DAISY Music Braille

Production Network (MBPN):   
Guidance for producing scores for international use

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# Contents

[Introduction 2](#_Toc131088146)

[Production guidance 2](#_Toc131088147)

[1. Filename creation: use a short but descriptive filename 2](#_Toc131088148)

[2. Title page: to be included 2](#_Toc131088149)

[3. Table of contents: to be included when there is more than one part in the file 2](#_Toc131088150)

[4. Paper size: use 40 cells per line x 25 lines per page (unless otherwise specified) 3](#_Toc131088151)

[5. Encoding: use BRF with US encoding (unless otherwise specified) 3](#_Toc131088152)

[6. Literary braille: use uncontracted braille, and apply language rules if there are multiple languages in the file 3](#_Toc131088153)

[7. Bar numbers and lyrics: follow NIM where possible 3](#_Toc131088154)

[8. Talk to the user: have a dialog with the user to check requirements/options 3](#_Toc131088155)

[9. Include a Transcriber’s Note/Explanatory Note: to help the user to read the score 4](#_Toc131088156)

[10. Add relevant metadata to your catalogue record 4](#_Toc131088157)

[Appendices: Guidance on writing Transcriber’s Notes 5](#_Toc131088158)

[Appendix 1: NLS Guidance 5](#_Toc131088159)

[Appendix 2: RNIB’s Guidance, 2022 6](#_Toc131088160)

# Introduction

In order that international users can more easily read scores produced through the Network, the producers have agreed that they are willing to produce scores using commonly agreed requirements.

Common formatting also permits easier ingestion into online collections such as the ABC Global Book Service.

Based on the findings from the Score Trial, Network discussions and research, this document presents our joint recommendations for a common Network production protocol when producing scores for international readership.

# Production guidance

## 1. Filename creation: use a short but descriptive filename

The filename should allow the user to know at least the composer, title, and part(s), also the encoding (if it’s not the standard BRF with USA encoding), and perhaps also the publisher (so users can tell the same scores apart from each other).

However, it should not be so long that it becomes hard to read with a braille display or with screenreader output, so keep it as short as you can.

Use spaces between words in filenames (avoid underscores which can be unfamiliar to non-technical readers, and can be hard to read with speech/braille output).

## 2. Title page: to be included

Must include details such as title, composer, publisher, and if it’s part of a work. Also state transcribing agency, year of production, and distributing agency (if different from transcribing agency).   
  
This information greatly helps users to know that they’re reading the right score, and promotes the availability of scores from international agencies.

## 3. Table of contents: to be included when there is more than one part in the file

List every version of the score in the transcription to help users get quickly to the right part in the file/embossed score. This is especially important if the score is presented in different formats, and/or over several volumes.

## 4. Paper size: use 40 cells per line x 25 lines per page (unless otherwise specified)

Paper size differs across USA and individual European countries, but these dimensions will suit all paper sizes, and will work on most embossers and braille displays.   
  
Some orders may specify a particular paper size depending on how the score is to be used, and in this case you should prepare the score that way (but note that it makes the file harder to share internationally).

## 5. Encoding: use BRF with US encoding (unless otherwise specified)

This is most easily read by screenreaders and braille devices - although non-English speaking users do have to know how to change their braille table so they can read it.  
  
If the user has requested another kind of encoding, please check whether they could use BRF with US encoding, as the file is more easily sharable in that format. You may choose to create one file in BRF with US encoding which can be widely shared, and another with the user’s encoding which is just for that user.

## 6. Literary braille: use uncontracted braille, and apply language rules if there are multiple languages in the file

Uncontracted braille is most suitable for typical music braille readers. Do not use contracted braille in scores where there is potential for international readership.

Apply language rules if there are multiple languages in the file.

## 7. Bar numbers and lyrics: follow NIM where possible

Some countries mark bar numbers differently to NIM. Where possible, follow NIM presentation please, or state how they are marked in the Transcriber’s Note.

