USING THE BRAILLE FRENCH CODE
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This booklet is based on the braille code used in the United Kingdom for transcribing text in French, and includes advice about various layout conventions.

THE BRAILLE SIGNS

For ordinary letters of the alphabet, the braille signs are the same as for Standard English Braille (SEB).

For accented letters, the following special accent signs should be used:

- ç
- é
- à
- è
- ù
- â
- è
- ç
- î
- û
- ë
- ë
- à
- ù
- ì
- oe diphthong

French code is written letter for letter, but with the following wordsigns being used:

- b for bien
- n for ne
- c " ce
- p " par
- d " de
- q " que
- j " je
- s " se
- l " le
- t " te
- m " me
- v " vous

Composition signs, e.g. letter sign, numeral sign, etc., are the same as in SEB, with the following exceptions:

- capital sign
- italic sign
- double italic sign
Punctuation signs are the same as in SEB, with the following exceptions:

- : abbreviation point (as well as apostrophe)
- : question mark
- :: tiret

Print symbols, e.g. dagger, percentage symbol, etc., and mathematical symbols, e.g. plus, minus, etc., are represented by the same signs as in SEB, with the following exception:

- : asterisk

(The French asterisk is currently used, but the use of the SEB asterisk would bring this into line with the other print symbols. In practice, in bilingual texts, the SEB asterisk is usually used anyway to avoid confusion with the wordsign “IN”.)

**THE RULES**

The French Code as used in the UK is a much simplified version of the real French Code used in France, thus making an introduction to the French language as straightforward as possible for VI students, without them having to learn a complicated new braille code at the same time. With this in mind, the approach to the production of French language material is: if there’s no rule to the contrary, the SEB rule applies.

**The capital sign.**

The capital sign is always used in French, except when the italic sign is used, in which case the italic takes the place of the capital.

Jean Racine

La Côte d’Azur

In French print, the accents are often omitted over capital letters, but we use the proper braille sign for the accented letter.

A sept heures
The double capital sign does not exist in the French code.

If a word or phrase is printed in block capitals for visual effect only, e.g. a heading, an initial capital may well be all that is needed. However, don’t forget that any proper nouns within a phrase like this will also need a capital sign.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VISITE À L’USINE</th>
<th>VISITE A L’USINE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LA BOURSE DE PARIS</td>
<td>LA BOURSE D’PARIS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If a word is printed in block capitals for emphasis, then the italic sign should be used instead, as happens in non-capitalised SEB.

“Il a dit QUOI?!”

Acronyms are brailled with the capital sign before each letter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>le SIDA</th>
<th>le SIDA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>les USA</td>
<td>les USA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The italic sign.

The italic sign is placed before a word to show that it is printed in italic type. If more than three consecutive words are italicised, the first word is preceded by the double italic sign and the last word by the single italic sign.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>écriture italique</th>
<th>écriture italique</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>un mot en italique</td>
<td>un mot en italique</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unlike SEB, where two words are joined by an apostrophe, the italic sign must be repeated after the apostrophe.

| s’accrocher              | s’accercher                    |

The letter sign.

There is no letter sign in the UK French code. However, in bilingual books, the letter sign can be used on questions prefaced by lower case letters or Roman numbers, and occasionally even on lower case letters in ordinary text if this is necessary to avoid confusion. (Upper case letters and numbers take the French capital sign.)
(a) Qui est-ce? Qui est-ce?

(iii) Ecoutez! Ecoutez!

Louis XIV LOUIS XIV

la classe 7b s’amuse au lieu d’étudier LA CLASSE 7B S’AMUSE AU LIEU D’ÉTUDE

(i.e. not LA CLASSE 7B S’AMUSE AU LIEU D’ÉTUDE where the “b” could be misinterpreted as the word “bien”.)

The abbreviation point.

Dot 3 is used instead of the full stop where a stop is used to indicate an abbreviation. If this occurs at the end of a sentence, use both the abbreviation point and the full stop (although, of course, if print does not use a stop after its abbreviations, an abbreviation at the end of a sentence requires only the normal full stop).

M. Bergeret M. BERGERET

l’U.R.S.S. L’U.R.S.S.

Voir p. 9, etc. VOIR P. 9, ETC.

Dot 3 should also be written after the number before ordinal endings. See “Numbers” below.

The tiret.

The tiret is used to open speech in French. However, if print uses ordinary quotation marks rather than the tiret, braille should follow suit.

– Allons! dit-il. CALLONS! DIT-IL.

“Allons!” dit-il. CALLONS! DIT-IL.

Distinction must be made in French between a tiret and a dash. A tiret, preceded but not followed by a space, is usually found at the beginning of a paragraph, but can occasionally occur within a paragraph if the speaker changes. The dash is unspaced as in SEB, and is brailled in exactly the same way.
Numbers.

Cardinal numbers.

Numbers in French are generally printed with a space or a stop separating groups of digits. In braille, the mathematical comma must be inserted.

20 000  
1.000.000

In decimal numbers, the decimal point is printed as a comma. We use the usual braille decimal point, dot 2.

3,14 x 2,36

Dates, telephone numbers, fractions, etc., all follow SEB rules.

Ordinal numbers.

Dot 3 should be written after the number before ordinal endings.

au 14e siècle  
le 1er juillet  
le IIIème acte

Unit abbreviations.

Unit abbreviations should generally be brailed as in SEB. If you’re not sure what to do, following the print is not a bad idea! **Remember:** use the dot 3 abbreviation point rather than the full stop; upper case letters take the French capital sign; lower case letters should be spaced from the preceding number to avoid confusion; where print uses a special symbol, the equivalent SEB braille sign should be used.

Money.

8F50 or 8 F 50  
8f50 or 8 f 50  
£5 = f35
Time.

10 h or 10 h. or 10h or 10h
12h. 45
18h30

Measurements.

NB: Measurement abbreviations are usually spaced from their preceding number, even if close up in the print. Exceptions (e.g. the degree sign) are the same as in SEB.

2 m (or 2m)
55 g (or 55g)
89 kg
60 km/h
21°C
60 W (or 60W)
8,25 %

(Notice in this last example the French use of the comma rather than a stop to represent the decimal point. In braille we use the dot 2, the same as in SEB.)

WORD DIVISION

The following information on word division may be useful. Words may be divided:

(a) before one consonant, e.g. bi-jou, mou-lin
(b) before 2 consonants spoken together, e.g. mi-gnon
(c) where there are three consonants, at the one most apart, e.g. con-troverse, ressem-bler, promp-ter.
(d) between c and q, e.g. ac-quitter.
(e) between double consonants, e.g. pas-ser, rail-ler, af-fairs; but not where pronunciation is disturbed, e.g. Alle-magne.
(f) never between slurred vowels or vowels spoken together, e.g. enroue-ment, vi-cieux; vieux and similar words should not be divided.
FRENCH/ENGLISH BILINGUAL TEXT

English Context.

(This would apply to such works as: books teaching French as a foreign language; grammar books; critiques including excerpts from French texts, etc.)

1. **French code** (including French italics where necessary) should be used for the following:

(a) French words in quotes or italics.
(b) French words which form a centred heading.
(c) French passages which are inset.
(d) French words which form a source at the end of a sentence or passage in French.
(e) French words which are separated from an English interpretation by a colon or other suitable punctuation, as in Notes or Vocabulary.

**Examples:**

*Un café* is a small black coffee.

*Baudelaire writes in a Projet d’épilogue: “Tu m’as donné ta boue …”*

*Il fait beau.: It is fine.*

2. **French words** which are in the same type as the surrounding text and which do not fall into any of the above categories should be regarded as Anglicized and English contractions may be used, with care, when these would not distort the pronunciation. However, if any of these words contain accents, they should be uncontracted, preceded by a letter sign, and the special accent sign should be used.
Examples:

Vin Mousseux is a fizzy wine.

Molière was quoted as saying: “J’en ai assez!”

