

Braille in the Workplace

Texas Workforce Solutions comprises Texas Workforce Commission, 28 local workforce development boards and our service providing partners. Together we provide workforce, education, training and support services, including vocational rehabilitation assistance for the people of Texas.

The ability to read and write is vital to everyone. Those skills affect one's ability to get jobs, promotions, and make other life advancements. Braille is an essential tool for individuals who are blind in the workplace.

Braille literacy plays the same key role in the life of someone who is blind as print literacy does in the life of a sighted person; it supports educational advancement and increases employment prospects. Research shows that Braille literacy directly correlates with academic achievement and employment. One quarter of all workers who are blind also read Braille. (Source: National Braille Press, www.nbp.org/ic/nbp/braille/needforbraille.html)



A popularly held belief is that Braille is no longer needed in our paperless society. It is easy to disprove this myth with a simple question: "Are sighted people ready to give up printers, pens and other writing tools?" The resounding answer is "NO!" More paper is manufactured and sold in America today than any other time in our society.

Technology is making literacy even more important. Use of computers, email, and the internet are essential parts of most workplaces. This technology has changed the way we communicate and the way we get information.

In the workplace, one can write and read Braille through a computer. Paper and digital Braille—when used with new technologies like screen readers and magnification software— help employees who are blind successfully work in many professions.



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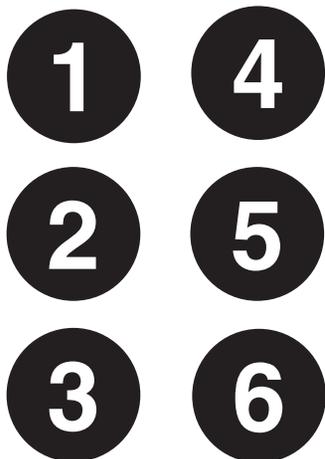
Contrary to popular belief, Braille is not difficult to learn. It is a simple code that fits on a 3" x 5" card.

The genius of Louis Braille, the inventor of the code, is demonstrated in the simplistic pattern of the alphabet and the thrifty approach to the numbering system, which utilizes the first ten letters of the alphabet preceded by a numeric indicator.

Unlike print, Braille does not have a separate set of symbols to represent lower and upper case letters. In Braille, indicators are placed before Braille letters to indicate upper case.

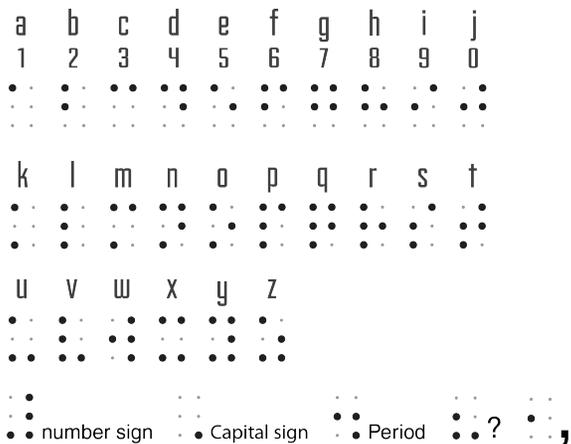
The Braille alphabet, numbers, punctuation and other symbols are created in a six-dot formation called a "cell", which contains two columns of three dots each. Each dot is assigned a number to facilitate ease of learning.

As shown below, from top to bottom, the first column contains dots 1, 2 and 3. The second column contains dots 4, 5 and 6.



Notice the pattern of progression in the example below. The first line contains the letters A through J, and only the four dots in the upper part of the cell are used. (Dots 1 2 4 5). The second line contains letters K through T. Dot three has been added to the letters A through J, to create these letters.

The third line contains the letters U through Z. Notice that the W does not follow the normal progression established throughout the preceding letters. There was no W in the French alphabet, so Louis Braille did not add a W until he met a blind Englishman who requested a symbol for the letter W.



**TEXAS WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS
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