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# **Embossing, Binding and Labelling Braille Publications**

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# 1. Embossing

## 1.1 Single or double sided

Generally speaking all braille should be embossed double sided for the simple reason that it saves paper. Braille is bulky to carry and store and double sided embossing halves this bulk. There are occasions when you may have to produce single sided braille, e.g.

- Your embosser only allows for embossing of single-sided pages
- The braille document will need to be read by people who sight read braille.

Braille translation software allows users to set margins and indicate whether the document will be single-sided or double-sided so that pages will be numbered in sequence.

## 1.2 Size and type of paper

There are two main sizes of paper used with embossers in the UK. One is the more traditional 'book' for texts and longer documents (upto 40 cells by upto 28 lines) the second is A4 (upto 30 cells by upto 28 lines) which is easier to store and carry. The other general paper size is Perkins which is used with the popular Perkins brailier. Suppliers often provide braille paper in a range of other different sizes, some with ready punched holes which will fit easily in standard ring binders and others of much smaller dimensions for use in notebooks etc

When using an embosser, the general principle is to make sure that the braille page is large enough to accommodate the number of braille cells and lines you need. When loading a new size paper into your embosser, check with the embosser itself what the maximum number of cells and lines per page are, and then make

sure your braille translation software is set no larger than these values.

It is important to run a test copy of a couple of pages, particularly for longer documents in order to make any necessary adjustments to margins. Braille paper for embossers is usually supplied 'fan-fold' (one long continuous sheet with perforations) and if text is embossed on the perforations between the fan-folded pages, it becomes impossible to read.

If you are embossing braille files from an international source, it is important to note that different countries can format their documents for different sized braille paper. The USA for example often uses either 30 cells or 40 cells by 25 lines.

### **1.3 Paper weight**

Standard A4 printer paper weight is 80 grams per square metre (GSM). This is inadequate for braille as the dots flatten quickly. Standard braille paper weight is between 120 and 140 GSM. The heavier the paper, the longer the dots are likely to last, but this has to be balanced against the higher cost and increased storage space required. The key criteria for selecting the correct paper weight for braille is the intended use of the document. In some instances paper weights as low as 100 GSM for temporary documents, such as a meeting agenda, are acceptable whereas popular library books might be embossed on 160 GSM.

## **2. Labelling**

If the document does not have a front cover then the title and the originator of the document should be the first piece of text on the front page.

If the document is to have a front cover then you should consider the following:

If a sighted, non-braille reader will need to know what the document is, for distribution or filing purposes then consider labelling in print as well as braille.

If the document is to be stored on a book shelf then consider placing the title top to bottom near the spine (rather than left to right) so the title can be read without completely removing the book from the shelf.

## **3. Binding**

### **3.1 Different methods of binding**

If a document is longer than a single sheet of braille paper, it will need to be collated and bound in some way. If the document has been produced on continuous paper, it will need to be 'burst' (separated into single sheets) and put in correct page number order. Basic knowledge of braille numbering is essential for this task.

There are a number of different ways of binding a braille document including a staple at the top left of the document, staples down the middle, treasury tags, plastic combs, metal wires, coils etc. The method used depends very much on how long the document is, how it will be used and how long it will need to last. A key consideration to take into account when binding is to ensure that there is sufficient binding margin. It is essential that the selected binding method does not interfere with the ability to read the braille in any way.

### **3.2 When to use different binding methods**

- 1.** Staple at the top left of document - is only to be used for very short documents (no more than 4 sheets of paper)
- 2.** Treasury Tag - is much preferred for short documents as it allows the separate pages to lie flat whilst being read or be easily folded back on themselves
- 3.** Staples down the middle - will only work where embosser settings allow for the printing of two pages on a single sheet of braille paper
- 4.** Plastic comb bindings - are useful for longer documents with a relatively short shelf life or minimal use
- 5.** Metal or plastic coils are preferred for longer documents that will need to be used more than a couple of times
- 6.** Paperclips - are not to be used, they easily become dislodged
- 7.** Slide binders - are best avoided as they can flatten the braille dots and make pages hard to manage

### **3.3 Covers**

When binding longer documents, you should consider adding a front and back cover. Suitable material for this would be card of a weight between 200 and 300 gsm with either gloss on both sides of the card or single sided gloss where the matt side is placed on the inside.

### **3.4 Quantifying the number of braille pages per volume**

There is an optimum number of pages that can be accommodated in each volume of braille. If this is exceeded then the volume is

difficult to store and the dots get flattened. The number of pages per volume depends on the size of the binding and whether the pages are single sided embossed or double e.g. a  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch wire can take 190 sheets of standard, A4, printer paper but only 50 or 60 sheets of double sided, embossed, braille paper.

<b>Size of wire binding</b>	<b>Thickness of the document to be bound</b>	<b>Maximum No. of single sided braille pages (135 gsm)</b>	<b>Maximum No. of double sided braille pages (135 gsm)</b>
$\frac{1}{4}$ " , 6.4mm	$\frac{1}{8}$ " , 3.2mm	8	6
$\frac{3}{8}$ " , 9.5mm	$\frac{1}{4}$ " , 6.4mm	20	15
$\frac{1}{2}$ " , 12.7mm	$\frac{3}{8}$ " , 9.5mm	40	30
$\frac{5}{8}$ " , 15.9mm	$\frac{1}{2}$ " , 12.7mm	52	40
$\frac{3}{4}$ " , 19.1mm	$\frac{9}{16}$ " , 14.3mm	72	55
1" , 25.4mm	$\frac{3}{4}$ " , 19.1mm	88	65
1 $\frac{1}{4}$ " , 31.8mm	1" , 25.4mm	112	85

N.B. This table is purely a guide. The addition of covers, the density of dots and paperweight will all have an influence on the number of pages comfortably accommodated by a particular binding size. Measuring the thickness of the document to be bound takes into account all these variables.

# **UK Association for Accessible Formats (UKAAF)**

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