USING THE BRAILLE GERMAN CODE
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This document is based on the braille code used in the United Kingdom for transcribing text in German, and includes advice about various layout conventions.

THE BRAILLE SIGNS

For ordinary letters of the alphabet, the braille signs are the same as for Standard English Braille (SEB).

For accented letters, the following special accent signs should be used:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ä} & : \text{ä} \\
\text{ö} & : \text{ö} \\
\text{ü} & : \text{ü}
\end{align*}
\]

Contractions are used for the following letter groups. These may be used for whole words where appropriate.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{au} & : \text{au} \\
\text{äu} & : \text{äu} \\
\text{ie} & : \text{ie} \\
\text{in} & : \text{in} \\
\text{sch} & : \text{sch} \\
\text{st} & : \text{st} \\
\text{ß} & : \text{ß (Gothic ss or sz sign)}
\end{align*}
\]

German code also uses the following wordsigns:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{d} & \quad \text{for} \quad \text{das} \\
\text{m} & \quad \text{man} \\
\text{n} & \quad \text{nicht} \\
\text{u} & \quad \text{und} \\
\text{v} & \quad \text{von} \\
\text{z} & \quad \text{zu}
\end{align*}
\]

Composition signs, e.g. letter sign, numeral sign, etc., are the same as in SEB, with the following exceptions:
capital sign
italic sign
double italic sign

Punctuation signs are the same as in SEB, with the following exceptions:

abbreviation point (as well as apostrophe)
question mark

Print symbols, e.g. dagger, percentage symbol, etc., and mathematical symbols, e.g. plus, minus, etc., are represented by the same signs as in SEB, with the following exception:

asterisk

(The German asterisk is currently used, but the use of the SEB asterisk would bring this into line with the other print symbols. In practice, in bilingual texts, the SEB asterisk is usually used anyway to avoid confusion with the wordsign “IN”.

THE RULES

The German Code as used in the UK is a much simplified version of the real German Code used in Germany, thus making an introduction to the German language as straightforward as possible for VI students, without them having to learn a complicated new braille code at the same time. With this in mind, the approach to the production of German language material is: if there’s no rule to the contrary, the SEB rule applies.

The contractions.

Care must be taken when using the following contractions:

ER: This should not be used in words where
a) the “e” is part of a preceding syllable or prefix, e.g. “gericht”, “bericht”, etc. (however, in “Berlin” for example, you can contract the ER since the syllable is “BER-lin”)
b) the “e” forms part of a longer vowel sound, e.g. “leer”, “ERbeere”, etc.
c) the “e” forms part of a vowel sound with “i”, in which case the IE contraction should be used instead, e.g. “hIEr”, “HaustIEr”, etc.
IE: This should not be used in words where it is pronounced as two syllables rather than one, e.g. “Familie”, “Belgien”, “VegetariERin”, etc.

SCH: This cannot be used when the “s” is part of a word and the “ch” is part of a diminutive, e.g. “Mäus’chen” - contract CH.

ß: This should only be used when the special symbol is used in print. If print uses “ss” or “sz”, then so do we.

ST: This should not be used
a) in words where the two letters belong to two separate syllables (or two separate nouns in compound nouns), e.g. “Reichstag”, “Haus’tür”, etc
b) in the sequence “sst” if the “ss” could have been printed as ß, e.g. “musst” (mußt), “passt” (paßt), etc.

Think carefully about the use of all contractions in words of foreign origin, and do not use them where these would distort the pronunciation, e.g.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contraction</th>
<th>Not</th>
<th>Alternative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ProteIN</td>
<td>not</td>
<td>ProtEIn or ProtEIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PortIER</td>
<td>not</td>
<td>PortIEr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHauffeur</td>
<td>not</td>
<td>CH/AuffEur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INtERview</td>
<td>not</td>
<td>INtERvIEw, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For further guidance on the use of contractions, please refer to the Wordlist at the end of this document.

The capital sign.

The capital sign is always used in German, except when the italic sign is used, in which case the italic takes the place of the capital.

Günter Grass  
Meine Freunde,  
meine Familie  

In German print, the accents can sometimes be omitted over capital letters. When this happens, the umlaut is always replaced by an “e” following the capital letter. In the braille, we follow whatever practice has been used in the print.

