



# Guidelines for Braille Transcription of Languages Other Than English

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## Introduction

Section 13 of *The Rules of Unified English Braille* describes various methods of transcribing non-English language material.\* The braille authority in each country where UEB has been adopted establishes which of these options to apply and in which situations. The purpose of this document is to outline which of these methods are best practices for use in North America.

This document is concerned primarily with determining which braille signs are used to represent non-English language print symbols while

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\* Historically, codes and guidelines have used the term "foreign" and "non-English" interchangeably. This document uses the term "non-English" for all languages other than English to more accurately reflect the variety of languages used in countries in which this document applies.

the current edition of *Braille Formats* addresses document formatting and structuring guidelines.

## Categories of Non-English Language Material

The nature of the non-English language material determines the method used in transcription. Categories of non-English language material that transcribers are most likely to encounter are:

1. Incidental non-English or anglicized words embedded within English text
2. Non-English language material in non-English language instructional texts that is distinguished as non-English with typeform, formatting, or by surrounding text; OR texts entirely in a non-English language for use in North America by readers whose primary braille code is UEB\*
3. Material in a non-English language for readers in or from other countries

When non-English material falls under Category 1, it is transcribed using UEB contractions, letter modifiers, indicators and punctuation.

When non-English text falls under Category 2, the basic elements of the script such as letters and accents are drawn from the non-English language's braille code itself. Punctuation marks, indicators, ancillary signs, etc. should be transcribed using UEB code signs.

When non-English material falls under Category 3, it is transcribed using the full non-English code. For a technical description of the six types of signs which comprise a non-English braille code, see *UEB* §13.6.2.

### Scope and Limitations of *World Braille Usage*

In addition to the letters and accented characters in non-English alphabets, *World Braille Usage* (WBU) includes major punctuation marks, a few indicators, and sometimes ancillary signs such as bullets

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\* When texts entirely in French are being transcribed for use in Canada, consult the requesting agency to determine if the text should be in the *Code braille français uniformisé* (CBFU) and whether contracted or uncontracted braille is required.

and asterisks taken from the full non-English language braille code. The lists are not comprehensive for every language nor does *WBU* provide instruction on how to utilize indicators such as capitals or typeforms. Therefore, for languages in Roman scripts, BANA recommends that when the situation calls for the use of non-English language code signs, only the letters and accents/accented letters be transcribed according to the non-English language braille code as listed in *WBU*. Punctuation marks, indicators, ancillary signs, etc. should be transcribed using UEB code signs.

## Category 1

Category 1 includes:

- anglicized non-English words or phrases that may include letters modified with diacritics (*fiancée*, *à la carte*); "anglicized" means the word or phrase has been added to the English dictionary as a main entry
- occasional, incidental non-English words or phrases, sentences, names, and titles that occur in an otherwise English text regardless of whether they are identified with typeform or displayed in print such as a poem or song lyrics in a non-English language.

This also includes incidental use of non-English language words in an English context within non-English language instructional materials such as an author's name on the title page or a city name in a paragraph written in English. The title page is considered an English context (*Braille Formats 2016* proposed errata).

BANA has approved the use of contractions in incidental non-English language within an English context (*Formats 2016* §1.2.3 and *Formats 2016* §1.16.2). In this category, transcribe print letters within non-English material that are modified by accents, diacritics or ligatures using UEB Modifiers (*UEB* §4.2) and ligature indicators (*UEB* §4.3). Use UEB punctuation, including the inverted exclamation and question marks (*UEB* §13.5). Transcribe all other signs and indicators according to the rules of UEB.

In summary, use UEB contractions, modifiers and ligature indicators, punctuation, ancillary signs and other indicators.

## Examples: Category 1

We went out for a *lekker braai* of *pap en wors*.

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—*¡Qué idea más buena!*—exclaimed Pedro's mother.

⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠ ⠠⠠⠠⠠ ⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠ ⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠

I would like a *salade niçoise* and a *crème brûlée* please.

⠠⠠ ⠠⠠ ⠠⠠ ⠠⠠ ⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠ ⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠ ⠠⠠ ⠠⠠

Thomas Mann: *Joseph in Egypt* (*Joseph in Ägypten*), 1936

⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠ ⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠ ⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠ ⠠⠠ ⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠

## Category 2

**Category 2** includes the non-English text in non-English language textbooks and assessments, grammar books and phrase books, and bilingual dictionaries. "Non-English" means that the text has been identified as non-English within the document either through formatting or context.

