



What is Braille?



Braille often uses contractions as it does with the “Wh” in the word “What” above, so there are no dots for “W”. The single dot before the words “What” and “Braille”, signify capital letters.



Braille is a universally accepted system of writing used by and for blind persons and consisting of a code of 63 characters, each made up of one to

six raised dots arranged in a six-position matrix or cell. These Braille characters are embossed in lines on paper and read by passing the fingers lightly over the manuscript. Louis Braille, who was blinded at the age of three, invented the system in 1824 while a student at the Institution Nationale des Jeunes Aveugles (National Institute for Blind Children), Paris.

When Louis Braille entered the school for the blind in Paris, in 1819, he learned of a system of tangible writing using dots, invented several years earlier by Charles Barbier. It was called night writing and was long thought to have been intended for nighttime battlefield communications. However, Barbier’s writings suggest that he hoped the system could be used by people with visual and hearing

impairments and anyone who was unable to obtain a formal education. In 1824, when Braille was only 15 years old, he developed a six-dot “cell” system. He used Barbier’s system as a starting point and cut its 12-dot configuration in half. The system was first published in 1829; a more complete elaboration appeared in 1837.

Braille’s system was immediately accepted and used by his fellow students, but wider acceptance was slow in coming. The system was not officially adopted by the school in Paris until 1854, two years after Braille’s death.

– The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica

