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The Power of Braille:

A Guide to Creating
Accessible Materials





INTRODUCTION

Braille is a critical tool for promoting literacy and independence among people with visual impairments, according to the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) (AFB, 2021). However, despite its importance, Braille literacy rates are declining, and there is a growing concern about the accessibility of printed materials for individuals with visual disabilities. In Europe, approximately 30 million people are estimated to be living with some form of visual impairment, and only 10% of blind children are proficient in Braille (European Blind Union, 2021).

The use of Braille helps individuals with visual

Braille was developed by Louis Braille in the 1820s when he was a pupil at the Royal Institute for Blind Youth in Paris

impairments to develop their reading, writing, and communication skills, enabling them to access information and participate fully in society. In today's digital age, there are various tools and technologies that can make information more accessible to individuals with visual disabilities.

However, printed materials in Braille remain an essential part of everyday life for many individuals who rely on this tactile system to navigate the world (AFB, 2021). For example, Braille is used for labeling prescription medication, marking clothing sizes, and indicating floor numbers in elevators.

Creating materials in Braille can be challenging, but it's crucial for promoting accessibility and inclusivity for individuals with visual impairments. The European Blind Union (EBU) is an organization that represents the interests of blind and partially sighted people in Europe. They provide resources and support for promoting accessibility and inclusion, including information on Braille printing and translation. The EBU reports that Braille production has decreased by 45% in

Braille is not a language. It is a tactile code enabling blind and visually impaired people to read and write by touch, with various combinations of raised dots representing the alphabet, words, punctuation and numbers.

Braille uses much more space on a page than a sighted writing system.

the last ten years in Europe (European Blind Union, 2021). Furthermore, only 15% of public and private organizations in Europe have policies in place to promote accessibility for individuals with disabilities (European Disability Forum, 2021).

By following the steps outlined in this guidebook, individuals and organizations can produce high-quality Braille materials that will allow individuals with visual impairments to have the same access to information as their sighted peers. Organizations such as the National Braille Association Europe (NBAE) provide resources and training for Braille teachers, transcribers, and readers. They also offer certification programs for Braille transcribers and proofreaders. Additionally, the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE) offers a range of resources and training opportunities for educators and professionals, including information on accessible technologies and Braille printing.

It is important for individuals and organizations to recognize the value of Braille literacy and promote accessibility and inclusivity for individuals with visual impairments. With the right tools and resources, it is possible to create Braille materials that promote literacy and independence for individuals with visual disabilities.

A number of hugely popular classic games have adapted braille versions, for example Monopoly, Scrabble and Uno.

Practising reading and writing braille regularly can help to improve reading speed.

References:

- American Foundation for the Blind. (2021). What is Braille? Retrieved from <https://www.afb.org/blindness-and-low-vision/braille-literacy/what-is-braille>
- European Blind Union. (2021). Facts and figures on blindness and visual impairment in Europe. Retrieved from <https://www.euroblind.org/facts-figures>
- European Disability Forum. (2021). Accessibility in Europe. Retrieved from <https://www.edf-feph.org/accessibility-europe>
- National Braille Association Europe. (n.d.). Home. Retrieved from <https://www.nbaeurope.org/>



Step 1:

Choose a Braille printer



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There are different types of Braille printers available on the market, ranging from desktop models to larger industrial ones. Popular brands include Index Braille, Braillo, and Enabling Technologies.

When choosing a printer, consider factors such as size, speed, and functionality. For example, if you need to produce a high volume of materials quickly, you might want to consider a high-speed Braille printer like the Index Braille Everest.

Useful links:

- Index Braille: <https://www.indexbraille.com/products/>
- Braillo: <https://braillo.com/products/>
- Enabling Technologies: <https://www.brailer.com/braille-printers/>

Funding opportunities for Braille printers:

- European Union:
- <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=89&langId=en>
- European Blind Union: <https://www.euroblind.org/>
- European Disability Forum: <https://edf-feph.org/>



Step 2:

Use Braille translation software



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Braille translation software is used to convert text into Braille format. Some popular software programs include Duxbury Braille Translator, BrailleBlaster, and Braille2000. These programs can handle both contracted and uncontracted Braille, as well as a variety of languages and Braille codes. It's important to choose a software program that is compatible with your Braille printer and can produce high-quality Braille output.

Useful links:

- Duxbury Braille Translator: <https://www.duxburysystems.com/>
- BrailleBlaster: <https://brailleblaster.org/>
- Braille2000: <https://www.braille2000.com/>

Did you know?



It is estimated that over 285 million people worldwide are visually impaired.



Step 3:

Choose high-quality Braille paper



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When printing Braille materials, it's important to choose high-quality Braille paper that can withstand the embossing process without tearing or smudging. Some popular brands of Braille paper include Piaf, Everest, and Nippon. Braille paper is usually thicker and more durable than regular paper, and it may have a slightly rougher texture to help the Braille characters stand out.

Useful links:

- Piaf: <https://www.piaf.fr/en/>
- Everest: <https://www.atlab.com.br/en/home/>
- Nippon: <http://www.nipponpaper-papylia.com/en/>



Did you know?

One person in the world goes blind every 5 seconds.



Step 4:

Proofread your document



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Before printing your Braille document, it's essential to proofread it for accuracy and clarity. If you're not a Braille reader yourself, consider asking a visually impaired individual to review the document to ensure that it is formatted correctly and free from errors.



Did you know?

80% of impairments can be prevented or cured.



Step 5:

Print and label your document



Once your Braille document is translated, proofread, and ready to print, use your Braille printer and high-quality Braille paper to produce the document.

When labeling your document, be sure to use clear, large print on the cover page to indicate the title and author of the document. You may also want to include additional labeling on any storage boxes or file folders where the document will be kept.



Did you know?

90% of the world's visually impaired people live in developing countries.



Step 6:

Consider adding tactile graphics



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If your Braille document includes graphics or images, consider adding a tactile version to make the document more accessible. You can do this using specialized software or by creating a separate tactile overlay using materials like thermoform plastic or Swell Paper. This can help to enhance the overall accessibility and usefulness of your Braille document.

Useful links:

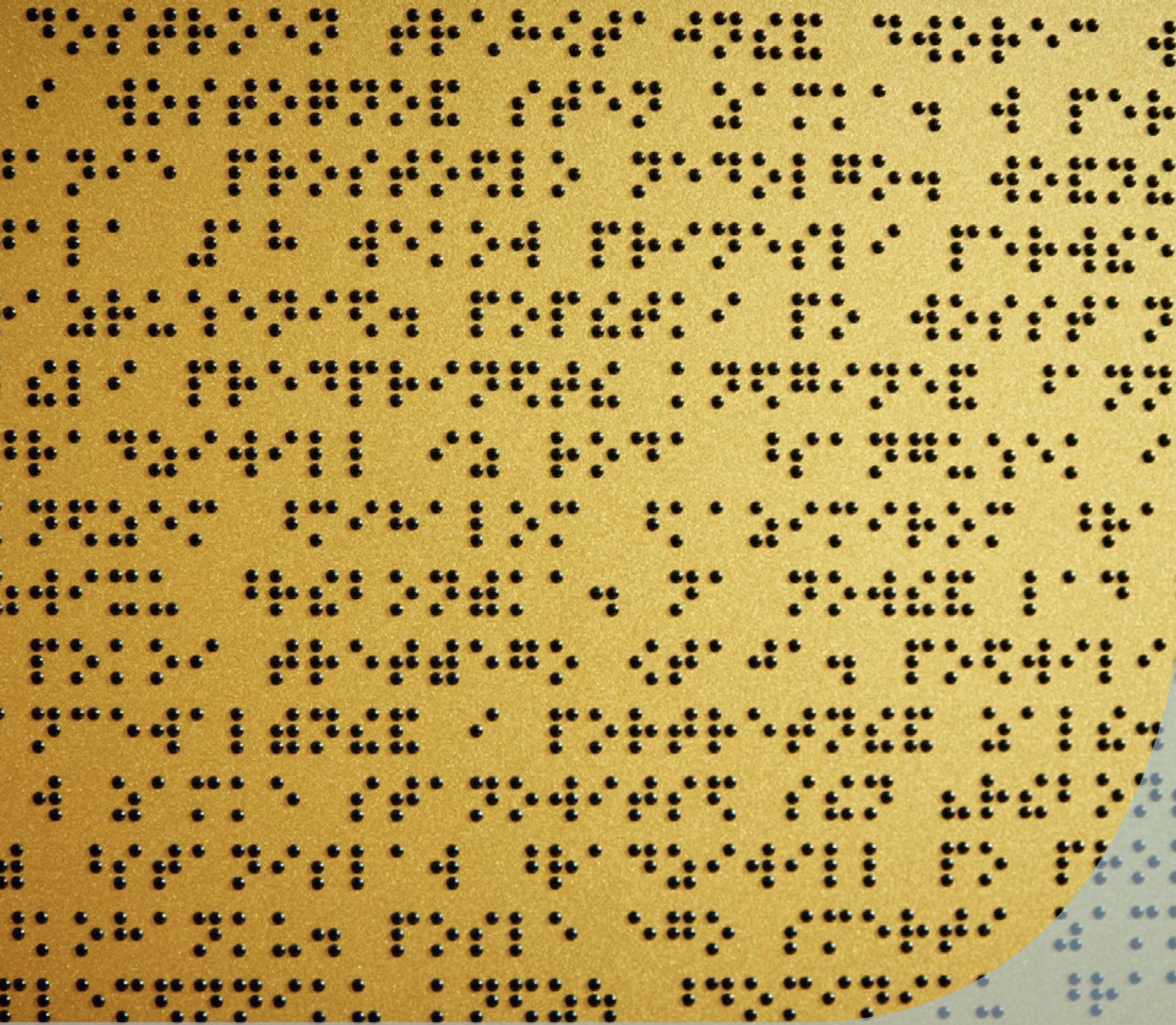
TactileView: <https://tactileview.com/>

Tactile Graphics Inc.: <http://www.tactilegraphics.org/>



Did you know?

82% of blind people are 50 years and older.



Step 7:

Consider the reader's needs



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When creating Braille materials, it's important to consider the needs of the Braille reader. Some readers may prefer electronic formats over hard copies, while others may have specific preferences for the type of Braille used. By taking these needs into account, you can ensure that your Braille materials are as accessible and useful as possible.

It's also important to note that there may be funding opportunities available for individuals or organizations that need to purchase a Braille printer. Disability advocacy organizations, government agencies, and private foundations are all possible sources of funding.

For more information on Braille printing, you can check out organizations like the European Blind Union or the Royal National Institute of Blind People in the UK. These organizations provide resources and support for individuals with visual impairments and can provide more guidance on producing Braille materials.



European organizations

promoting accessibility and inclusion



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European Blind Union (EBU):

Website: <https://www.euroblind.org/>

Description: EBU is an organization that represents the interests of blind and partially sighted people in Europe. They provide resources and support for promoting accessibility and inclusion, including information on Braille printing and translation. They also offer advocacy services and training opportunities for individuals and organizations.

Email: info@euroblind.org

Phone: +32 2 280 04 68

National Braille Association Europe (NBAE):

Website: <https://www.nbaeurope.org/>

Description: NBAE is an organization dedicated to promoting Braille literacy in Europe. They provide resources and training for Braille teachers, transcribers, and readers. They also offer certification programs for Braille transcribers and proofreaders.

Email: info@nbaeurope.org

Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB):

Website: <https://www.rnib.org.uk/>

Description: RNIB is a UK-based organization that provides information and support for people with vision impairment. They offer a range of resources on Braille printing and accessibility, including information on Braille translation software, Braille embossers, and Braille paper.

Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk

Phone: +44 300 123 9999

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE):

Website: <https://www.european-agency.org/>

Description: EASNIE is an organization that works to promote inclusive education across Europe. They offer a range of resources and training opportunities for educators and professionals, including information on accessible technologies and Braille printing.

Email: info@european-agency.org

Phone: +45 32 64 30 00

European Disability Forum (EDF):

Website: <https://www.edf-feph.org/>

Description: EDF is an organization that advocates for the

rights of people with disabilities in Europe. They provide resources and support for promoting accessibility and inclusion, including information on Braille printing and translation. They also offer training opportunities and advocacy services for individuals and organizations.

Email: info@edf-feph.org

Phone: +32 2 280 68 68

It's important to note that these organizations may have different contact details or regional branches, so it's best to check their websites for more information.



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