Teach yourself to sight read basic braille

Crack the Code

Puzzles with a purpose

All you need is a pencil
Learning braille

Braille is a system of raised symbols, which some people who are blind or partially-sighted learn to read with their fingertips. The words in braille go from left to right across the page, just like printed words.

Some people become very fast at reading braille and are able to read long books, such as Harry Potter. Other people just use braille for labelling, or for writing notes. For some children who are blind or partially-sighted, braille is the very best way to learn to read.

When sighted people look at a page of braille they see a mass of dots and it is hard to imagine ever reading it - by sight or by touch. But once you know what you are looking for it becomes much easier.

What is grade 1 braille?

There are two grades of braille. Grade 1 (also called ‘uncontracted braille’) is a straightforward code with one symbol for each letter of the alphabet, plus a few extra symbols for punctuation and numbers.

Grade 2 (‘contracted braille’) uses the same symbols for the letters of the alphabet but it has lots of extra signs for common words and combinations of letters. Grade 2 braille is quicker to read but takes longer to learn.
How do the dots work?

The symbols which represent each letter are made up of between one and six dots, based on the pattern of the six dots you would see on a dice or a domino.

Each dot can be referred to by number. On a Perkins brailler the keys correspond to the individual dots as shown below.

If you are able to spend an hour or two with this puzzle book you will find, by the end, you can read a whole page of basic ‘grade 1’ braille with very little difficulty.
1. Use a pencil or pen to copy the dots which make up the letters:

1. Here are the letters A-G again - but one letter is repeated. Which one?

2. Can you match the following words in print and braille?

   cage  bead  face  age
Can you read these sentences?

• bought him an Arsenal.
• He her to get into the .
• She met him at an Internet.

Fill in the missing word - in braille!

• Delia Smith will teach you how to boil an
• Burgers are usually made from minced
• In card games, the highest (and lowest) scoring card is an
• David Beckham is Brooklyn Beckham’s

Finished this page? Congratulations - you have learned over a quarter of the alphabet!
You have learned these letters:

A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Now here are six more:

H  I  J  K  L  M

6  Copy the dots which make up the letters:

H  I  J  K  L  M

7  Find the opposites of these print words:

white  low  alive
her  valley  toe  healthy

hill  hear  ill  dead

black  high  him
When Michael Hill was found dead in Ed’s Downtown Diner in Miami we did not know who to blame. Mike was no saint. He had blackmailed his brother Jake and made his sister Gail lend money which he gambled away. He made a fake insurance and was jailed in Gambia.
He lied to his old dad, his marriage to Kim failed, and on one occasion even hijacked a plane from Adelaide to Bali. Many people wanted to kill him. But who killed the kid? Ed did!

And that’s half the alphabet............
You have learned these letters:

A B C D E F G

H I J K L M

Now here are seven more:

N O P Q R S T

9 Copy the dots which make up the letters:

N O P Q R S T

10 Find the shops!

Tesco  Iceland  Boots

Monsoon  Lidl  Harrods

Homebase  Top Shop
11 Take another good look at the new letters. Now try to remember them and fill them in the spaces below:

N O P Q R S T

12 Wordsearch

Write these drinks in braille.

soda  beer  lager

Write these drinks in braille:

soda  beer  lager

N O P Q R S T

tea  cola  port

Now find them in the box below, written across or down. Can you find one more drink in the box?
Before we look at the last six letters, it is time to look at some punctuation. Unlike the letters of the alphabet, punctuation does not use either of the top dots.

Here is a braille full stop. Copy it here

We also need a comma, Copy it here

an exclamation mark! Copy it here

and a question mark? Copy it here

13 Fill in the braille punctuation in the following sentences:

I stopped at the shop to get eggs, cheese, milk and bread. Had I forgotten something important? Nappies? Soap? Potatoes? I know! Chocolate!

I stopped at the shop

eg, cheese

t and bread had
Braille produced for children usually shows which letters are capitals by putting a capital sign in front of them.

In this way, young braille users learn how to use capital letters themselves.