Österreich  
Oesterreich
The double capital sign does not exist in the German code.

If a word or phrase is printed in block capitals for visual effect only, e.g. a heading, an initial capital may well be all that is needed. However, don’t forget that any proper nouns within a phrase like this will also need a capital sign.

```
GELD NACHRICHTEN       GELD NACHRICHTEN
EHE IM WANDEL           EHE IM WANDEL
```

If a word is printed in block capitals for emphasis, then the italic sign should be used instead, as happens in non-capitalised SEB.

```
“Er hat WAS gesagt?!”   “ER HAT WAS GESAGT?!”
```

Acronyms are brailled with the capital sign before each capital letter.

```
RTL-plus                  RTL PLUS
in die USA fahren        IN DIE USA FAHREN
Staedtler Mars GmbH      STAEDTLER MARSH GMBH
```

The italic sign.

The italic sign is placed before a word to show that it is printed in italic type. If more than three consecutive words are italicised, the first word is preceded by the double italic sign and the last word by the single italic sign.

```
Guten Tag!              GUTEN TAG!
Wie geht es Ihnen?      WIE GEHT ES IHNEN?
```

The letter sign.

There is no letter sign in the UK German code. However, in bilingual books, the SEB letter sign can be used on questions prefaced by lower case letters or Roman numbers, and occasionally even on lower case letters in ordinary text if this is necessary to avoid confusion. (Upper case letters and numbers take the German capital sign).

```
(a) Wie heißt du?          (a) WIE HEISST DU?
(xiv) Hör zu!              (xiv) HOER DU?
Wilhelm II                WILHELM II
```
The abbreviation point.

Dot 3 is used instead of the full stop where a stop is used to indicate an abbreviation. If this occurs at the end of a sentence, use both the abbreviation point and the full stop (although, of course, if print does not use a stop after its abbreviations, an abbreviation at the end of a sentence requires only the normal full stop).

Herr Dr. Schmidt  

die U.S.A.  

siehe S. 8, 9, usw.

Numbers.

Cardinal numbers.

Numbers in German are generally printed with a space separating groups of digits. In braille, the mathematical comma must be inserted.

20 000       

1 000 000

If a number is printed close up to a word, insert a hyphen in the braille.

77jährige

In decimal numbers, the decimal point is printed as a comma. We use the usual braille decimal point, dot 2.

3,14 x 2,36

Dates, telephone numbers, fractions, etc., all follow SEB rules.

Ordinal numbers.

Ordinal numbers are written with a full stop after the number. This is brailled as a normal full stop (not the dot 3 abbreviation point).

19. Januar  

der III. Akt
Unit abbreviations.

Unit abbreviations should generally be brailed as in SEB. If you’re not sure what to do, following the print is not a bad idea! Remember: use the dot 3 abbreviation point rather than the full stop; upper case letters take the German capital sign; lower case letters should be spaced from the preceding number to avoid confusion; where print uses a special symbol, the equivalent SEB braille sign should be used.

Money.

In German print, DM (Deutschmarks) may either precede or follow the number. If it precedes the number, it should be brailed close up to the numeral sign (like other monetary units, e.g. £). If it follows the number, it should be spaced from the number (like other unit abbreviations).

8,50 DM  8,50 DM
8,50 8,50

8,50 DM  8,50 DM
8,50 8,50

Round numbers are frequently printed with a dash instead of two zeros. In braille we must use the two missing zeros.

100,– DM  100,– DM
100,– 100,–

Measurements.

NB: Measurement abbreviations are usually spaced from their preceding number, even if close up in the print. Exceptions (e.g. the degree sign) are the same as in SEB.

2 m (or 2m)  2 m (or 2m)
55 g (or 55g)  55 g (or 55g)
89 kg  89 kg
21°C  21°C
60 W (or 60W)  60 W (or 60W)
8,25 %  8,25 %

(Notice in this last example the German use of the comma rather than a stop to represent the decimal point. In braille we use dot 2, the same as in SEB.)
Time.

There are no abbreviations of time. The word “Uhr” is written out in full, or the 24-hour clock is used.

WORD DIVISION

The following information on word division may be useful. Words may be divided:

(a) between syllables, e.g. Geo-gra-phie, spe-zì-ell
(b) between nouns in a compound noun, e.g. Haar-bürste, Unter-tasse
(c) after prefixes, e.g. auf-geschlossen, be-antworten, Mit-arbeiter
(d) before suffixes, e.g. Krank-heit, Geheim-nis
(e) between elements in separable and inseparable verbs, e.g. zurück-kommen, über-gehen

Note that if dividing a word containing a “ck”, these letters should be kept together and taken over to the next line, e.g. backen = ba-cken. (New rule effective from 1 April 1998 – in texts published before this date you may still see the old method of changing “ck” to “k-k”, e.g. backen = bak-ken.)

If a word is divided at an ß, the ß should be treated as “ss”, e.g. schließen = schlies-sen. (This does not apply, of course, if the ß is wholly part of one syllable, or one noun in a compound noun, e.g. Paß’amt.)

GERMAN/ENGLISH BILINGUAL TEXT

English Context.

(This would apply to such works as: books teaching German as a foreign language; grammar books; critiques including excerpts from German texts, etc.)

1. German code (including German italics where necessary) should be used for the following:

(a) German words in quotes or italics.
(b) German words which form a centred heading.
(c) German passages which are inset.
(d) German words which form a source at the end of a sentence or passage in German.
(e) German words which are separated from an English interpretation by a colon or other suitable punctuation, as in Notes or Vocabulary.
Examples:

*Das kalte Licht* is essentially a play of intellectual argument.

You may be inclined to think “Erst wägen, dann wagen …” (Look before you leap).

Wie alt bist du?: How old are you?

2. German words which are in the same type as the surrounding text and which do not fall into any of the above categories should be regarded as Anglicized and English contractions may be used, with care, when these would not distort the pronunciation. However, if any of these words contain umlauts or the *eszet* (ß), they should be uncontracted, preceded by a letter sign, and the special accent sign should be used.

Example:

Hüser had also built up informal contacts with Walter Köpping, an education officer in the IGBE (Industriegewerkschaft Bergbau und Energie).

3. Any foreign words other than German which are in quotes or italics should be uncontracted and dot 4 should be used for any accent signs. Use SEB italics and capital signs.

Examples:

The *Festival du luxe* is described as “eine phantastische Revue!”
In Berlin, Vienna, Paris, enthusiastic masses marched through the streets, shouting “À bas l’Allemagne!” “Nieder mit Serbien!” “Es lebe der Krieg!”

4. **Foreign words other than German** which are **NOT in quotes or italics** should be regarded as Anglicized and English contractions should be used, with care, when these would not distort the pronunciation. The dot 4 method should be used for any accent signs.

*Example:*

During that summer, von der Grün spent much of his time in the Cafetería Español.

German Context.

(This is rare. It is unlikely we would produce bilingual text where German is the base language and English is the foreign language! In case the unlikely happens though, the above rules are reversed. In brief …)

5. **English words in quotes or italics**, etc. (see point 1 on p.7 for the other categories) should be brailled as SEB with English italics, contractions, etc.

6. **Other foreign words in quotes or italics** should be uncontracted and dot 4 should be used for any accent signs. Use German italics and capital signs.

7. **ALL foreign words** (including English) which are in the **same type** as the surrounding text should be regarded as Germanified and German code should be used. The dot 4 method should be used for any accent signs.

N.B. In strictly German text, i.e. **not** bilingual text, **English words in quotes or italics** would be treated as Germanified and German code would be used, in exactly the same way as we treat foreign words in Standard English Braille. This situation could occur in bilingual books which include extracts from German sources, in which case the extracts are German text, even though the overall document is classed as bilingual text. (See *Example* overleaf.)
Example:

Gestern hat er *The Times* gelesen.

LAYOUT

This section is intended only as a guide to brailing items where the layout in print is unusual, e.g. vocabulary, grammar structures, verb tables, etc. It is not meant to be definitive, as it is based largely on the style employed by the RNIB in the production of language texts, and other producers’ methods may vary. The important thing to remember is accessibility for the VI reader.

Vocabulary and (bilingual) examples.

These tend to be relatively straightforward. Print generally distinguishes this type of text from surrounding “normal” text by means of indentation and/or a different typeface. In braille, we ignore the use of bold type and italics (except, of course, where emphasis is required), but we do indent the text for the same reason that print does, so that it is easily found in the middle of normal text. Usual practice is to start the example in cell 5 with runovers in cell 7, and with a colon between the languages if there is no other suitable separator used in the print.

