

Guidelines for Brailleing Business Cards

Codes for producing literary, math, music, and computer braille are well-established and have been authorized by the Braille Authority of North America (BANA). However, occasionally, the realities of transcribing materials involves the production of Braille on an item that may present particular challenges. To meet these specific situations, aspects of these well-established codes may need to be modified or adapted.

One very frequent example is the brailleing of business cards. The challenge in this specific case is that there is very little surface area on which to place the Braille.

The typical business card stock used in the United States can accommodate 4 lines of braille with 14 cells each. One strategy that can help somewhat is to use the fold-over style of business card stock that effectively doubles the writing surface of the card. In any event, though, there is usually far more print on the card than will fit in braille no matter how it is done.

Selecting What to Braille

If possible, consult with the owner of the business card to determine which lines on the card are the most important. With only a few very short lines, it is often the transcriber's task to select which elements from the card will be brailled. Part of this selection process should include an assessment of which words will contract the most.

Typically, the information on a business card includes:

- name;
- job title;
- organization/company;
- Mailing address;
- phone;
- fax;
- cell;
- e-mail address; and
- website.

There may be other elements as well but these will almost certainly have to be omitted.

Very often, fitting the most crucial print information on a business card in Braille will require some creativity and flexibility. Some elements to consider when making this decision include:

- first line: name;
- second line: organization/company;
- third line: phone number; and
- fourth line: e-mail address.

The format of these lines should be planned considering the entire card, not just one line at a time. All lines except the e-mail address will be transcribed using the literary braille code.

Strategies to Accommodate the Literary Braille Elements

In most cases, the person's name is essential. If the name won't fit on a 14-cell line, the first thing to try is to remove the capital signs. If it still doesn't fit, then remove the middle initial, if there is one. If it still will not fit, then use an initial for the person's first name. If these strategies still don't reduce the character count for the line to the needed 14 cells, the last and least desirable option is to continue the name on the second line.

Some indication of the name of the organization or company is usually desirable on a business card. However, this element may be able to be left off, especially if the e-mail address has an indication of the company or organization. Other strategies may also be employed when planning for the company name such as removing the capital signs and shortening or eliminating some words. In the case of an organization or company name, abbreviating words such as "lib" for "library," "amer" for "American," or "nat" for "National" can work well.

If the telephone number has no extension, then it will fit well like this: #123-456-7890. Extra characters such as parentheses should be avoided or omitted. Do not remove the number sign unless absolutely necessary.

Strategies for Brailing the E-mail Address

An e-mail address should be brailled according to the Computer Braille Code (CBC). The opening and closing CBC indicators can be omitted if their use will extend the e-mail address onto a new line. When an e-mail address must be divided over two lines, try to divide it after the "at" sign or after a period. Do not insert hyphens or continuation indicators to show that the e-mail address has been divided. Begin the second line of the e-mail address in cell 2. An e-mail address should never be written in contracted braille.

These guidelines for brailleing a very small item not only apply to business cards but can also apply to brailleing other items with limited space such as package or personal labels for food items, medications, CD's, or file folders.

A few examples:

