

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why do I sometimes braille letters backwards?

A: Remember that when you read braille, you start from the left:

1. Your fingers first come to dots 1, 2, and 3: the top, middle, and bottom dots on the first side.
2. Your fingers then move across the cell to feel dots 4, 5, and 6: the top, middle, and bottom dots on the second side.
3. When you write braille, though, you begin at the right. You also first come to dots 1, 2, and 3, the top, middle, and bottom dots on the first side.
4. You then cross the cell to dots 4, 5, and 6, the top, middle, and bottom dots on the second side.
5. For example, whether you're reading or writing the letter *p*, you read or write dots 1, 2, and 3 first, that is, the top, middle, and bottom dots on the first side.
6. You then move across the cell to find or press dot 4, the top dot on the second side.
7. Always press the first side dots first and then the second side dots.

Q: What should I do when I'm working with the slate and stylus and I get interrupted?

A: When interrupted while working, do the following:

1. Lift the top half of the slate a little bit.

continued...

2. Put the point of the stylus into the next blank cell as far as it will go. The bottom of the stylus handle will be against the opening of the cell.
3. Angle the point of the stylus toward the hinge, and angle the top toward the free, open end of the slate.
4. Set the top of the slate down gently. It will be held up a little by the stylus. If it is not disturbed, the stylus will stay in place, marking the next blank cell.
Another alternative, when interrupted, is to use a piece of masking tape or a small self-stick note:
5. Put your finger on the next blank cell.
6. With your other hand, put a self-stick note on the cell so that a corner points to your finger. If you're using your left hand to place the self-stick note, point with the top right corner. If you're using your right hand, point with the top left corner.

Q: How do I erase when using the slate and stylus?

A: Just as there are different types of slates and styluses, there are also different types of braille erasers. Some are made of wood and others are plastic. Some people even use the tip of a ball point pen as an eraser. Whatever you use, the method is the same. Use the pointed end to flatten the braille dot or dots that you want to erase:

1. Remove the paper from the slate, and put it on a hard, flat surface with the dots facing up.

continued...

2. Find the symbol with the dots you want to erase. Begin at the left margin and count to that symbol. This way, you'll know where you were if you want to rewrite dots in that cell.
3. Hold the braille eraser straight up and down, not slanted.
4. Press the tip of the eraser on the dot or dots you want to remove.
5. Press straight down, and then move the eraser in a small circular motion. Use enough pressure to remove the dot or dots without making a hole in the paper. It takes practice to determine the necessary amount of pressure.
6. If you erase more dots than necessary, put the paper back in the slate, count the cells to get to the cell you erased, and rewrite the symbol.
7. After erasing, proofread your work to make sure that it is neat and easy to read and that the braille you edited is now correct.

Q: Am I holding the stylus too tightly?

A: If the top of the stylus is nestled under the base of your index finger, all your fingers will be quite relaxed. Let your fingers guide the point of the stylus around the cell and keep the stylus from falling over.

continued...

Q: Am I working for too long at a session?

A: If you are resting your arm on the table or desk, you make the dot by moving your hand up and down from the wrist. This exercises muscles in your forearm. These muscles may not get much exercise in your daily life. They will strengthen in time as you continue to practice, but in the beginning, start with short periods of practice and then lengthen the time gradually.

Q: What if I am not sure whether I am going to make a top, middle, or bottom dot?

A: Remember that you can take all the time you need to position the stylus before you push it down to make a dot:

- 1.** Use the end of the stylus as a feeler. Move it against the right edge of the cell.
- 2.** Press gently against the right edge to feel the little humps and grooves. These define the top, middle, and bottom dot positions. The left edge also has humps and grooves.
- 3.** Take your time to position the stylus, and when you're ready, push down to make the dot.