers.** When a single letter is followed immediately by a number, a letter sign is not required. However, a single letter followed by a hyphen and a number needs a letter sign so that the letter will not be misread as a whole-word contraction. Examples:

When a letter grouping is followed by a number, or a hyphen and a number, a letter sign is used only if such letters could be mistaken for a short-form word. [II.12.a(4)] Examples:

RCV90	 lr-14	······································
TX48	 gyv-72	•• •• •• •• •• •• •• •• •• •• •• •• ••
ES-18	 W-2GS	
17C4-6	 C22A	

[Reference citations, such as *II.12.a(4)*, that include numbers and letters separated by periods and decimal points will be studied in Lesson 17.]

12.6 Summary

The rules governing the use of the letter sign may be summarized as follows:

Use the Letter Sign

- 1. With all single letters that mean letters, not words. [Class B]
- 2. With single letters followed by 's. [p's and q's]
- 3. With letters that represent shapes. [a Ved formation]
- 4. With single letters joined to words by a hyphen or dash. [x-ray]
- 5. With single letters joined to other single letters by a hyphen or dash. [a-j A-J]
- 6. With single enclosed letters in regular text (drop enclosure symbols). [(a) "b"]
- 7. With unpunctuated letters in outlines and lists.
- 8. With names, words, or letter groupings that could be mistaken for short-form words.
- 9. With any single letter connected to a number by a hyphen. [c-4 4-C]
- 10. With a letter or letter grouping immediately following a number, or following a number and a hyphen. [6MG 6-mg]

- 11. With letter groupings joined to a number by a hyphen that could be mistaken for a short-form word. [Fr-10 6-ab]
- 12. With lowercase roman numerals and foreign ordinal numbers (to be studied in Lesson 14).

Do Not Use the Letter Sign

- 1. With the words *a*, *I*, and *O*.
- 2. With letters that are followed or preceded by an apostrophe, hyphen, or dash indicating omitted letters. [Fish 'n' Chips d--n]
- 3. With letters designating topics in outlines or listings if they are followed by or enclosed in punctuation.
- 4. With letter groupings that could not be mistaken for a short-form word. [XYZ]
- 5. With words, names, or letter groupings that correspond to short-form words, but, because of context, could not be mistaken for one.
- 6. With a contraction that immediately follows a number, as in ordinal numbers. [1st 4th]
- 7. With any letter that is immediately followed by a number. [M6]
- 8. With letter groupings followed immediately by a number, or by a hyphen and a number, that will not be confused with a short-form word. [TY60 ty-60]
- 9. With words following a number and a hyphen, unless all of the letters of the word could be misread as a number. [6-pack]
- 10. In stammered words (see 12.7.a). [b-b-boy]
- 11. With initials and abbreviations followed by periods or a slash (to be studied later).

Drill 23

Practice brailling the following sentences.

- 1. Little Timmy has learned to write but he sometimes forgets to cross his t's and dot his i's.
- 2. In algebra, the unknown quantity is represented by x.
- 3. If A has two apples and B has three apples, how many apples do they have altogether?
- 4. In the word "siege," I can never remember which comes first, the "i" or the "e."
- 5. D Day, June 6, 1944, was the day set for the landing of Allied forces on the Normandy beaches.
- 6. The patient was given a large T-bone steak to eat before the second set of X-rays was taken.
- 7. His duties are: a. to process the mail; b. to answer the phone; c. to receive visitors; and d. to take dictation.

- 8. Section 4(d) of the outline should be greatly condensed.
- 9. "Peg o' My Heart, I love you."
- 10. Grandma said that the modern generation had gone berserk over rock 'n' roll.
- 11. Line AB is parallel to CD and intersects EF at O.
- 12. I am also sending a copy of this letter to Ab.
 - 13. Al is a popular guy.
 - 14. A meeting will be held on the 15th for the purpose of organizing a new 4-H Club.
 - 15. You will find sections 216b and 216c of the law extremely ambiguous.
 - 16. Next semester Whitney hopes to be promoted to Grade 6A.
 - 17. The diameter of a circle is equal to 2r.
 - 18. During the Cold War U-2 planes were shot down deep inside Soviet territory.
 - 19. She is taking a series of vitamin b12 shots.
 - 20. The medical examination showed that he was in A1 condition.
 - 21. I save money by buying V-8 juice in either a 6-can case or a 4-case lot.
 - 22. We read about Haroun-al-Raschid in the Arabian Nights Tales.

