



Information on Six-Key Braille Entry

To produce an electronic file in braille on your computer, you will need 1) a Braille input program, and 2) a compatible keyboard. This document provides information on keyboards and software that may be used to create braille using your computer.

SOFTWARE TO USE IN THE TRANSCRIBING COURSE

This course requires that the braille be written either with the use of a manual braille writing device, such as the Perkins Brailler, or with the use of a program employing six-key entry on a computer. The following information is provided to assist if you plan to transcribe on your computer and submit lessons electronically for evaluation.

For the first twelve lessons of the transcriber certification course, full features of translation software in which you type in regular print characters on a computer keyboard and then translate the file for braille output are not acceptable. The use of automatic "styles" for such items as headings, paragraphs etc. is also not acceptable for the earlier lessons.

Perky Duck and BrailleZephyr are Perkins keyboard emulators allowing for six-key entry using a standard PC keyboard. They are free programs. For Perky Duck, visit the website www.duxburysystems.com. Choose the products link and then follow the link to "purchase" Perky Duck. There is no charge for this freeware as noted on the site. For BrailleZephyr, visit: <http://brailleblaster.org/braillezephyr.php>. Download the program and install it on your computer by following the instructions given.

These six-key entry programs use the letters F D S for braille dots 1-2-3 and the letters J K L for Braille dots 4-5-6 (consult the *Instruction Manual for Braille Transcribing* for an explanation of the braille dot numbers). The spacebar produces a space and the backspace key deletes characters. The enter key produces a hard carriage return. See below for information on keyboard issues.

Spacing and centering is done manually, and maximum line length must be used as directed in the instruction manual. Set the program for 40 characters per line and 25 lines per page.

Braille documents created with these programs may be opened and embossed, viewed on screen or reviewed with an electronic braille display. They can be saved either as a .dxb file or .brf file.

Remember that if you have access to a braille embosser and choose to emboss your files on paper rather than sending them by email, the lessons must be embossed on one side of the paper (single-sided).

KEYBOARDS

Computer software for creating braille is generally used with a regular computer keyboard. Many keyboards allow for six-key braille input, but not all. To make sure your keyboard will work, perform the following test: On a Windows computer, click "Start", then "Run". In the space provided to type a file name, press the six keys SDFJKL SIMULTANEOUSLY at least seven times. Then press backspace to clear the box and then press the six keys together once more. All six letters must be shown, but the order does not matter. If all the letters do not show, then you will not be able to braille multi-dot characters reliably with that keyboard in ANY six-key input braille program, and you'll need to connect a different keyboard to your computer.

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