

Lesson 20

The Final Reading Exercise, The Trial Manuscript, and Certification

Upon completion of Lesson 19, the student has been introduced to the rules of Unified English Braille necessary for the transcription of general reading materials and has been provided information for locating less commonly used symbols and rules that are not thoroughly discussed in this course. In order to demonstrate that the rules have been mastered and to achieve national certification, the student is asked first to submit a final reading exercise and then to prepare and submit a manuscript to the Library of Congress.

20.1 The Reading Exercise

Prior to the submission of a trial manuscript, the student must first successfully complete a braille reading exercise. After completing and passing the transcription exercise at the end of Lesson 19, the student should request the final reading exercise either by emailing transcribers@nfb.org or by calling 410-659-9314 (ext. 2510). The exercise can be sent and received either by email or postal mail; the specific arrangements will be determined with the student when the request is made.

If significant errors are made on the reading exercise, the student will be asked to complete another such exercise before proceeding to the manuscript.

20.2 Trial Manuscript in General

The certification manuscript must consist of at least thirty-five full braille pages, including preliminary pages, taken from a general reading book. Several partial pages adding up to twenty-five braille lines count as one page. Submit thirty-six braille pages if a transcription includes a dedication page that contains less than twenty-five braille lines, but all other pages are full.

The manuscript may be prepared using a braillewriter, a computer using a direct-input braille program, or a computer using braille translation software. If a translation program is used, bear in mind that the software can sometimes introduce unexpected errors—therefore the student must carefully correct the final copy to ensure that the braille

knowledge gained from studying the course lessons is applied in the preparation of the manuscript.

Submit all manuscripts in single-sided embossed form. Interpoint (braille on both sides of the page) will not be accepted, nor will electronic files or simulated braille. If the copy has been produced on a computer and embossed, remove all sprocket strips, separate and collate the pages, and remove all blank pages. The manuscript should be submitted so that it is ready to read. It is not necessary, but it may be bound with a spiral binding. Thermoformed copies of the manuscript will not be accepted. It is highly recommended that, if possible, the student keep a thermoformed copy of a manuscript that was prepared on a braillewriter.

The basis for the certification manuscript must be a print book, not an e-book. A copy of the print book used, or photocopies of the pages transcribed including all of the preliminary pages contained in the print copy, should accompany the manuscript. The print copy will be returned along with the evaluation report and the original braille pages.

20.3 Choosing a Book for the Manuscript

The book selected for the manuscript should not be so technical in nature that the student must concentrate on technicalities rather than on producing neat and accurate braille. On the other hand, it must not be so rudimentary that it does not present average vocabulary and sentence structure.

The book chosen for the manuscript *must contain a table of contents* and use a level of vocabulary approximately equal to a high school text. Do not choose an illustrated book for your manuscript or one that contains pictures that must be described or depicted as tactile graphics.

The manuscript should resemble a complete braille book as closely as possible. Use a 40-cell braille line and a running head. When the required number of pages has been transcribed, end at a logical place such as at the end of a paragraph. Points will be deducted if the manuscript ends in the middle of a sentence. The words **THE END** should be placed on the last page in the prescribed manner.

20.4 Formatting the Book

Formatting or structuring are terms used for carefully perusing and making decisions as to how to handle the basic braille layout of the book. It is very important that this be done for every book before starting to braille. Structuring ensures consistency throughout a braille version. When structuring the book that you have chosen for the manuscript, look for such things as dialect, special typefaces, quoted material, preliminary page setup, headings, graphs, tables, etc. Decide how you are going to handle each item before you start to braille. Also decide upon the running head and centered, cell-5, or cell-7 headings.

If the chosen book contains footnotes, include the references and footnotes in your manuscript. If the book uses endnotes, transcribe the references that occur in the text, and treat the endnotes as if they were footnotes—that is, place the notes referenced on a given page at the end of that page, according to the format for footnotes discussed in Lesson 17. Explain this change on the Transcriber's Notes Page. The converting of endnotes to footnotes is specific to the trial manuscript. After certification, transcribe endnotes according to §16.7 in *Braille Formats*.

If there are items in the book that you are not comfortable with, such as maps or flowcharts, choose a different book for the manuscript.

20.5 Beginning Pages

All pages at the beginning of a book, such as a dedication, acknowledgments, preface, author's note, foreword, table of contents, introduction or prologue, should be included in the braille transcription—with one exception. None of the items discussed under 19.2b(1) *Cover/Jacket Material* are to be included in the manuscript.

The title page should be prepared following the instructions in Lesson 19. After certification, future title pages should be prepared at the direction of the agency for which the transcriber works.

If the student is affiliated with a transcribing group, list that group's name on the title page, as shown in the example in 19.2a(1). If the student has no group affiliation, list only the transcriber's city and state.

Because the manuscript is a facsimile of a complete book, place the words **In 1 Volume** instead of Volume 1 on the title page. The contents page should contain only the chapters and pages that actually appear in the thirty-five pages of the manuscript. Do not braille the entire table of contents.

Include a special symbols page and a transcriber's notes page if appropriate.

Start the first chapter on a new braille page, and do not divide symbols-sequences between lines unless they are too long to fit on one line.

20.6 Accuracy and Neatness

A high degree of accuracy and neatness is expected of the student in the preparation of the certification manuscript. Accuracy includes a thorough and exact reproduction of the print text with respect to wording, spelling, punctuation, the correct formation of braille characters, the proper use of contractions, the correct application of all rules of braille transcribing, and the use of correct braille formats. Neatness includes uniformly clear dots, evenly spaced lines, and the absence of extensive or poorly made erasures. If an error has been made in page numbering, the appropriate pages must be repeated.

Omission or repetition of part of the text is undoubtedly the most serious error that can occur because it results in material that is often incomprehensible to the reader. As such an error is most likely to occur when the same word or words appear on two consecutive print lines, you are cautioned to guard against losing your place in the print copy, thereby either omitting the second line or repeating the first line.

20.7 Erasures

If the grader of the manuscript can feel an erasure, it will be counted as an error. Therefore, erasures should be resorted to only rarely. Follow the directions for erasing as presented in the *General Course Instructions* at the beginning of this manual.

20.8 Editing

It is the job of the transcriber to duplicate the print copy as faithfully as possible. The transcriber is in no sense an editor and should not seek to substitute his or her judgment for that of the author as to what constitutes correct usage. This is especially true for capitalization, punctuation, and hyphenation — where there is wide variation in practice among writers and publishers. The author must be permitted his idiosyncrasies in such matters. George Bernard Shaw often used simplified spelling and omitted periods after many abbreviations.

There are occasions in print (just as in braille) when errors do occur, and these the transcriber should correct; however, this should be done with great circumspection. In correcting spelling, for example, be sure that what is shown is not simply an alternate or archaic spelling. For example, in the sentence, *Teh farmer sold his milch cows*, it is clear that the *e* and *h* in the word *the* have been reversed and should be corrected. However, although the word *milch* is archaic, it was the author's choice and should not be changed to *milk*.

20.9 Proofreading

The certification manuscript should be the work of the student and no one else. While preparing the manuscript, the pages should be proofread as they are brailled. After brailing seven to ten pages they should be proofread again. When the manuscript is finished, it is suggested that it be left alone for at least a week. The final proofreading, after the student has had a rest from the material, should expose any remaining errors. If the manuscript is generated by a computer, the pages should be carefully proofread *after* embossing.

The work *should not* be proofread by anyone other than the student. The trial manuscript is a test of the student's knowledge and ability, not of anyone else's proofreading skills.

20.10 A Letter to the Grader

A letter, in braille, to the grader from the student should accompany every manuscript. In the letter, tell the grader about anything unusual that was encountered in print such as format irregularities, dialect, or unusual foreign names. If any editing (see *Editing*, above) was done, this too should also be explained. Do not include these explanations on a transcriber's notes page. The letter is not to be counted as part of the thirty-five-page manuscript. Points will not be deducted for errors in the letter.

20.11 Mailing the Manuscript

Instructions for mailing the manuscript are on page xvii of the General Course Instructions.

20.12 Grading

The following system for grading manuscripts is used. A perfect manuscript is given a grade of 100. A grade of 80 is required for certification. The list below shows how points are deducted for errors. If the same error in the use or omission of contractions occurs consistently with respect to the same word, it is counted only once, unless it is a contraction error particular to the use of translation software. Format errors may sometimes be counted together as a single error. Otherwise, each error is counted separately.

Errors and Points

- Contractions omitted or misused: 2
- Characters misformed (including added or omitted dots): 1
- Incorrect division of symbols-sequences: 2
- Letters inserted or omitted: 2
- Text omitted or repeated: 3
- Software-specific errors (such as incorrect apostrophes, out-of-place typeform indicators, inserted paragraph or page breaks, and the like): 3
- Spacing errors: 2
- Format irregularities: 2
- Omitted or inserted punctuation or indicators: 2
- Braille pages out of order or not collated: 2
- Erasures, if detected: 2

If the score on the first manuscript is between 75 and 79, the student will be asked to submit a second manuscript of twenty-five pages. If a successful score has still not been reached after a third try, the student is directed to wait twelve months and retake the transcribing course before submitting a final fourth manuscript.

20.13 Appealing the Test Results

If a student feels that points were deducted erroneously, a print or braille letter should be sent to: Manager of Braille Programs, National Federation of the Blind, 200 East Wells Street at Jernigan Place, Baltimore, MD 21230. Along with the letter, send the pertinent braille pages of the manuscript and the corresponding print pages.

20.14 Certification

A Certificate of Proficiency in Braille Transcribing, signed by the Librarian of Congress and the Director of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, will be awarded upon successful completion of the manuscript. Library of Congress certification is a symbol recognized worldwide and something to be very proud of.
GOOD LUCK!