This category also includes literature entirely in a non-English language for use in North America, such as advanced textbooks or literature in a language other than English.

Note that Category 2 excludes non-English words that appear in an English context and which are not distinguished as non-English using font attributes or formatting, such as a city name used incidentally in a paragraph written in English. If the same name appears in a section distinguished as non-English, it should be transcribed as category 2.

The non-English language in instructional texts or other non-English language literature is integral to the nature of the text. The reader is learning or is expected to know the non-English alphabet symbols. In these texts, non-English material which is identified as non-English by font attributes or print formatting is uncontracted. Use non-English

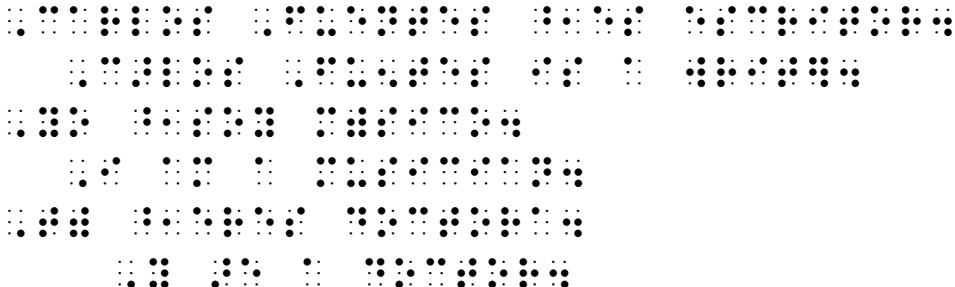
alphabet signs for accented letters and UEB punctuation, including inverted punctuation marks (UEB §13.5).

In summary, use uncontracted braille, non-English braille code signs for modified letters, and UEB punctuation marks and indicators.

**Examples: Category 2**

Carlos Fuentes es escritor.  
Yo soy músico.  
Tú eres doctora.

*Carlos Fuentes is a writer.*  
*I am a musician.*  
*You are a doctor.*

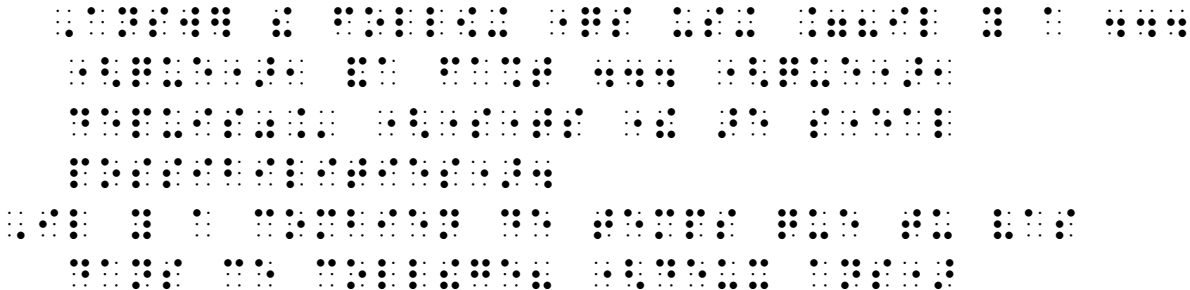


—¡Qué idea más buena!—exclaimed Pedro's mother.



Answer the following questions using «il y a ... (que), ça fait ... (que), depuis» (sometimes there are several possibilities).

Il y a combien de temps que tu vas dans ce collège? (deux ans)



**Note:** The title page is considered an English context. Non-English words or names are transcribed according to Category 1 rules. If non-English words appear in the running head or the full title of the book where it appears on page 1 of the body, this should be considered Category 2 non-English material.

## Latin

Latin is not listed in *World Braille Usage*. When Latin text falls under category 2, the same rules apply as for other languages based on the Latin alphabet: use uncontracted braille, UEB letter modifiers for pronunciation marks, punctuation and typeform or other indicators.

