Unified English Braille (UEB): Summary of changes for ordinary braille

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1. Introduction

This document is a short summary of the changes to the braille rules for ordinary text. It does not provide a full statement of the rules, nor a full list of the signs which UEB provides. For this, reference should be made to The Rules of Unified English Braille, produced by and available from ICEB (www.iceb.org). UEB doesn't deal with braille layout, and so only braille coding rules are affected.
2. Contractions

a. Deletions

The following contractions are no longer used:
ble, com, dd, ation, ally, o'clock, to, into, by

E.g. addition table  

Although the contraction ation may not be used, the contraction tion may still be used in words containing that string of letters.

E.g. station

"to", "into" and "by" are no longer brailed close up to the following word. Although the contraction for the word "into" may no longer be used, the contraction for in may still be used within it.

E.g. into space

b. Sequencing

The wordsigns and for of the with are still allowed, but have to be spaced from each other and from the word "a".

E.g. for the time being

b. Choice of contractions

When the string "ence" is followed by "a", "d", "n" or "r", the contraction ence is now used, rather than the single cell contractions.

E.g. silencer

experienced
d. Lower wordsigns

Lower wordsigns such as in, be and his may be used in contact with capital indicators or terminators even if the string does not include an upper sign.

E.g. Be Calm!


e. The ea contraction

The ea contraction is now permissible in words like borealis, genealogy, Neapolitan; and as part of diphthongs as in Judaean and Liliaceae.

f. With the oblique stroke

The oblique stroke is not treated as a word boundary for some of the contraction rules, which results in the following contractions not being used in contact with it:

(a) Shortforms and alphabetic wordsigns (called simple upper wordsigns in SEB, e.g. b – but, c – can).

(b) The lower groupsigns be, con and dis.

E.g. above/below  above/below
quite/very  quite/very

[This relates to the important definition of "standing alone" in UEB, upon which some of the rules on the use of contractions depend. For the same reason the exclusions of (a) also apply to words in email and web addresses; as does (b) if the word is not at the very start of the address. An example of this is shown under Email and Web Addresses later in this document. Nevertheless, for the most
part, the use of such contractions in ordinary text is the same as in SEB.]

3. Capitals

Capitals are normally indicated. The indicators are the same as for SEB:

   Capital indicator

symbol    
word      
passage    
terminator 

The rules are generally similar to those for SEB: the capital word indicator has force over a sequence of letters or contractions, but is terminated by other signs, such as a hyphen or dash. The capital passage indicator applies up to the capital terminator, and is used for three or more spaced strings (e.g. words).

   E.g. LEFT-HAND 
   I AM HERE!

4. Italics, bold and underline

There are separate indicators for italics, bold and underline. In UEB these are collectively called "typeform indicators":

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Italic</th>
<th>Bold</th>
<th>Underline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>symbol</td>
<td>: :</td>
<td>: :</td>
<td>: :</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>word</td>
<td>: :</td>
<td>: :</td>
<td>: :</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>passage</td>
<td>: :</td>
<td>: :</td>
<td>: :</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>terminator</td>
<td>: :</td>
<td>: :</td>
<td>: :</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The symbol indicators apply to the following character only; the word indicators apply to the following string ending with a space (e.g. a word); and the passage indicators apply up to the corresponding passage terminators.

E.g. books  books
Reading *The* Times  The Times
avant-garde  avant-garde

The passage indicators are used for three or more consecutive spaced strings (e.g. words) of that type. If punctuation ends the passage, the terminator is normally placed after it.

E.g. Guide to the **Tower of London**.


5. Quotation marks

Outer quotation marks have generic braille signs whatever the print type (single or double), but inner quotes use new signs which distinguish between single and double print quotes. The latter can also be used in other circumstances where it is needed to distinguish the type of print quotes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Open</th>
<th>Close</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>outer</td>
<td>:✿</td>
<td>:✿</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inner single</td>
<td>' '</td>
<td>:✿ :✿</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inner double</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
<td>:✿ :✿</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
E.g. 'He asked, "Can I come in?"'

(In this example, note that in the application of the lower sign rule, which allows en and in to be contracted if in contact with an upper sign, all quote signs are regarded as lower signs.)

6. Other common signs

- Round brackets ( ) opening : closing :
- Square brackets [ ] opening : closing :
- Asterisk * :
- Dagger † :
- Double dagger ‡ :
- Dash – :
- Long dash — :
- Underscore _ :
  (e.g. a blank to be filled in; the single braille sign is used for any length of underscore in print)
- Decimal point . :
  (i.e. same as full stop)
- Ellipsis ... :
  (i.e. a sequence of stops)
- Pound sign £ :
- Dollar sign $ :
- Degree sign ° :
- Prime ’ :
  (e.g. feet or minutes)
- Double prime ″ :
  (e.g. inches or seconds)
- Percent % :
UEB is designed so that all the signs are capable of being spaced or unspaced in any combination without ambiguity, so arbitrary strings of letters and other signs can be brailled directly as shown in print.

