# Introduction to grade 3 braille

## Introduction

Grade 3 is an extension to the grade 2 (contracted) braille code providing hundreds of additional contractions, abbreviated words and space saving. The aim is to further reduce the size of braille and save additional time when reading and writing.

It is assumed you have a thorough grasp of grade 2 braille.

Language and writing was very different when grade 3 was conceived and some of the conventions used may seem somewhat outdated. Much of the material presented here dates from the early 20th century.

Grade 3 is no longer an official braille code and was primarily meant for personal note taking. You won't find it supported by current screen readers or braille libraries. You can use it for your own notes; if using a braille display or note taker, make sure you write a BRF file with translation turned off.

We'll cover the main concepts of grade 3 with hopefully plenty of examples, but the full detail is left to the books.

## One-Cell Signs

Additional meanings have been given to various one-cell signs.

### At the Start of Words

Seven additional contractions:

* J -- DE, example Define is J F IN E.
* Q -- QU, example queen Q E EN.
* X -- EX, example expand is X P AND.
* OU sign -- OUT, example outline is OU L IN E.
* OW sign -- RE, example remain is OW M A IN.
* GH sign -- SP, example spend is GH EN D.
* ING sign -- UN, example unable is ING A BLE.

Apart from QU and SP, all these must be syllables, so you can use DE in defend, but not in deep.

### In the Middle of Words

Extra one-cell contractions in the middle of words:

* Q -- QU, example square is S Q AR E.
* WH -- SE, example consequence is CON, WH, Q, Dot 56, E.
* Lower H -- RR, example borrow is B O Lower H OW.
* Lower J -- TT, example kitten is K I lower J EN.
* Dots 456 -- LL, example dollar is D O Dots 456 AR.
* Dots 46 -- SS, example tissue is T I Dot 46 U E.
* Dots 36 -- PP, example stopping is ST, O, Dots 36, ING.

There are also "two-vowel" signs:

* Dot 4 -- two vowels starting with A
* Dot 5 -- two vowels starting with E
* Dot 6 -- two vowels starting with I
* Dots 45 -- two vowels starting with O
* Dots 56 -- two vowels starting with U

The second of the pair of vowels is worked out by context, so R Dots 45 T is root, but G Dots 45 T is goat. Don't use the two-vowel signs where there is more than one possibility: C Dots 45 L could be coal, coil, or cool.

### At the End of Words

Additional signs for the end of words include:

* J -- DE, example guide is G dot 56 J.
* Q -- LE, example circle is C I R C Q.
* V -- VE, example move is M O V.
* W -- WARD, example forward is FOR W.
* Z -- ES, example edges is ED G Z.
* OU -- OUS, example obvious is O B V I OU.
* Lower J -- TE, example flute is F L U Lower J.
* Dots 456 -- LL, example full is F U Dots 456.
* Dots 46 -- SS, example boss is B O Dots 46.
* Dots 45 -- LY, example, fairly is F Dot 4 R Dots 45.
* Dots 36 -- CE or CY, example rice is R I Dots 36.
* Dot 6 -- IAN or ION, example region is OW, G, Dot 6.

There are a few others.

## Two-cell signs

Grade 3 extends the concept of dot 5, Dot 45 and dot 456 contractions to include nearly every braille sign either alone, with dot 4, 45, 5 and 456. Here's the beginning of the table:

| **Alone** | **dot 4** | **dot 45** | **Dot 5** | **Dot 456** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| a | act | appear | among | all |
| but | better | bear | bring | brought |
| can | course | clear | Christ | cannot |
| do | doing | does day | day | did or done |

There are hundreds of these signs and a few have two meanings, such as 456 D for either did or done. Context gives the meaning:

* I dots 456 D X: I did it.
* I H dots 456 D X: I have done it.

The lower letter signs alone include:

* Dot 2: an or am
* dots 25: is
* Dots 256: are
* Dots 235: been or to

Some words already only occupied two cells, including:

* Dot 4 SH: she
* Dot 4 Lower H: he
* Dot 4 I: if
* Dot 4 U: up

The reason for these is that you can "sequence", that is, omit the following space.

* She went up the road: no spaces needed: Dot 4, SH, Dot 5, ER, Dot 4, U, THE, R, Dot 45, D.
* He had the time of his life: no spaces needed: dot 4 lower H dots 456 H THE dot 5 T OF lower H dot 4 L.

Several of these signs may seem unusual at first:

* GH: them; Dot 4 GH: they; Dot 5 GH: special; Dot 45 GH: speak; Dot 456 GH: spoke or spoken. Remember that the GH sign also doubles as SP at the beginning.

## Additional abbreviated words

Here are some of the additional abbreviated words:

* A C K: acknowledge
* A N S: answer
* B ST: best
* B K: book; L K: look; T K: took
* B TH: both
* C ER: certain
* D FF C: difficult
* E B D Y: everybody; E TH ING: everything
* F W: few; N W: new
* G EN: general
* G T: get; L T: let; P T: put
* H L P: help
* L W WH: likewise
* M M: member
* Dot 5 P R: particular
* P Dots 3456: possible
* S T S: sometimes; S dot 5 WH: somewhere
* TH K: think
* ING T: until
* V AR: various
* Y D: yesterday

Many of these may be added to, for example OW M M is remember, C ER Dots 45 is certainly.

## Omission of spaces

Spaces between words may be omitted in groups of:

* And, For, OF, THE, WITH, A, IT, AS;
* the two-cell contractions and most of the lower cell words.

Examples:

* It was the right time.
* She came over the other day.

Always leave a space after punctuation marks or other words, or to make the meaning clearer.

## Omission of vowels

Finally, certain vowels can be omitted.

If the first vowel is A, it can be omitted (excluding of course words starting with A);

Most other single vowels may be omitted, so long as the meaning is clear. Don't delete two adjacent vowels or omit a vowel if included in a contraction. Don't remove a silent E.

Examples:

* grade is G R J, grand still uses AND
* bottom is B O lower J M, but top has to be written in full.
* date is D lower J, possession is P O Dots 46 46 6

## Further Resources

We have only scratched the surface and introduced some of the contractions in grade 3 braille.

Further information can be found at grade3braille.com.

James Bowden wrote a summary pamphlet available by contacting equipment@braillists.org.