3. Any foreign words other than French which are in quotes or italics should be uncontracted and dot 4 should be used for any accent signs. Use SEB italics and capital signs.

Example:

All towns and many villages have an Office du Tourisme. For those of you venturing beyond France, the Spanish for Tourist Information Office is La Oficina de Información.

4. Foreign words other than French which are NOT in quotes or italics should be regarded as Anglicized and English contractions should be used, with care, when these would not distort the pronunciation. The dot 4 method should be used for any accent signs.

Example:

Kanterbräu, Mutzig and Stella Artois are well-known makes of beer.
French Context.

(This is rare. It is unlikely we would produce bilingual text where French is the base language and English is the foreign language! In case the unlikely happens though, the above rules are reversed. In brief …)

5. **English words in quotes or italics**, etc. (see point 1 on p.7 for the other categories) should be brailled as SEB with English italics, contractions, etc.

6. **Other foreign words in quotes or italics** should be uncontracted and dot 4 should be used for any accent signs. Use French italics and capital signs.

7. **ALL foreign words** (including English) which are in the **same type** as the surrounding text should be regarded as Frenchified and French code should be used. The dot 4 method should be used for any accent signs.

**N.B.** In strictly French text, i.e. **not** bilingual text, **English words in quotes or italics** would be treated as Frenchified and French code would be used, in exactly the same way as we treat foreign words in Standard English Braille. This situation could occur in bilingual books which include extracts from French sources, in which case the extracts are French text, even though the overall document is classed as bilingual text.

**Example:**

Il lisait *The Times* tous les jours.

*Il lisait The Times tous les jours.*

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LAYOUT

This section is intended only as a guide to brailling items where the layout in print is unusual, e.g. vocabulary, grammar structures, verb tables, etc. It is not meant to be definitive, as it is based largely on the style employed by the RNIB in the production of language texts, and other producers’ methods may vary. The important thing to remember is accessibility for the VI reader.

Vocabulary and (bilingual) examples.

These tend to be relatively straightforward. Print generally distinguishes this type of text from surrounding “normal” text by means of indentation and/or a different typeface. In braille, we ignore the use of bold type and italics (except, of course, where emphasis is required), but we do indent the text for the same reason that print does, so that it is easily found in the middle of normal text. Usual practice is to start the example in cell 5 with runovers in cell 7, and with a colon between the languages if there is no other suitable separator used in the print.

Examples:

*beau*, beautiful, fine

`beau b1uti;f1e`

*petit* = little, small

`petit l1l1 smalk`

*Il sera ravi de faire votre connaissance.*  He **will be delighted** to make your acquaintance.

`il s3era4 rav1 de faire votre connaissance0 he w1l b1 deli4tea yor a0q上看1st acq�st m1e`

Grammar structures.

This is a massive topic area, and it would be impossible to cover the huge variety of layout that there is in the print. On the whole, print tabulates much of this type of material. In braille, it’s often simpler and clearer to do ordinary paragraphs and lists.
Examples:

All nouns in French are either **masculine** or **feminine**:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine singular</th>
<th>Feminine singular</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>un appartement</td>
<td>une maison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le village</td>
<td>la ville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l’hôtel</td>
<td>l’épicerie</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

J’ai les cheveux **blonds** blancs noirs marron foncés et courts. longs. moyens. raids. frisés.

Il a les cheveux...

Elle a les cheveux...

… aux cheveux...

(Notice that the options are separated by semi-colons rather than strokes. This helps to avoid long wordstrings, which are not easy to read.)
Make up 6 sentences from this table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>s'est</th>
<th>réveillés pendant la nuit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Est-ce que tu</td>
<td>t'es</td>
<td>couchée tard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chantal</td>
<td>se sont</td>
<td>bien amusé au camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous</td>
<td>nous sommes</td>
<td>couché de bonne heure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marc et ses parents</td>
<td>s'est</td>
<td>levé à 10 heures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierre</td>
<td>me suis</td>
<td>baignés dans la rivière</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Notice the change of wording in the braille instruction to account for the difference in format from table to lists.)
Sometimes, of course, following print’s table format is the best course of action to take.