E.g. *x**%  

### 7. Basic maths signs

The arithmetical signs are similar to SEB, except that dot 5 is used as a prefix instead of dots 56:

- **plus** +  
- **minus** −  
- **times** ×  
- **divided** ÷  
- **equals** =

These signs can be spaced or unspaced, but a common convention is to space the equals sign, and to leave the others unspaced.

E.g. 2 + 6 = 8

### Fractions

Simple numeric fractions use upper numbers for both numerator and denominator, separated by a "fraction line sign", dots 34.
8. Phone and other grouped numbers

In phone numbers, spaced groups of digits are separated by a dot 5, rather than by repetition of the numeral sign. Other punctuation signs used as separators, such as hyphens, are retained in UEB.

E.g. 0845 60 85223

The same applies to ordinary numbers where spaces are used in print to group thousands, etc.

E.g. 6 000 250

9. Grade 1 indicator

Grade 1 indicator

symbol ::

word :: ::

passage :: :: ::

terminator :: :: :

There is no such thing as the "letter sign" in UEB: dots 56 is instead designated as the grade 1 indicator, and with letters is only used when needed to stop a letter being read as a wordsign. Abbreviations like "pm" or "am" would not have a grade 1 indicator, as no disambiguation is needed. The dots 56 grade 1 indicator only applies to the following character; UEB also has a grade 1 word indicator, a grade 1 passage indicator, and passage
terminator, used similarly to the indicators for italics, bold and underline.

In general, abbreviations are not specially distinguished from ordinary words in UEB, any distinction is only that given by the print, i.e. by the abbreviation's capitalisation.

E.g. Mr S arrived at the BBC at 6 pm

Mr S arrived at the BBC at 6 pm

The grade 1 indicator is also used where letters a-j follow unspaced after numbers.

E.g. 221b

221b

10. Spelt-out and stammered words

No special rules are introduced here: the standard UEB rules on contractions and the need for grade 1 indicators are applied:

E.g. w-i-n-d-o-w

w-i-n-d-o-w

d-d-day

d-d-day

y-y-you

y-y-you

11. Unit abbreviations

Unit abbreviations should be spaced or unspaced from the number according to print, and the grade 1 indicator is used as required according to the above.

E.g. 100 cm = 1 m

100 cm = 1 m
25.4cm = 0.254m = 10in

6’ 10” (6 feet 10 inches)

12. Superscripts and subscripts

UEB has new superscript and subscript indicators:

superscript :^:
subscript :^:

The grade 1 indicator is needed before these signs in cases where they could be read as contractions. (Note that in UEB, the number sign automatically sets grade 1 mode after it for the rest of the string, so a grade 1 indicator is not needed before the superscript and subscript indicators there.) Lower numbers are not used in superscripts and subscripts as they are in SEB.

E.g. $3^2 = 9$

$10 \text{ m}^2$

$10\text{m}^2$

vitamin $B_{12}$

$H_2O$

13. Dates and times of day

Print’s use of punctuation and separators should be followed.

E.g. 6/3/12

6.3.12
14. Email and web addresses

Email and web addresses are treated as normal text (there is no such thing as computer code in UEB).

E.g. bbc.co.uk/arts  

mark@trade123.co.uk  

friend@rogers.com  

(In this example note that the grade 1 indicator is needed before "co", otherwise "c" would be read as decimal 3.)

(In this example the shortform for "friend" cannot be used because of the "standing alone" rule, mentioned under Contractions – 6.)

15. Accents

In UEB specific signs are used for the different accent marks; there is no generic accent sign as in SEB.

acute ́̂

grave ̀̂

circumflex ^̂̂

diaeresis ´̂̂

cedilla ¸̂
tilde ~ 

These precede the letter which they modify; the modified letter may not be part of a contraction.

E.g. crème brûlée ulaire ée
blessèd ééd

16. Transcriber's note indicators

UEB includes special brackets @.< and @.> to enclose explanatory notes or other text inserted by the transcriber, as distinct from the original text. (Previously ordinary square brackets would have been used for this purpose.)

E.g. in the figure below [not reproduced]

[Figure not reproduced]

17. Uncontracted braille

In UEB the rules for uncontracted braille are the same as for contracted braille, except for the use of contractions and the rules relating to them. This amounts to grade 1 indicators not being used apart from a few cases unrelated to contractions, e.g. before lower case letters immediately following numbers, such as in "3c".

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