Braille Screen Input workshop

Presented by BLC and GTT

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Presentation notes

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# Enabling Braille Screen Input

When you first get a new device, Braille Screen Input is not enabled by default. To enable it, do the following:

1. Go to SETTINGS; then to ACCESSIBILITY; then to VOICEOVER; then go to ROTOR.
2. Double tap on Braille Screen Input and make sure it says “Selected”.
3. You can close SETTINGS now or make a few more changes, described below.

Tip: We suggest that you move Braille Screen Input to the top of the list of rotor items. If you do this, Braille Screen Input is usually the first rotor selection when you turn the rotor clockwise. Conversely, if you prefer rotoring to the left, you can move Braille Screen Input to the bottom of the list, and it will be first when you rotor counterclockwise.

# To change the position of Braille Screen Input in the rotor

1. Go to settings, accessibility, voiceover, rotor.
2. Under each item in the rotor is a button labeled reorder (in this case) braille screen input
3. Double tap and then hold on this button.
4. Do not let go, slide your finger up the screen and you will hear it moving above the other items.

# Customizing the settings under Braille for Braille screen input

## Contracted or Uncontracted Braille

You can set your default form of Braille input. To set the form of Braille you wish to use, do the following:

1. From within Voiceover Settings, open BRAILLE, and flick to Braille Screen Input. VoiceOver will probably say: "Braille Screen Input: “Six-Dot.” Double tap here.
2. Note that the options for Braille Screen Input are: Uncontracted Six-dot Braille and Contracted Braille. (The iPad has an additional option: Uncontracted Eight-dot Braille).
3. After you make your selection, double tap the Back Button in the upper left corner.

## Braille Code

If you want to check or change your Braille Code setting, do the following:

1. From within Braille Settings, flick to Braille Code. VoiceOver indicates which of the three options is currently selected. Unified English Braille (UEB), which VoiceOver calls “” English Unified” is the default. Since UEB Has been adopted in Canada, we urge you to leave it as your default. (For your information, we note here that the Braille Code Options are English Unified (English US), and English United Kingdom.)
2. Once you have made your choice, double tap the Braille: Back Button in the upper left corner of your screen to leave Braille Code Settings.

## Some people like to reverse the order of the dots on the screen.

To do this go to settings, accessibility, voiceover, braille, braille screen input, turn reverse dot positions on. It is automatically set to off.

## Typing Feedback

You can set the amount of feedback you get in Braille Screen Input. Do the following:

1. From within VoiceOver Settings, double tap on Typing Feedback.
2. Let us look specifically at Braille Screen Input. You have four options to choose from: Nothing, Characters, Words, Characters and Words.
3. Select the one you prefer for Braille Screen Input.
4. At this point you can now close SETTINGS.

# Ways of typing using braille screen input

## Tabletop Mode Versus Screen Away Mode

There are two modes for inputting Braille.

In **Tabletop Mode**, the phone is flat on a table or held flat in your hands and the Braille dots are organized somewhat like a Perkins keyboard. However, the hands are in a V shape. The index fingers are closer together and close to the side of the phone presenting dots 1 and 4. The middle fingers, form the middle of the V and are dots 2 and 5 and the ring fingers are dots 3 and 6. The fingers fan out like a V which is not a common shape when typing on a perkins brailler or braille display.

If you tip the phone so that the screen is facing away from you with the phone still in Landscape orientation, you go into **Screen Away** mode. In this mode, the dots are arranged vertically at the ends of the phone and you write braille with three fingers of each hand curled around the ends of the phone. Your index fingers braille dots 1 and 4; your middle fingers braille dots 2 and 5; and your ring fingers braille dots 3 and 6.

You can lock your phone in either screen away or tabletop mode. To do this, when you are in the mode you like best, swipe up with 3 fingers and you will be locked in whatever mode you like best.

# Exiting Braille Screen Input

You can exit Braille Screen Input in one of three ways:

1. Turn the rotor in either direction.
2. the two-finger scrub gesture
3. a two-finger swipe up to go to the next keyboard

You know that you have exited when you hear your iPhone say “portrait”.

# A few important tips

* Braille Screen input works best when you use an exceptionally light touch on your phone. This is not a Perkins brailler where you need to pound hard on the keys to get good braille. Use an exceptionally light touch and do not press down hard.
* If you are not sure where your dots are, you can rest a finger on the screen. You will hear VoiceOver beep twice and then say, “in exploring mode.” Now you can slide your finger around the screen and each dot is spoken as your finger passes it. Exit Exploring mode by lifting your finger.
* Whenever you want to hear the dots under your fingers, you can calibrate the dots. I do this every time I use the Braille Screen Input method.
  + On the iPhone, do this by typing a dots 4-5-6 character with your right hand and then an l (dots 1-2-3) with your left hand. You need to tap the 4-5-6 then 1-2-3 in very quick succession to have the calibration work correctly.
  + On the iPad double tap all six or eight dots simultaneously.
  + You know that it has worked when you hear VoiceOver say, “dot position calibrated.”
* iPhones only allow five five simultaneous touches on the screen. This certainly presents a problem when you want to use the ***for*** contraction. To get this character, here are two concrete suggestions on how to do this. (Full disclosure: I find it simpler to just type f o r and then do a space). iPad users do not have to do this.
  + Type a five-dot character like Y (dots 13456). Keeping any four fingers on the screen, lift one of the fingers of the Y and put down the finger for the dot 2, which was not used in the original character. When you lift all your fingers, VoiceOver should say: “f o r.”
  + Try this with the Y: Keeping any two  fingers on the screen (dots 1 and 3),  lift the fingers for dots 4, 5, and 6 and then slide your finger on dot 1 down to dot 2, which was not used in the original character. When you lift all your fingers, VoiceOver should say: “f o r.”