**Example:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Masculine singular</strong></th>
<th><strong>Feminine singular</strong></th>
<th><strong>Before a vowel</strong></th>
<th><strong>Plural</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>my</em></td>
<td>mon</td>
<td>ma</td>
<td>mon</td>
<td>mes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>your</em></td>
<td>ton</td>
<td>ta</td>
<td>ton</td>
<td>tes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>his, her, its</em></td>
<td>son</td>
<td>sa</td>
<td>son</td>
<td>ses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>our</em></td>
<td>notre</td>
<td>notre</td>
<td>notre</td>
<td>nos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>your</em></td>
<td>votre</td>
<td>votre</td>
<td>votre</td>
<td>vos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>their</em></td>
<td>leur</td>
<td>leur</td>
<td>leur</td>
<td>leurs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note the abbreviation of the column headings in the braille and the inclusion of a note to explain this.)

**Verb conjugations and verb tables.**

Where individual verb conjugations are included within “normal” text, it’s often possible to reproduce them in the same way that print does, and indent them to cell 5 to make them stand out. Dot 2’s are not necessary after a verb presented in this way. (But if following text is a list or example also starting in cell 5, it can be helpful to insert a separator such as a blank line or centred asterisks.)
Example:

Regular -er verbs are conjugated as follows:
donner – to give
donne  nous donnons
tu donnes  vous donnez
il donne  ils donnent

(Notice that the verb endings have not been italicised in the braille. It is often not necessary to do this, as most grammar texts usually explain what is happening in the verb, and bold endings are just an extra visual aid. But don’t rule it out if you think it’s more useful to include it!)

Verb conjugations laid out in this way should not be split over the braille page. If the conjugation won’t fit as two columns, the whole conjugation can be brailled starting in cell 5, like any normal list. If this is the case, the verb conjugation can be split over the braille page, but it should only be split between the singular and plural forms.

If print uses paragraph format, so can we.

Example:

Répondre (to reply)
Present: je réponds, tu réponds, il répond, ...
Perfect: j’ai répondu, ...

répondre  reply
present: j réponds; tu réponds; il répond; ...
perfect: j’ai répondu; ...
Some verb tables can be brailled using a combination of the previous two methods.

**Example:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive</th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Perfect</th>
<th>Future</th>
<th>Past historic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>devoir</td>
<td>je dois</td>
<td>j’ai dû</td>
<td>je devrai</td>
<td>je dus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to have</td>
<td>tu dois</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to, must</td>
<td>il doit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nous devons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vous devez</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ils doivent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive</th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Perfect</th>
<th>Future</th>
<th>Past historic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dire</td>
<td>je dis</td>
<td>j’ai dit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to say</td>
<td>tu dis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alternatively, the infinitive could be centred (without the word “Infinitive”, although if you do this you should explain it in a note at the beginning of the table) and this would obviate the need for asterisks to separate the conjugations and save some space.
Some verb tables are best presented in table format, the same way that print does them, although we have to make some adjustments to allow for the limited space on the braille page.

**Example:**

**Regular verbs – present tense:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>jouer</th>
<th>attendre</th>
<th>finir</th>
<th>se laver</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>je joue</td>
<td>j’attends</td>
<td>je finis</td>
<td>je me lave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu joues</td>
<td>tu attends</td>
<td>tu finis</td>
<td>tu te laves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il joue</td>
<td>il attend</td>
<td>il finit</td>
<td>il se lave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nous jouons</td>
<td>nous attendons</td>
<td>nous finissons</td>
<td>nous nous lavons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vous jouez</td>
<td>vous attendez</td>
<td>vous finissez</td>
<td>vous vous lavez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ils jouent</td>
<td>ils attendent</td>
<td>ils finissent</td>
<td>ils se lavent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Notice there are no dot 3 lead lines between conjugations. This is because conjugations are meant to be read down the column, not across the row.)

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Other titles in this series:
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Using the Braille Spanish Code

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