12.7 Speech Mannerisms [II.13]

In the preceding section it was stated that when a letter is joined to a word by a hyphen, the letter sign should precede the letter. In speech mannerisms such as stammering, speech hesitation, and vocal sounds, letters are separated by hyphens but they are actually part of the word itself. In such cases, the letter sign is not used.

12.7*a* **Stammering.** When brailling stammered words, the letter or contraction preceding and following the hyphen must be identical. Therefore, contractions cannot always be used. Examples:

```
m-m-mine ses-say sessay sessay
```

To, into, and by should be contracted and joined to a stammered word. Examples:

```
into th-these to d-do by th-the way
```

Short-form words may be used in stammered words only if the short-form begins with the same letter or contraction as the stammered portion. Examples:

```
g-(good) (ch)-(ch)-(children) q-q-(quick)
m-(myself) d-d-(deceive) qu-quick
c-conceive (th)-(th)emselves b-b-betwe(en)
```

When dividing a stammered word between lines, the stammered portion should not be separated from the rest of the word. However, such words may be divided after any syllable in the unstammered portion. Examples:

```
b-before [not] ::::

s-s-sometime [not] ::::

d-d-d-do [cannot divide]

th-th-think [cannot divide]
```

- **12.7***b* **Speech hesitation or elongation, sound imitations, lisped words, dialect.** In order to promote reading ease, it is suggested that words representing these speech mannerisms not be divided between braille lines.
- **12.7***b*(*1*) **Speech hesitation, elongation, and sound imitations.** Follow print when hyphens and dashes are used to indicate speech hesitation. It is suggested that one-cell whole-word contractions not be used. Other contractions should be used only if they do not interfere with readability or pronunciation. Examples:

```
we-e-elllla-a-ahh—(ch)-o-o-oht(wh)(ing)gg [sound of an arrow]mmm-more(sh)hh!(er)rrr—ahpfftdoodle-e-do(th)e-e-(en)kso-o-o-oas-s-s-saa(ar)rrgg(gh)h!!
```

When the letters *hm* are used in print to represent a vocal sound, see §11.7.

12.7*b*(2) **Lisped words.** A lisped word is one in which the *th* sound is substituted for an *s* or *z* sound. When brailling lisped words, the *th* contraction is always used to represent the lisped sound. Example:

```
Don't keep your thithter in thuthpenthe.
```

12.7*b*(3) **Dialect.** Dialect, sometimes known as "speaking with an accent," is the speech of a geographic region or a social class. The spelling of words reflects phonetic pronunciation. In general, contractions and short-form words are used rather liberally in dialect. It is suggested that these words not be divided between lines. [See also §16.4a] Examples:

(could)a [could have] me(bb)e [maybe] (th)' [the] p(in)ny [penny] dep(ity) [deputy] y(ou)r [you're] (some)rs [somewhere] (wh)(er) [where] (their)selves d(in)t [didn't] '(st)ract(ed) [distracted] b(of)e [both] fay(the)r [father] (dis)truc(tion) [destruction] f(er) [for] (must)a [must have] (good)un [good one] com'(er)e [come here]

If, however, the use of a contraction in a word printed in dialect would obscure its meaning or pronunciation, the contraction should not be used. Example:

```
lyedee [lady]
```

In order to reflect dialectical pronunciation, the th sign is used instead of the the sign when in dialect thee replaces thi, as in (th)e(en)g [thing] and (th)e(en)k [think] — or, where the replaces te or de, as in mat(th)(er) [matter], sis(th)(er) [sister], bat(th)(er)y [battery], and mur(th)(er) [murder]. [X.34.e(1)] This rule applies whether the word is written as a whole or elongated as in the-e-enk.

When in dialect *you're* is written *your*, do not use the short-form word because it does not retain its original meaning.

12.8 Divided Words [II.13]

- **12.8***a* **Words divided into syllables.** In syllabicated words the hyphen always occurs at the end of a syllable; therefore they may be divided between lines after any hyphen.
- **12.8***a*(1) **Words divided into syllables for dramatic effect.** In order to prevent misunderstanding, contraction usage is restricted in syllabicated words. The only contractions that *can be used* when brailling a word that has been divided into syllables for dramatic effect are:
 - and, for, of, the, with. Examples: (for)-ti-tude b(and)-age
 - one-cell, part-word contractions including *in* and *en*. Examples: (en)-li(st) m(in)-is-t(er)
 - one-syllable initial-letter contractions. Examples: (day)-(time) (right)-i(st)
 - one-syllable, short-form words. Examples: (great)-(er) (quick)-ly

The following contractions *cannot be used* if they constitute the *entire* isolated syllable:

- one-cell, whole-word contractions. Examples: can-did so-da (ch)ild-i(sh)
- one-cell, lower sign contractions (except the part words *en* and *in*). Examples: con-tract was-sail be-have mo(th)-(er)-in-law
- one syllable, final-letter contractions. Examples: (for)(th)-(right)-ness com-m(en)t bal-ance (in)-di-g(ence) b(less)-(ed) less-(en)

Examples:

"I'll be to-ing and fro-ing," she chirped, "from your office to mine."

I heard ev-er-y sin-gle word!

12.8*a*(2) **Spelling words and words under study.** [*BF* Rule 1, §4.a] No contractions are used in spelling words or in words that are being analyzed or that have been broken into parts in order to focus upon spelling, pronunciation, or word construction. Example:

```
"Can you spell 'stren-u-ous,' Al?"
```

12.8b Spelled-Out Words. When the letters of a spelled-out word are separated from each other by hyphens, black dots, stars, or spaces, in braille a hyphen is placed between the letters and, when necessary, a transcriber's note (to be studied later) is inserted to explain that the hyphens do not exist in print. Each upper case letter is capitalized individually and letter signs are not used. Examples:

Divide spelled-out words only at the end of a syllable. Do not divide a beginning or ending single-letter syllable from the rest of the word. Example:

	[correct]	[incorrect]	[incorrect]
A-r-a-b-i-a	A-r-a-	A-	A-r-a-b-i-
(A/ra/bi/a)	b-i-a	r-a-b-i-a	a

Drill 24

Practice brailling the following sentences.

- 1. "K-k-katie, beautiful lady, you're the only g-g-g-girl that I adore."
- 2. "Br-r! It's c-cold! D-d-do you th-th-think it'll b-b-b-be warmer t-t-t-t-tomorrow?" he asked, shivering.
- 3. "Wh-where did th-that ch-child d-disappear to n-now?" exclaimed the excited mother.
- 4. "S-s-stop! P-please, let's g-go in," Crystal chattered. "I c-c-can't c-c-conceive of anyth-th-thing as c-c-cold as the wa-water in th-th-this l-l-lake."
- 5. "We-e-ell," the indecisive young captain wavered, "if the storm doesn't soon abate, we may have to send out an SOS."

- 6. "If you'll be m-i-n-e mine, I'll be t-h-i-n-e thine, and I'll l-o-v-e love you all the t-i-m-e time."
- 7. "Come on now! All together! Make it loud! Spell it and yell it! Let's go! CENTRAL! Central!" urged the cheerleader.
- 8. "I lotht my ten thentth, Thuthie," sobbed the little girl.
- 9. "Iffen I cain't keep goin' fer long, I kin allus set a spell and sip my Harm Walker Likker," said the old mountaineer.
- 10. "Theess leetle fellair ees lookeeng for hees seestair," explained the Mountie.
- 11. "And have you consithered, O'Reilly, that the patther of little feet manes that you'll be nadin' mor-r-re bread and butther and tay on the table?"
- 12. The sign in the barracks read: A·T·T·E·N·T·I·O·N! LIGHTS OUT AT 2300.
- 13. Oh, what a beau-ti-ful morning!

EXERCISE

Prepare the following exercise for submission to the instructor. As in previous lessons, the running head, **LESSON 12**, should appear on the first line of every page of the exercise. On the first page only, center the title of the story **SCHOOL DAY** on the third line. Leave a blank line between the title and the beginning of the text. Do not leave blank lines between paragraphs.

SCHOOL DAY

It never would have happened to me if Miss Nellie Peabody, the pretty schoolmarm of Possum Hollow, hadn't suddenly eloped with Everett Stamp, the mail carrier for Route 3. This created a crisis in the Possum Hollow School, and in a weak moment I agreed to step into the breach and teach the entire school — all the way from kindergarten to grade a8.

