

Braille Glossary

The braille alphabet:

Each braille character, called a “cell,” is made up of a combination of up to six dots. They are numbered top to bottom in the left column 1, 2, 3, and top to bottom in the right column 4, 5, 6.

1 ● ● 4
2 ● ● 5
3 ● ● 6

The first 10 letters of the alphabet and numbers 1 through 0 (see below for an explanation of numbers):

a/1	b/2	c/3	d/4	e/5	f/6	g/7	h/8	i/9	j/0
⠁	⠃	⠉	⠋	⠏	⠒	⠒	⠒	⠒	⠒

The second 10 letters are the same as the letters directly above them, except they add dot 3:

k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t
⠅	⠇	⠍	⠎	⠕	⠔	⠖	⠗	⠘	⠞

The remaining letters are the same as the letters directly above them, except they add dot 6:

u	v	x	y	z
⠑	⠔	⠚	⠛	⠞

The letter **w** does not fit in the pattern above. As braille was developed originally for the French alphabet, which did not contain the letter **w**, it was added later:

w
⠭

Numeral sign:

There are no distinctive signs used to represent numerals in literary braille. The same characters used for the first ten letters of the alphabet (see above) are also used for the digits 1 through 9 and 0. Every number (not every digit) is preceded by the numeral sign.

⠠

For example: 1776 = ⠠⠒⠒⠒⠒

Punctuation in this book:

apostrophe	comma	dash	ellipsis	exclamation point	hyphen	period
⠂	⠂	⠒	⠒	⠒	⠒	⠒

question mark	open quotation mark	close quotation mark
⠏	⠏	⠏

single-letter capital sign

⠠

whole-word capital sign

⠠

A single capital sign preceding a word indicates that the first letter of the word is capitalized. Two capital signs preceding a word indicates that the whole word is capitalized.

italics sign

⠠

Braille cells cannot be physically italicized. To indicate that a word is in italics, the italics sign is placed before the word.

Upper whole-word signs in this book:

These whole-word signs may not be used in conjunction with other letters or contractions as part of longer words. However, a whole-word sign may be used when followed by an apostrophe as in **can't**.

as	but	can	it	just	not	quite	that	very	you
⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠
⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠
⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠

Upper part-word signs in this book:

Part-word signs are used to represent a group of letters within a longer word.

ar	ch	ed	er	gh	ing	ow	sh	st	th	wh
⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠
⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠
⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠

The signs **a**, **and**, **for**, **of**, **the**, and **with** may serve as part-word or whole-word signs. When following each other, they should be written without any intervening space.

and	for	of	the	with	<i>For example:</i>	with the	r ed
⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠		⠠	⠠
⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠		⠠	⠠
⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠		⠠	⠠

Lower signs in this book:

Lower signs consist of combinations of dots 2, 3, 5 and 6. Their meanings can vary according to placement within a word, and some may function only as whole-word signs. There are extensive rules about their usage. The following shows their usage in this book:

be	bb	by	con	dis	ea	en	gg	his	in	into	to	was
⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠
⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠
⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠

The lower whole-word signs for **to**, **into**, and **by** require no intervening space between them and the following word.

Initial-letter contractions in this book:

Initial-letter contractions use the first letter or sign of the word to be contracted and are preceded by dot 5, by dots 4 5, or by dots 4 5 6. Only initial-letter signs preceded by dot 5 may also function as part-word contractions.

ever	had	many	name	ought	there	where	work
⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠
⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠
⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠

Final-letter contractions in this book:

Final-letter contractions use the final letter to be contracted and are preceded by dots 4 6, by dots 5 6, or by dot 6. They are part-word signs only and are used to represent a group of letters within a longer word.

ally	ful	ment	ong
⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠
⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠
⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠

Short-form words in this book:

Short-form words are represented by a number of significant letters from the print word. They may serve as whole-word or part-word contractions.

above	before	braille	could	good	great	little	said
⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠
⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠
⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠

This short glossary is not a substitution for complete braille instruction. Please visit our website for more information about braille resources.