The sign to show a capital is like this: ♂ ●.

The capital sign appears at the start of every sentence, at the beginning of names and wherever else you would find a capital letter in print.

14 Read these words and find the odd one out!
15 Fill in the names of famous people - not forgetting the capital sign. (Make up a name if you don’t know the answer!)

Oliver (chef)

Mandela (statesman)

Obama (US President)

Cruise (US actor)

Widdecombe (politician)

Harry (boy wizard)
Now for the last six letters. You have already learned these:

A B C D E F G

H I J K L M

N O P Q R S T

Now here are the last six:

U V W X Y Z

16 Copy the dots which make up the letters:

U V W X Y Z

17 Write your first name here (with a capital sign):
Write your child’s name here:

Where do you live?

18 Circle your birthday month:

- January
- February
- March
- April
- May
- June
- July
- August
- September
- October
- November
- December
19 The missing words all start with the same letter:

• People waiting in line is called a

• A competition with questions is a

• Where boats tie up is called a

20 Now here’s a joke:

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Doctor, doctor, every time I stand up I see Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck and Goofy.
Tell me, how long have you been having these Disney spells?

Two more bits of punctuation . . .

In print, what people say is put in speech marks “like this.”

In braille, speech starts with this sign 

and ends with this one 

21 Copy out this braille sentence, with punctuation.

“Women,” he said, “like sunbathing.”

“Women,” he said, “like sunbathing.”
22 Now add the punctuation to this sentence:

You say “hello” and I say “goodbye.”

You might also need to recognise the apostrophe, which looks like this:

For example: It’s very warm in Zoe’s flat.
And here’s a funny story for you!

A husband and wife were going out for the evening. The last thing they did was to put the cat out.

The taxi arrived and, as the couple walked out of the house, the cat shot back in. So the husband went back inside to chase it out.

The wife, not wanting to leave the cat inside, went back in to close the door.
it known

explanation to the taxi
driver who was just

going upstairs to say

goodbye to the mother.

a few minutes later,

the husband got into

the taxi and said

there was someone

sounding the stairs.
Under the bed and she had to poke her with a coat hanger to get her to come out.

**Numbers**

Lastly, you need to know a few numbers.

With the clever use of a number sign like this in front of them, the letters A to J become numbers - like this:
And longer numbers just need one number sign at the beginning:

10  11  12

20  100  2009

24 Fill in the missing numbers

For the emergency services dial

The Prime Minister lives at Downing Street.

James Bond is agent

Most men retire at age
The winning lottery numbers are \( 5 \quad 17 \quad 26 \quad 38 \quad 49 \).

Which of these numbers wasn’t a winning number?

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\begin{align*}
\bullet \bullet \bullet & \quad \bullet \bullet \bullet \quad \bullet \bullet \bullet \\
\bullet \bullet \bullet & \quad \bullet \bullet \bullet 
\end{align*}
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\begin{align*}
\bullet \bullet \bullet & \quad \bullet \bullet \bullet \quad \bullet \bullet \\
\bullet \bullet \bullet & \quad \bullet \bullet \bullet 
\end{align*}
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CONGRATULATIONS!

You have cracked the code!
Here’s a bit more reading practice. The second part of the story looks more like embossed braille - the kind you will find in real braille books.

This is the true story of a man who woke at 2 in the morning and realised that thieves were breaking into his garage.

- He immediately phoned the police who asked was someone in your house?
- George said no and explained the situation. Then they told him all patrols were busy but an officer should be there then available.
George said he had hung up, counted to ten, and phoned the police again.

"Hello, I've just shot all the people burgling my garage," he told them and he hung up.

Within 20 minutes a squad cars, an armed response unit and an ambulance showed up.

Of course, the police caught the burglars red handed.
One of the policemen said to George: "I thought you said that you'd shot them."

"I thought you said there was nobody available."

The end.
For more information about braille and a range of braille courses for visually-impaired and sighted adults and children, please contact the RNIB: 0845 766 9999
www.rnib.org.uk