My troubles began early. The children were all seated when Terence O'Shaughnessy came running through the door. I asked why he was late, and he answered in his broadest Irish brogue, "The batthery in me fayther's car was dead." I explained to Terence that the word is pronounced bat-ter-y, not bat-ther-y. But he, not the least bit convinced, glared at me as he took his seat, and snarled, "Divil a bit! That's the way me fayther says it, and me fayther is always right."

I then proceeded with the calling of the roll. I had progressed from the A's through the M's when I became conscious of the fact that the back of the room was enveloped in clouds of smoke. I was frantically looking about to locate the safest exit through which to herd my charges when I discovered the source of the smoke. A huge hulk of a boy, about six feet, two inches tall, clad in blue overalls and a multi-colored T-shirt and wearing colossal brogans that looked to be at least size 12d, was slouching in his seat in the back row calmly smoking a corncob pipe.

"What do you mean by smoking in school?" I demanded.

"We-e-e-ell, I reckon a m-m-man kin have his m-m-mornin' pipe," he drawled. "Y' know the m-m-mailman run off with the t-t-teacher, and my pa made me g-g-go clear into

t-town and g-g-git the m-mornin' paper so's he c-c-could read the g-g-gossip. So th-thar w-warn't t-t-time for my m-mornin' p-p-pipe."

"Well, you just put that foul-smelling thing out and do without your smoke for one morning," I snapped.

"Okay," he assented sullenly. "Some p-p-people t-treat you like a ch-child. I bin s-smokin' my p-p-pipe since I was th-thirteen. Some f-folks oughta l-look out for th-theirselves 'steada b-bossin' others 'round."

After the smoke had cleared away I returned to my pedagogic duties, listening to the kindergarten contingent recite their ABCs. Even these little tykes seemed determined to test my patience to the utmost. Whenever little Luigi recited the alphabet he insisted on stopping at q. When I asked him why he did this, he replied, "But teachair, Q is for quit — I the-e-enk," and the class roared with laughter. When we came to arithmetic I asked 1st-grade Judy how much 7 and 7 make, and she replied sweetly, "Theventy-theven, Mith Olthen," and again the school rocked with laughter at my expense.

During that whole long day there was one fleeting moment of satisfaction. This happened during the 4th-grade spelling lesson. It became painfully apparent that the children were all having difficulty with words that contained both the letters "e" and "i." Finally, Al asked in desperation, "But how can we tell which comes first, Miss Olsen?"

"Al," I replied, "one thing that will help is to remember this little verse: 'When the letter c you spy, place the e before the i." After that, Al and the rest of the class as well had much less trouble.

About this time, noticing that the children were becoming restless, I announced we'd have a real spelldown — choosing up sides and everything. We started with easy words, and for a while things proceeded smoothly and without notable incident. But then it was Jimmy's turn, and I gave him the word "frog." "F-r—" began Jimmy. He hesitated and started over again. "F-r—f-r—" Jimmy appeared to be completely at sea. Just then I detected Tom reaching over and jabbing Jimmy with a pin, and Jimmy finished in a blaze of glory, "—o-g!" I ignored the prompting and went on.

Finally the field was narrowed down to just two survivors; Dorothy Stamp, a bespectacled, pony-tailed intellectual colossus, and little Percy Littlejohn, a precocious brat who always read with expression. (I could envision the day when Percy would be the announcer on the Possum Hollow radio station and would dramatically proclaim the virtues of K-9 dog toys and 2-dog leashes to an enthralled public.)

"Your word is sat-is-fies, Percy," I said.

Percy spelled it with confidence: "S-a-t-i-s-f-y-s."

"How do you spell it, Dorothy?" I asked, and she triumphantly spelled it correctly: "S-a-t-i-s-f-i-e-s."

As I presented Dorothy with a new 3r game as the prize for being the A1 speller of the school, little Percy's small world of conceit came tumbling down amid anguished howls and copious tears, and my little world of peace and tranquillity came tumbling with it.

At last that long day came to a close, and with it my country schoolteacher career was ended. As I stepped out into the bitter cold of that January 1935 afternoon my lips said "Br-r-r-r-r," but my heart uttered a fervent "Thank God!" I was an older and wiser woman. I had learned three never-to-be-forgotten facts: (a) kids say and do the darnedest things, (b) patience is a virtue well worth cultivating, (c) a schoolteacher's life is anything but a bed of roses.