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## Preface to 2015 Edition

Since January of 2007, the courses leading to certification as a braille transcriber or proofreader have been administered by the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) under a contract with and on behalf of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Library of Congress (NLS). As longtime advocates of braille literacy, we in the NFB are pleased to continue to work with NLS to implement this critically important program. We are dedicated to significantly increasing the quality and quantity of braille transcription, thus making braille literature and instructional materials more available to the blind of America. We are indebted to Judith Dixon, Tamara Rorie, and many others from the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped for their ongoing assistance in making this partnership a successful one, and for their tireless dedication to the field.

The 2015 edition of the *Instruction Manual for Braille Transcribing* has been created with two primary purposes in mind. First, the adoption of Unified English Braille to replace English Braille, American Edition as of 2016 necessitated the revision of most of the lessons to reflect the changes. With the advent of UEB, many of the braille rules have become more streamlined, and many exceptions have been eliminated. The division of words between lines to save space on paper, once a prominent feature in this course, is now no longer required to be used in any of the lessons but is discussed in §10.13 of *The Rules of Unified English Braille*.

Second, the revision is intended to provide an introduction to the use of modern tools for braille production. The role of a braille transcriber today often includes much more reading and editing than direct entry of text. Therefore, additional reading practice has been added to the course, and some reading exercises will be submitted to the instructor. Braille transcribers must be thoroughly knowledgeable about the braille dots, and they must also be knowledgeable on how to utilize today's tools to produce braille in a timely fashion while still maintaining the highest quality. For the earlier lessons, students should utilize six-key entry method for transcribing the drills and exercises. However, in later lessons, having demonstrated their ability both to read braille and to transcribe it manually, they are not restricted to the use of six keys and are taught some of the general concepts necessary to the efficient use of braille translation software.

We wish to express our sincere gratitude for the essential contributions of several individuals. We are indebted to Constance Risjord, the author of several previous editions of this manual; her work forms the basis for this new edition, and her continuing contributions to braille instruction during this time of transition are immensely valuable. We are thankful to Jan Carroll, Sharon

Monthei, Susan Mattson, Robert Clapper, Kathy Desmarais, Stacy Fontenot, Lisa Hall, Linda Jacobson, Jill Pariso, Allison O'Day, Julie Sumwalt, Mary Czepyha, Frances Mary D'Andrea, Saralyn Borboa, Trisha Tatam, and Steven Booth for their review of various aspects of this manual with exacting attention to detail. We also appreciate and welcome the feedback of students, instructors, and many others who have made helpful suggestions for improvements in the past and whom we count on to continue to do so as needed with this latest revision.

Jennifer Dunnam  
Manager of Braille Programs  
National Federation of the Blind, Jernigan Institute  
January 2015



# 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 International Council on English Braille (ICEB) and by the Braille Authority of North America (BANA) and published in *The Rules of Unified English Braille* (UEB). In January 2016, UEB will be the general-purpose code in use in the United States, along with other specialized braille codes and guidelines set forth by the Braille Authority of North America.

A source citation appears in brackets following each main heading in this manual. The citation refers to the rule and section of the latest edition of the official code, *The Rules of Unified English Braille, Second Edition 2013*, or to *Braille Formats: Principles of Print to Braille Transcription 2011 (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 very few 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.

Appendix A at the back of this manual gives the correct print for the simulated braille reading exercises that appear at the end of many lessons.

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 *Braille Formats: Principles of Print to Braille Transcription*, available online at [www.brailleauthority.org](http://www.brailleauthority.org). 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*. These

publications may be purchased from the American Printing House for the Blind, (800) 223-1839 or [www.aph.org](http://www.aph.org).

The National Federation of the Blind currently administers the braille certification courses under contract with the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. All persons using this manual are invited to submit comments, criticisms, or suggestions regarding it to the Braille Certification Training Program, National Federation of the Blind, 200 East Wells Street at *Jernigan Place*, Baltimore, MD 21230. These will be studied carefully and given serious consideration in the preparation of any revision.

## How to Enroll

Please visit <http://www.nfb.org/transcribers> or call (410) 659-9314 (ext. 2510) 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*, available for download from <http://www.nfb.org/transcribers>, and provided in hard copy as needed to U.S. citizens and residents enrolled in the course.
- The latest edition of *The Rules of Unified English Braille*, also available for download from the above URL. At this writing, the latest revision is dated 2013.
- A collegiate edition of any reputable dictionary less than ten years old. Online dictionaries such as [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com) are also permissible.
- Braille transcription paper measuring 11 x 11½ inches. A good source for braille paper is the American Printing House for the Blind, (800) 223-1839 or [www.aph.org](http://www.aph.org). If paper is ordered locally, specify 90-lb. card stock with the grain running along the 11-inch dimension. (Note that braille paper is not necessary if lessons will be submitted electronically. However, the manuscript must be submitted on paper—see Lesson 20 for more information).
- A braille eraser, available from the American Printing House or from Howe Press, 175 North Beacon Street, Watertown, MA 02472. (An eraser is not necessary if lessons will be submitted electronically).
- A braillewriter 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 until later lessons in this course. Exercises must be submitted in hard copy (embossed) braille, or by

e-mail with the electronic file as an attachment. Simulated braille (dots reproduced in print on paper) will not be accepted.

**Computer Program.** A six-key computer program called Perky Duck can be downloaded free of charge from <http://www.duxburysystems.com>. Instructions for use of Perky Duck can be obtained from its distributor or from the National Federation of the Blind. Other computer programs provide for the use of six-key entry, but if the program provides any automatic features such as running heads or page numbers, these must be disabled. All spacing, centering, and line breaks must be performed manually for the first 12 lessons.

**Braillewriter.** While there are a number of braillewriters on the market, the Standard Perkins braillewriter 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. Note that other models of Perkins Braillewriters such as the Next Generation and the Smart Braillewriter cannot be used for this course because they cannot accommodate a 40-cell line.

## **Use and Preparation of Drills, Reading Practices, and Exercises**

**Drills and reading practice.** Material in this manual is divided into twenty lessons. Lessons 1–16 each contain one or more drills, and many 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 print 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 or in an electronic file via e-mail. Exercises submitted on thermoform paper or in simulated braille printed on paper will not be accepted. Only one exercise at a time should be submitted. After successful completion of some of the exercises, the student will be provided with an additional reading exercise to be submitted before proceeding to the next lesson. Those students who are

taking instruction elsewhere need submit only the trial manuscript, as described in Lesson 20, to the National Federation of the Blind for certification by the Library of Congress.

**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 second cell on the machine. A good way to set the margins in the braillewriter 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, so that the extra blank cell is to the right of the heading. When counting the number of cells needed for a centered heading, remember to include in your count contractions, spaces, punctuation signs, and indicators. Also, remember that contractions take fewer cells than the letters they replace.

A blank line should follow the centered running head 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 2, place consecutive braille page numbers at the right margin, preceded by three blank cells, on the last line of each page (line 25).

**Erasures.** Erasures (sometimes done when braille directly onto paper) 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 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.*

## 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. Details for preparing the manuscript, and information about the grading process, are located in Lesson 20.

## Mailing Materials

**Submitting exercises.** All exercises brailled on paper should be mailed to:  
National Federation of the Blind, Braille Certification Training Program  
200 East Wells Street, *at Jernigan Place*  
Baltimore, MD 21230

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. Electronic submissions should be emailed as an attachment to [transcribers@nfb.org](mailto:transcribers@nfb.org). The student's name and the lesson number should be included in the subject line of the email.

**Mailing the trial manuscript.** *The trial manuscript must be submitted on paper.* 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 bind 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, the letter to the grader (as described in Lesson 20), and the braille manuscript should be placed in a box or adequately wrapped to protect them from damage. Photocopies of the print are acceptable.

[Front Matter last updated November 28, 2016.]