# A Few Other Things You Can Do with Braille Screen Input

* You can use Braille Screen Input to find and open apps on your home screen. To do this rotor to Braille Screen Input from any home screen and begin typing the name of the app you want in uncontracted Braille. As you input each letter VoiceOver announces how many matches it has found. It will find any app on your phone, not just the ones on the home screen. To browse the apps it has found, flick up or down with one finger. When you find the one you are looking for, flick right with two fingers to launch it.
* When you turn on your phone, you can use Braille Screen Input to enter your password or passcode. Once you wake your phone, turn the rotor to Braille Screen Input. To enter numbers, you must enter a number sign then the number. When you enter your password or passcode correctly, your phone unlocks as soon as you type the last character.  Note: when you do this, you do not get any typing feedback.

# Braille Screen Input Gestures

Braille Screen Input has its own set of gestures. Here are a few gestures to start with:

* Space: One-finger flick right
* Delete the last character: One-finger flick left
* Delete the last word: Two-finger flick left
* New line: Two-finger flick right
* Cycle between input modes (6 dot or contracted) 3 finger swipe left.
* Lock orientation for braille screen input, 3 finger flick up.
* Cycle through alternative spelling suggestions: One-finger flick up or down

# Q and A information following the presentation

Some people use a tactile screen protector which has bumps where each of the Braille dots are located. These are made by a company called Speed dots. Here is the link: <https://www.speeddots.com>

It was pointed out that when writing in contracted braille, nothing will appear on the screen until you complete a word.

Screen curtain and Braille screen input are great for privacy when typing. If you want sighted people to see how it works, make sure to turn Screen curtain off with a 3-finger double tap.

Question were asked about entering passwords in Braille Screen input: should one type in contracted or uncontracted braille. It is thought that uncontracted braille may be more reliable.

When entering numbers use number sign, and use upper numbers, especially with postal codes.

Question asked about the contraction for the number sign. If typing a password use 3-4-5-6 before numbers.

If you need to type a number or pound sign (#), use dots 4-5-6 followed by 1-4-5-6 (the *th* contraction).

You can use a combination of Braille Screen input and keyboard input. You would need to turn the rotor to exit Braille screen input.

You cannot currently read back what you have written while in Braille Screen input. You will have to turn your rotor to read what you have written in its entirety.

There is another app called MBraille which was available before Braille Screen input.

It is available for both IOS and android Here is a little more about it:

MBRAILLE app (cost) https://www.applevis.com/apps/ios/productivity/mbraille -features where you can edit

MBraille is a full-featured APP designed for entering Braille on an iPhone or iPad screen. It can be a stand-alone APP with lots of integration features or a third-party keyboard. This APP is like Braille Screen Input but with a lot more features.

With the free version you can type, edit, and send tweets and text messages. With an in-APP purchase called MBraille Keyboard, you can use the keyboard to create text for all supported applications. The full version includes all features: MBraille as a third-party keyboard, Dropbox support, file management, and much more.

There are some advantages of MBraille over Braille Screen Input. A significant one is that you can read what you have written with a swipe up in Screen Away mode. It also has an undo gesture, the two-finger swipe right, and you can shake your phone to clear all the text you have written.

If you switch to another application, whatever you have written is automatically copied to the clipboard. You can then past this text wherever you want it. You can also do basic editing, search your text, and even spell check with MBraille.

Remember you can use two dot 6’s to capitalize a word, or three dot 6’s to capitalize all text in a line. You can also use dots 5-6 as a letter sign (e.g. in postal codes).

Here is one way a participant described to hold the phone: bottom of phone sits on baby fingers, thumb hold top of phone, Some people think getting a grippy case for the phone helps. If you have a screen protector on phone, people thought this made doing Braille Screen input a little easier.

Everyone has different sized hands and phones. Try different ways and see what works best for you. One other tip is to hold the phone against your body, put it on screen away mode but on a table.

Do you need to switch keyboards, to type in French? Yes. But each language needs to be inputted as grade 2 or uncontracted.

TURN OFF auto correct, braille suggestions, are different than those suggested in print

There is a new version that is similar for Android which Tracy is playing with. She will write an article about this in an upcoming newsletter.

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