

vzw Braille op blad.

Filtering rules for the composition of digital texts in a braille-friendly version.

These filtering rules are based on many years of experience in converting texts and course materials into braille and have been drawn up according to the three requirements that digital braille texts need to meet. Digital braille texts should:

- be possible to listen to via a speech technology programme, and therefore must be auditive;
- be legible via a refreshable braille display connected to the computer;
- be directly printable in relief.

In “filtering” into braille there are two aspects that should be taken into account:

Aspect 1: the number of characters in braille is limited.

Aspect 2: the blind can only read raised-relief text letter by letter and do not have any visual overview.

Structure of the filtering rules.

- in part 1 tips are given for the settings in MS Word before a new document can be created.
- in part 2 the basic preliminary steps for creating the new file are indicated.
- in part 3 the structural rules are explained.
- in part 4 recommendations (“luxury” rules) are given for adapting the software settings as much as possible for braille computers.

In themselves, these filtering rules are not at all difficult, and you do not need to learn them by heart. What is more important is that you understand the meaning, the reason behind each filtering rule... and that requires some explanation and practice.

Via “filtering courses” and/or “filtering days” vzw Braille op blad teaches the filtering technique for braille. This approach has proven an efficient one. Because of their particular approach, these filtering rules are not linked to a given language, so they can be used in all languages.

Part 1: Settings in Microsoft Word.

Before you open a new document, it is important for you to check a number of settings in the Microsoft Word menu bar and adjust them as necessary.

In the MS Word menu bar, under the heading “Tools” open the setting “Autocorrect”.

In both “AutoFormat while typing” and in “AutoFormat” enable the option: “replace fractions 1/2 by fraction characters”.

It is also strongly recommended that you disable the “automatic formatting” and work only in “plain text”.

Part 2. Basic steps and creation of the file.

Rule 2.1. Important basic step.

Save all existing texts that have been created in “.doc” in a “.txt” (text) file.

Close the new txt-document.

Reopen the close txt-document, and then:

- Select all,
- Choose the font, use only Times New Roman or Arial,
- Copy all,
- Paste it into a new Word document.

You may now delete the original txt-file if you like.

Rule 2.2. format.

Always work in plain (unformatted) text; so never use any form of automatic format.

Always align text to the left.

Do not use bold, italics or underlining...

Never use tabs, never indent.

Only use the characters that are shown on the keyboard.

Do not use unnecessary punctuation, for example: a black square, emoticons, smileys...

Preferably don't place titles, whole words or whole sentences in capitals.

Punctuation after every sentence, after every clause.

After a title, always insert 2 hard returns.

Only use the apostrophe as an apostrophe and not as quotation marks.

See that the opening and closing quotation marks are in the proper order.

Idem for parentheses; only use round brackets.

Never insert a full line in a text.

Rule 2.3. For scanned texts, you should carefully correct all scanning errors.

Here are some examples of frequent scanning errors.

There is a difference between:

- . 1 (one) and l (the first letter of the word left),
- . 0 (zero) and the letter O!
- . rn (RN) and m (M),
- . gen (GEN) and gcn (GCN) ...

Part 3. Adapting the structures.

Rule 3.1. Line spacing and spaces.

- . After each sentence use just a single space.
- . After a paragraph skip a single line.
- . Begin each new chapter on a new page.

Rule 3.2. Chapters.

For each chapter clearly specify:

Table of contents.

Introduction.

Chapter 1: The history of Belgium.

Chapter 2. Belgium in Europe.

Chapter 3. Europe in the world.

Rule 3.3. Question lists.

In a series of questions, clearly indicate the question numbers.

Question 1: Who was the first king in Belgium?
Question 2: Who is the current king in Belgium?
Question 3: Who is the current Crown Prince?

Rule 3.4. Blanks to be filled in.

If, after a question or an instruction the answer is to be filled in, then you should include 3 dots after the question or instruction.

Example.

- Name 3 types of fruit: ...
- List several differences between apples and pears: ...

Rule 3.5. Lists.

In lists, always begin after the colon, with a new line per list.

Always use the same structure, punctuation and hard return so that the brailist can keep track.

Begin each list with a dash, a dot, or two dots...

Example 1. Use of the dash in lists.

There are three colours used for traffic lights:

- On top there is a red light,
- In the middle is a yellow light,
- At the bottom there is a green light; when the light turns green, you may drive further.

Example 2. Use of a dot, preferably followed by a single space, in lists.

There are four mathematical functions:

- . Addition,
- . Subtraction,
- . Multiplication,
- . Division.

Example 3. Use of letters, either followed by a dot or by a closing parenthesis symbol, in lists.

There are four mathematical functions:

- A) Addition,
- B) Subtraction,
- C) Multiplication,
- D) Division.

After the item letter (or the item number) always insert a parenthesis symbol or a dot.

Before you insert a hard return there needs to be a punctuation mark that is appropriate to the situation.

For subdivision, you may also use the asterisk.

Rule 3.6. Subdivisions and spaces.

For subdivisions such as 1.4.3.2. always separate with dots; don't forget the final dot with a single space. Always start each new subdivision on a new line (hard returns).

For numbering, always use the same system, be careful with the placement of the dot or comma, or the parenthesis...

When transitioning to another item you should preferably leave a line between them.

Rule 3.7. Tables.

Tables are never legible for braille readers, that is why they need to be converted into a legible list. This will require insight into the subject matter and a little creativity.

