

All about Braille

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NCBI

**Working for People
with Sight Loss**

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The Life of Louis Braille

Louis Braille was born in a small town near Paris on 4th January 1809. His father was a cobbler and made saddles for horses. Louis loved to help his father in his workshop but when he was only 3-years-old, he cut one of his eyes badly while playing with his father's tools alone. This caused an infection, which spread to his other eye and he lost all of his sight.



Louis went to the village school for two years, where he learned by listening. At the age of 10 he got a scholarship to go to a school for blind boys in Paris, one of the first in the world. He became very good at maths and science and learned to play the organ. He was also taught to read but not to write. The letters he read were raised on a page so that he could feel the outline of each letter but it was hard to tell one letter from another.

In 1821, a soldier named Charles Barbier de la Serre visited Louis' school to show the school children his invention, which was called "night writing". Night writing was used by soldiers so that they could pass messages along trenches at night and Charles thought it would be useful for blind people to read and write.

Louis wanted to invent an easier way of reading and in 1824 he invented Braille. Louis could read by running his fingers over the dots. He also developed a different code for maths and music.

In 1827 the first Braille book was produced. Louis eventually became a teacher at the school. Unfortunately, he did not live to see Braille used widely. Louis died on 6th January 1852, at the age of 45. Braille was not recognised as a way of reading and writing until 1918.

Today, Braille is used throughout the world and is taught to children from an early age.

“ I have been blind since birth and I love to read Braille. When the books arrive in from NCBI’s library, I can’t wait to see what stories they have sent me. ”
- May Murphy



What is Braille?

Braille is a system of reading and writing using raised dots. Braille is read by touch. People with sight loss can read the same books as everyone else.

When do people use Braille?

Braille readers use Braille in their everyday lives to:

- Read books
- Read school books
- Label food tins at home
- Label CDs and DVDs so they don't get mixed up
- Read bills and letters in the post
- Read numbers in a lift to select the correct floor
- Read the name and instructions on medicine bottles.

Can you think of any more examples of where Braille is used?

Did you know?

Braille readers can learn to read music, mathematics and foreign languages through Braille. Audio is also very important to people with sight loss but tables and diagrams, which are difficult to describe and understand in audio, can be easily read by Braille readers.

The Braille alphabet

Each letter of the alphabet has its own symbol. The symbols are made by arranging dots in the Braille cell, which is made up of six dots. Different dots are raised to represent different letters or numbers.

The space that six dots occupy is known as a Braille cell




a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m

So, for example:

The letter **a** is one raised dot in place one.

The letter **b** is two raised dots in places one and two.

Numbers are made by placing a numeral symbol  in front of the letters a – j, which represent numbers 1 – 10.

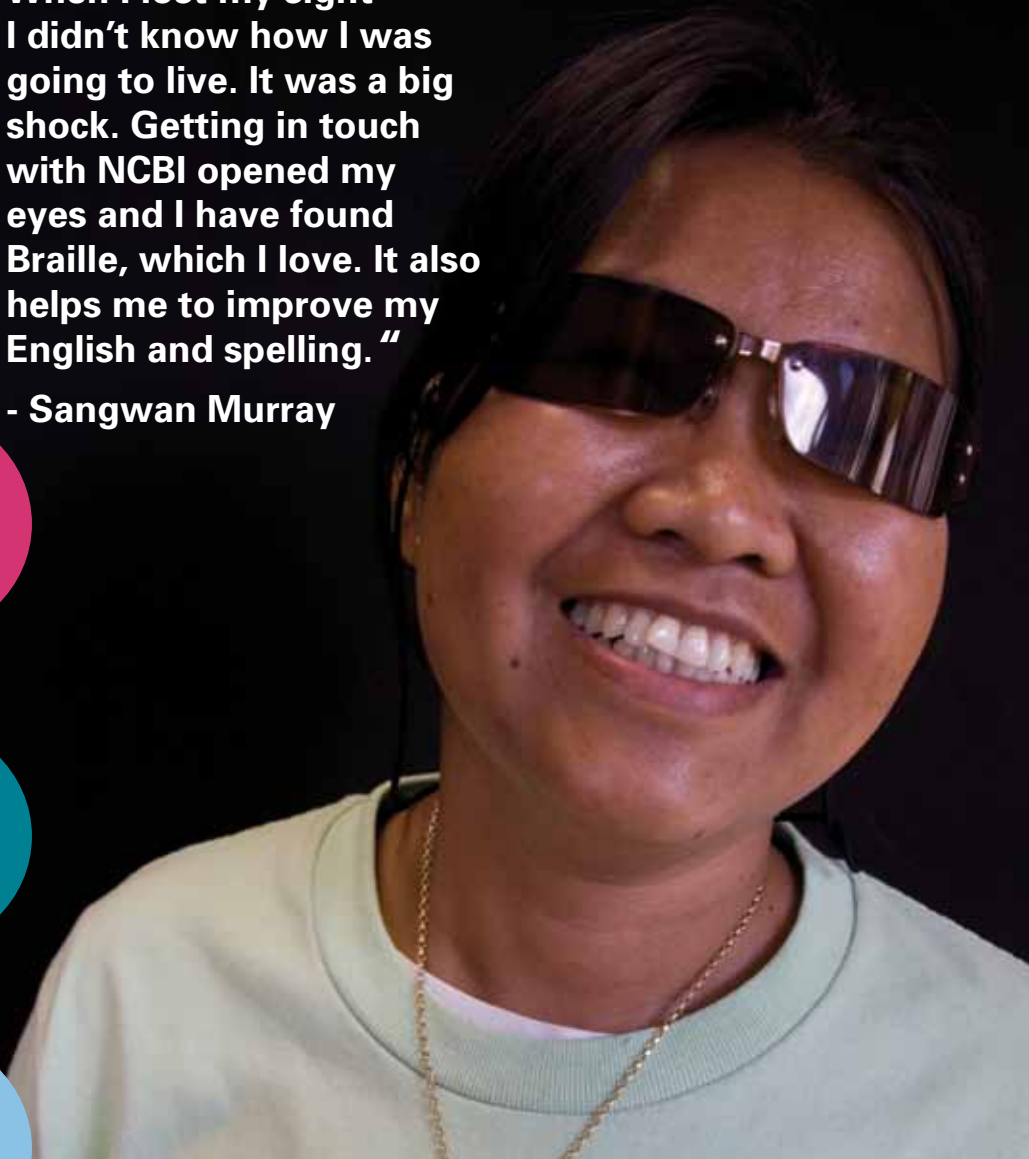
Can you write your name in Braille?



If someone you know could benefit from our services, please call us to find out more on **1850 33 43 53** or visit **www.ncbi.ie**

“ When I lost my sight I didn’t know how I was going to live. It was a big shock. Getting in touch with NCBI opened my eyes and I have found Braille, which I love. It also helps me to improve my English and spelling. ”

- Sangwan Murray



About NCBI

NCBI (National Council for the Blind of Ireland) is a not for profit charitable organisation which offers support and services nationwide to people experiencing difficulties with their eyesight. About 18 percent of people using NCBI's services are completely blind, while 82 percent have varying degrees of usable vision.

NCBI's Library and Media Centre provides a range of services to voluntary, public and private organisations to make sure that their services are accessible to people who are blind or vision impaired. In fact, our Media Centre is the largest provider of Braille material in Ireland. Our expert team carefully edits and proof-reads all Braille documents to the highest standard.

European legislation requires Braille packaging to be included on pharmaceutical products. To assist with this, we provide a certified Braille (grade 1) one-day training course specifically designed for the pharmaceutical sector and associated industries. Contact NCBI's Library and Media Centre on 01 8642266 or email library@ncbi.ie for further details.

Did you know?

The dimensions of the Braille cell must comply with Marburg Medium specifications (international standards) and cannot be altered. These standards specify the exact spacing of the dots within the cell, the spacing between each Braille cell and the height of the dots. If the dimensions of the cell do not comply with these specifications, a Braille reader will not be able to read the Braille dots by touch. NCBI can help you ensure that the Braille you use on documents, forms or signs is correct.

More information

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