A Guide to Braille ASCII
(or "Computer Braille")

Some electronic braille devices occasionally display information or require that users input information in "computer braille" or braille ASCII. Braille ASCII is not technically a braille code, but rather is a one-to-one mapping between braille characters and the QWERTY keyboard (a standard computer keyboard). If you have a braille font installed on your computer, that braille font is the same as "computer braille" when typing.

This guide will provide you with an overview of what you need to know to be able to understand or enter text when a device says, "computer braille required."

Do Not Contract

Since braille ASCII is a one-to-one mapping between the QWERTY keyboard and braille signs, there is no translation occurring, so contractions cannot be used.

Instead of typing:

⠨⠃⠗⠊⠞⠑ ⠃⠙

You would need to type:

⠠⠃⠗⠊⠞⠊⠎⠓ ⠉⠕⠇⠥⠍⠃⠊⠁

Because there is no translation occurring, you also cannot use braille indicators that don't exist in print, such as the number indicator (dots 3-4-5-6 ⠼) or the capital indicator (dot 6 ⠠).

Numbers

Since the number indicator is a symbol that does not exist in print and cannot be used, all numbers are represented in the lower part of the braille cell with no number indicator preceding them.

If you need to type a mixture of letters and numbers, such as a postal code like V6P 6G2, instead of typing:

⠠⠧⠼⠋⠠⠏ ⠼⠋⠛⠂

You would type:

⠓⠊ ⠞⠓

Capitals

Without being able to use dot 6 to indicate capitals, many devices will use 8-dot input to accomplish this. Often, a capital can be entered by adding dot 7 (the far-left dot under the little finger) to the letter being typed. So, a capital A would be dot 1-7 and a capital R would be dots 1-2-3-5-7.

Note: Be sure to check the manual for the braille device being used. Sometimes another method is used to indicate capital letters, such as pressing space with U prior to typing the letter to be capitalized.

Punctuation

Braille ASCII does not use the same punctuation symbols as Unified English Braille. Here are some of the most frequently used punctuation signs:

Period (.)   ⠲ (dots 4-6)
Comma (,)   ⠠ (dot 6)
At sign (@)   ⠈ (dot 4)
Slash (/)   ⠌ (dots 3-4)
Backslash (\)   ⠳ (dots 1-2-5-6)
Colon (:)   ⠱ (dots 1-5-6)
Hyphen (-)   ⠤ (dots 3-6)
Underscore (_)   ⠸ (dots 4-5-6)
Pound (#)   ⠼ (dots 3-4-5-6)

For a full list of all punctuation and other signs in braille ASCII, most braille device user manuals include a braille ASCII chart as an appendix.