Example of a non-braille friendly amortisation table:

Name	Ledger	Starting year	Duration (years)	Value €
Buidings	220000	2004	10	28.200,00
Office equipment	240000	2004	5	10.363,00
Rolling stock	241000	2005	3	12.820,00
Computers	260000	2004	3	4.800,00

Example of the same amortisation table, but in a braille-friendly form.

- Name: buildings.
- . Ledger number: 220000.
- . Starting year: 2004.
- . Duration: 10 years.
- . Value: 28,200.00 Euros.

- Name: office equipment.
- . Ledger number: 240000.
- . starting year: 2004.
- . duration: 5 years.
- . value: 10,363.00 Euro.

- Name: rolling stock.
- . Ledger number: 241000.
- . Starting year: 2005.
- . Duration: 3 years.
- . Value: 12,820.00 Euros.

- Name: computers.
- . Ledger number: 260000.
- . Starting year: 2004.
- . Duration: 3 years.
- . Value: 4.800,00 Euros.

Rule 3.8. descriptions.

In some situations (tables, text structures,...) some extra explanation will be required. Keep the texts highly objective, there should never be personal remarks.

Example: in order to maintain the overview, the extract of the ledger is limited here to the ledger numbers that have an influence on the amortisation values for this fiscal year.

Rule 3.9. Visual material.

All visual material such as photographs, illustrations, drawings, ... should be described, if this is at all possible and if relevant. You should announce the visual material as “visual material”.

Processing visual material is a delicate matter: you always need to evaluate the extent that it is useful to mention the visual material and what you need to mention and/or describe.

Examples:

- Visual material, photo of a cyclist who has fallen off his bike. This photo is used to indicate that the street in question is hazardous for cyclists.
- Visual material 43, photograph of the picturesque Koornlei in Ghent, a specific row of houses along the water. What is specific about these houses are the beautifully finished stepped gables, typical of the architectural period.

Rule 3.10. Text boxes.

Do not create text boxes. Braille readers are unable to read anything inside text boxes and the printouts of the braille printers are often unreliable.

Rule 3.11. Page numbers.

Never use page numbers. The page numbers of the standard texts will never correspond to the page numbers of the braille version and to that of the braille-relief print... which will cause them to actually disrupt the braille text in the completely wrong place.

Rule 3.12. Headers and footers.

Incorporate any header or footer text in the body text. Braille readers cannot situate the references.

Incorporate footnotes or other notes whenever possible in the body text as well. A reference to chapter 6, point 2 is permissible. A reference to page 18, not at all, because page 18 in the original text for the visually non-impaired will never correspond to page 18 of the braille version.

After a text is inserted (for example an extract from an e-mail) you should state: end of e-mail.

Rule 3.13. hard return.

If you use a hard return, then never simultaneously press shift (soft return) because in braille print this may entail a different print command.

Part 4. Luxury-filtering rules.

“Luxury”-filtering rules are filtering rules that are not strictly necessary but greatly enhance the legibility (and clarity) for the brailist. The filtering rules below have two purposes:

- to provide a simple way of making the content of the text clear for the brailist,
- to avoid the need for extra symbols to be used during the relief printing (opening symbols, key symbols, restore symbols, alphabet change symbols...) that do not exist in the standard type but are only used to allow the accurate conversion of standard type to braille. On one hand, the symbols slow down the braille reading and on the other hand, they are not all familiar to braille readers.

Rule 4.1. Roman numerals.

Roman numerals are a delicate item. Preferably avoid them where possible.

King Leopold III, should be King Leopold 3 or King Leopold the third. If you retained the Roman numerals, the auditive version will actually turn out like a burst of laughter (hihihi).

Rule 4.2. Numbers.

Always make sure that all division points for thousands are inserted.

Rule 4.3. Hyphens.

Always use them judiciously and if necessary, replace the hyphen with the word “to” or by another suitable word. Example: storage room temperature from 15 to 25°C.

Rule 4.4. Minus symbol.

In the software, a subtle distinction is often made between a hyphen and a minus symbol and when typing, you should take care that the minus symbol is retained in that function and does not later convert it to a hyphen.

Rule 4.5. Abbreviations.

The abbreviations are generally known to Braille readers. However, it is best to write out the words in full because for the auditive representation, too much attention will be diverted to decoding the abbreviations!

Example: 25°C should preferably be written as 25 degrees Celsius.

Rule 4.6. Special symbols.

For € (Euro), \$ (Dollar), and £ (Pound) braille symbols have also been created. However, it is recommended to use neither a symbol nor an abbreviation but to simply write the currency name out in full after the amount.

The at symbol. In an e-mail address @ can simply be used.

The letters of the Greek alphabet should preferably be written out in full.

Example: “α” should be written as “alpha”,...

The following symbols do not frequently occur in braille text publications. Here too, it is recommended to use the description:

- ©, copyright,
- °, date of birth or degrees,
- #, hashmark,
- §, paragraph,
- †, deceased,
- ®, registered,
- ™, trademark.
- in scale indications, use the : between the “shown”- and the “value”-indication. Example:
map scale 1:250.000.

These filtering rules were compiled in collaboration with Steven Bladt and Jan Smeyers, and are the intellectual property of the vzw Braille op blad. They have been registered as such; they may only be distributed with the permission of the author and subject to citation of the author’s details. Please contact:

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