### Examples: Latin

Puer laudātus est. *The boy was/has been praised.*

⠨⠠⠏⠤⠑⠗⠆ ⠠⠇⠠⠘⠠⠔⠤⠠⠑ ⠨⠠⠑⠤⠠⠎⠠⠎⠠⠗⠠⠎⠠⠑⠤⠠⠑.  
⠨⠠⠗⠠⠑ ⠨⠠⠗⠠⠑⠤⠠⠑ ⠨⠠⠗⠠⠑⠤⠠⠎⠠⠎⠠⠗⠠⠎⠠⠑⠤⠠⠑ ⠨⠠⠗⠠⠑⠤⠠⠎⠠⠎⠠⠗⠠⠎⠠⠑

		Perfect Passive
Singular	1	<i>portātus, -a sum</i>
	2	<i>portātus, -a es</i>
	3	<i>portātus, -a, -um est</i>

⠨⠠⠗⠠⠑⠤⠠⠎⠠⠎⠠⠗⠠⠎⠠⠑⠤⠠⠑ ⠨⠠⠗⠠⠑⠤⠠⠎⠠⠎⠠⠗⠠⠎⠠⠑⠤⠠⠑  
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⠨⠠⠗⠠⠑⠤⠠⠎⠠⠎⠠⠗⠠⠎⠠⠑⠤⠠⠑ ⠨⠠⠗⠠⠑⠤⠠⠎⠠⠎⠠⠗⠠⠎⠠⠑⠤⠠⠑ ⠨⠠⠗⠠⠑⠤⠠⠎⠠⠎⠠⠗⠠⠎⠠⠑⠤⠠⠑  
⠨⠠⠗⠠⠑⠤⠠⠎⠠⠎⠠⠗⠠⠎⠠⠑⠤⠠⠑ ⠨⠠⠗⠠⠑⠤⠠⠎⠠⠎⠠⠗⠠⠎⠠⠑⠤⠠⠑ ⠨⠠⠗⠠⠑⠤⠠⠎⠠⠎⠠⠗⠠⠎⠠⠑⠤⠠⠑  
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## Non-UEB Code Switch Indicators

**Languages using the Roman alphabet.** There may be situations where non-English letters, words or passages require non-English code signs even though the context or format does not distinguish the non-English language material from the surrounding English (for example, when the letters or words themselves are under study but the author or publisher felt that the print diacritics were sufficient to identify the letters as non-English without typeform). In such cases, non-UEB code

switch indicators would be used to identify the extent of the non-English language (*UEB* §14.2.4). **Note:** this does not apply to incidental non-English words within English text, which are transcribed according to Category 1 rules.

**Example: Code Switch Indicators Required**

Note the use of é, è, ê, and ë.



If a heading contains both English and a non-English language without distinction in print, non-UEB code switch indicators must be used. However, if a heading is entirely non-English, code switch indicators are unnecessary.

At this time, there is no guidance available from the International Council on English Braille (ICEB) for a standard way to represent non-alphabetic characters such as typeform indicators within code switch indicators. A transcriber would need to be familiar with the non-English language braille code to understand how to apply the appropriate indicators.

**Languages using a non-Roman alphabet.** Code switch indicators are required in most instances for languages using a non-roman alphabet (Chinese, Arabic, Cyrillic) in an English context unless format clearly distinguishes the non-English text from the English. See *UEB* §14 for the rules of using code switch indicators. Note that UEB signs may not be used within code switch indicators (*UEB* §13.7.1).

Category 3

**Category 3** includes non-English language material for readers of that language's braille code as it would be transcribed and produced in another country.

Use the full non-English language braille code as written by the braille authority in the countries where the language is used. In order to transcribe non-English material for a native reader of that braille code, the transcriber must be familiar with the language as well as the correct usage of all 6 types of signs (see *UEB* §13.6.2) and any format guidelines produced by the braille authority in that country. It is not in the scope of this document to give specific instruction for this type of

material. However, braille transcription computer programs with built-in non-English language braille codes or templates may assist a knowledgeable transcriber in producing such works.

If a transcriber is asked to produce a work in a non-English language braille code, it is recommended that any material for use in North America be produced in uncontracted braille unless the person or agency requesting the document specifically requests the contracted form.

## References

Braille Literacy Canada

Email: [info@blc-lbc.ca](mailto:info@blc-lbc.ca)

For questions related to French braille being transcribed for use in Canada

*World Braille Usage*

<https://www.perkins.org/international/about/world-braille-usage>

A reference compiling braille codes used in languages around the world

*The Rules of Unified English Braille, Second Edition 2013*

<http://www.iceb.org/ueb.html>

*Braille Formats Principles of Print-to-Braille Transcription, 2016*

<http://brailleauthority.org/formats/formats2016.html>

Transcribers are responsible for ensuring that they have the latest version of these documents including any updates **and/or Errata.**