Examples:

*schön*, beautiful, fine

klein = little, small

Die Lehrerin gibt *dem* Schüler das Heft.  
*The teacher gives the exercise book to the student.*
Grammar structures.

This is a massive topic, and it would be impossible to cover the huge variety of layout that there is in the print. On the whole, print tabulates much of this type of material. In braille, it’s often simpler and clearer to do paragraphs and lists.

Examples:

All nouns in German are either **masculine, feminine** or **neuter**:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>masculine</th>
<th>feminine</th>
<th>neuter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ein Mann</td>
<td>eine Frau</td>
<td>ein Kind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>der Tisch</td>
<td>die Wand</td>
<td>das Fenster</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All nouns in German are either **masculine, feminine** or **neuter**:

**Masculine:**
- ein Mann
- der Tisch

**Feminine:**
- eine Frau
- die Wand

**Neuter:**
- ein Kind
- das Fenster

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Ich möchte)</th>
<th>Volltanken, bitte. Für 100 Mark 20/50 Liter</th>
<th>Normal/Super/Bleifrei/Diesel.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Können Sie bitte das Öl/das Wasser/die Reifen prüfen?</td>
<td>Volltanken, bitte. Für 100 Mark 20/50 Liter</td>
<td>Normal/Super/Bleifrei/Diesel.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(ich möchte) Volltanken, bitte. Für 100 Mark 20/50 Liter Normal/Super/Bleifrei/Diesel. Können Sie bitte das Öl/das Wasser/die Reifen prüfen?
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

(Notice that the options are separated by semi-colons, not strokes. This helps to avoid long wordstrings, which are not easy to read.)

With your partner, practise making up sentences using the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Was kostet ein Brief nach England?</th>
<th>Was kostet eine Postkarte nach Frankreich?</th>
<th>Was kostet eine Postkarte nach Belgien?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ich möchte eine Briefmarke zu einer Mark zu sechzig Pfennig</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zwei Briefmarken zu zwei Mark</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drei Briefmarken zu drei Mark</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With your partner, practise making up sentences using the table below.
(In the last example, notice the change of wording in the braille instruction to account for the difference in format from table to lists.)

Sometimes, of course, following print’s table format is the best course of action to take.

Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
<th>Neuter</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nominative</td>
<td>mein</td>
<td>meine</td>
<td>mein</td>
<td>Meine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accusative</td>
<td>mein(en)</td>
<td>meine</td>
<td>mein</td>
<td>meine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genitive</td>
<td>mein(es)</td>
<td>meiner</td>
<td>meines</td>
<td>meiner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dative</td>
<td>mein(em)</td>
<td>meiner</td>
<td>meinem</td>
<td>meinen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Notice the abbreviation of the column headings in the braille and the inclusion of a note to explain this. In addition, it is not necessary to include the capital sign in table row headings, which also saves space. Also note that the bold endings have not been italicised in the braille. It is often not necessary to do this, as the bold endings are just an extra visual aid, and the table format already makes the differences clear.)

Verb conjugations and verb tables.

Where individual verb conjugations are included within “normal” text, it’s often possible to reproduce them in the same way that print does, and indent them to cell 5 to make them stand out. Dot ‘s are not necessary after a verb presented in this way. (But if following text is a list or example also starting in cell 5, it can be helpful to insert a separator such as a blank line or centred asterisks.)
Example:

Regular or weak verbs all follow this pattern:
spielen – to play
ich spiele wir spielen
du spielst ihr spielt
er/sie/es spielt sie/Sie spielen

(Notice that the verb endings have not been italicised in the braille. It is often not necessary to do this, as most grammar texts usually explain what is happening in the verb, and bold endings are just an extra visual aid. But don’t rule it out if you think it’s more useful to include it!)

Verb conjugations laid out in this way should not be split over the braille page. If the conjugation won’t fit as two columns, the whole conjugation can be brailled starting in cell 5, like any normal list. If this is the case, the verb conjugation can be split over the braille page, but it should only be split between the singular and plural forms.

If print uses paragraph format, so can we.

Example:

werden (to become)
Present tense: ich werde, du wirst, es wird, wir werden, ihr werdet, Sie werden, sie werden
Past tense: ich wurde, du wurdest, ...

werden (to become)
Present tense: ich werde, du wirst, es wird, wir werden, ihr werdet, Sie werden, sie werden
Past tense: ich wurde, du wurdest, ...
Some verb tables can be brailled using a combination of the previous two methods.

Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive</th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Imperfect</th>
<th>Past part.</th>
<th>Imperative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>haben</td>
<td>ich habe</td>
<td>ich hatte</td>
<td>gehabt</td>
<td>habe!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to have</td>
<td>du hast</td>
<td>es hat</td>
<td>aufhaben</td>
<td>habt!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wir haben</td>
<td>ihr habt</td>
<td></td>
<td>haben Sie!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sie/ sie haben</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| sein       | ich bin  | ich war   | etc.       |
| to be      | du bist  |           | etc.       |
|            |          |           |            |

---
Alternatively, the infinitive could be centred (without the word “Infinitive”, although if you do this you should explain it in a note at the beginning of the table) and this would obviate the need for asterisks to separate the conjugations and save some space.

Some verb tables are best presented in table format, the same way that print does them, although we have to make some adjustments to allow for the limited space on the braille page.

_example:

**Modal verbs – present tense:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>dürfen</th>
<th>können</th>
<th>mögen</th>
<th>müssen</th>
<th>sollen</th>
<th>wollen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ich</td>
<td>darf</td>
<td>kann</td>
<td>mag</td>
<td>muss</td>
<td>soll</td>
<td>will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>du</td>
<td>darfst</td>
<td>kannst</td>
<td>magst</td>
<td>musst</td>
<td>sollst</td>
<td>willst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>er/sie/es</td>
<td>darf</td>
<td>kann</td>
<td>mag</td>
<td>muss</td>
<td>soll</td>
<td>will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wir</td>
<td>dürfen</td>
<td>können</td>
<td>mögen</td>
<td>müssen</td>
<td>sollen</td>
<td>wollen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ihr</td>
<td>dürft</td>
<td>könnt</td>
<td>mögt</td>
<td>müsst</td>
<td>sollt</td>
<td>wolt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sie/Sie</td>
<td>dürfen</td>
<td>können</td>
<td>mögen</td>
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<td>wollen</td>
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<td>mögt</td>
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<td>können</td>
<td>mögen</td>
<td>müssen</td>
<td>sollen</td>
<td>wollen</td>
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<th>müssen</th>
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<td>mag</td>
<td>muss</td>
<td>soll</td>
<td>will</td>
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<td>darfst</td>
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<td>magst</td>
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<td>wollen</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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(Notice there are no dot 3 lead lines between conjugations. This is because conjugations are meant to be read down the column, not across the row.)

***************
GERMAN WORDLIST
GUIDE TO CONTRACTING

This Wordlist is not comprehensive, and does not include words in which the contractions are straightforward, but it does include many of the more unusual words that may be encountered up to GCSE level. A good German dictionary showing how the words are pronounced, in conjunction with the rules stated in this booklet, should help you with words not included in this list.

A
AkademIE
AllERgIE
Asthma
Au-pair
AUssCHalten
AUssST/Elgen
AUssTellung
AUssST/Eg
AUstAU/SCH
AUstAU/SCHen
AUstragen
AUtobahndrEleck

B
BattER/ IE
beERben
beERdigen
BeERdigung
Beere
beige [the colour]
bElnahe
Belgien
BelgiER
beraten
Beratung
berEIt
berElten
B/ERg
BeriCHt
beriCHten

B/ERlIN
B/ERn
Beruf
BerufsberatER
Berufsberatung
BerufSSCHule
berufstätig
beSTätigen
BeSTie
BetrIefsERien
BibliographIE
BiologIE
Bundestag

EI
EIN
EINfamilienhAUUs
ERdbeere

F
Familie
Familienname
F/EI/ERabend
fEI/ERn
F/EI/ERtag
F/ERien
Folie
FotokopIE
Fotokopien
FrElen
Friseur

G
Garderobe
Geburtstag
GenIE
GeographIE
gerade
geradeAUUs
Gerät
GerÄU/SCH
GereCHt
GeriCHt
G/ER/StE
G/ERte
GeruCH
Gerufe
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