State how lyrics are presented in the Transcriber’s Note. The user may need a specific presentation of lyrics depending on how they will be using the score, so it’s a good idea to check with them before production.

## 8. Talk to the user: have a dialog with the user to check requirements/options

It is clear that for some transcriptions the Producer needs to talk directly to the end-user to clarify their request, or to discuss options with them to suit their particular need for the score. The Producer may have good suggestions for better solutions than the user is aware of.

## 9. Include a Transcriber’s Note/Explanatory Note: to help the user to read the score

Organisations are encouraged to add a concise Transcriber’s Note. It should specify any potentially unfamiliar signs or particular local practices at variance with standards documents. This should be written as follows:

1. **Keep it concise with essential information only**

Users want to get to the music, but need some guidance as to what they should expect to find in the score.

1. **In English as standard. Use short, simple sentences and lists**It should be written in plain, simple English, using short sentences, and use lists for brevity.

Written in English at least for maximum file-sharing benefits. The online translation tool DeepL can be used to translate literary text into other languages (but it will not work for Key Lists).

1. **What to include (for example):**

* The format of the score (e.g. Bar over Bar, System by System, etc)
* A list of unusual or special signs/symbols
* Any unusual elements (e.g. interval directions)
* How lyrics are placed, and how they are marked
* How bar numbers are written
* Etc

1. **Refer to existing resources on writing Transcriber’s notes (see Appendix)**

Agencies often have their own guidance for writing Transcriber’s Notes, and if so, please follow your normal practice. If you don’t have existing guidance to follow, RNIB and NLS have kindly shared their guidance for writing Transcriber’s Notes which might inspire you - see Appendix.

## 10. Add relevant metadata to your catalogue record

Follow the recommended DAISY music braille metadata guidance for the music braille files as you create new materials. These will be easier to share with other agencies, and to find and retrieve from online collections. Available from the Network homepage at <https://daisy.org/mbpn>

# Appendices: Guidance on writing Transcriber’s Notes

## Appendix 1: NLS Guidance

1. NLS “Specifications for NLS braille book production” (General 800), includes guidance for writing Transcriber’s Notes:   
   <https://www.loc.gov/nls/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Spec800.11October2014.final_.pdf>
2. “Music Braille code 2015” available at: <https://www.brailleauthority.org/music/Music_Braille_Code_2015.pdf>
3. The NFB course in music braille transcription: “Introduction to Braille Music Transcription, by Mary Turner De Garmo Third Edition” Revised and Edited by Karen Gearreald, Christina Davidson, Kathleen Cantrell , John Hanson.  
   <https://nfb.org/programs-services/braille-certification/music-braille-transcribing>

## Appendix 2: RNIB’s Guidance, 2022

Note to Braille Edition

GENERAL NOTES

Depending on the format being used, one or more of the following will begin the Note to Braille Edition:

KEYBOARD

This piece is transcribed in the bar-over-bar method, chords reading downwards in the right-hand part, and upwards in the left.

SINGLE-LINE FORMAT

In this piece, each new print line is marked by an equivalent new line in braille, above which, on a free line, are written the print line and bar number. The treble clef .=>/l has been marked at the start of each movement.

[Often appended to both the above:] The bar numbering does not appear in the print.

SONG (WORDS AND VOICE)

Single language

This item [Soprano part or whatever] is transcribed line-by-line: a line of words, with the corresponding music below, indented two spaces.

Two languages

This item [Soprano part or whatever] is transcribed line-by-line thus: a line of German words, followed by the corresponding line of music below, indented two spaces; then the corresponding line of English words.

Bar numbers, rehearsal figures and/or print page ranges:

This item [Soprano part or whatever] is transcribed line-by-line: a line of words, with the corresponding music below, indented two spaces. Print's bar numbers and rehearsal letters are reproduced in the braille, enclosed in special parentheses .=7 at the relevant point in the music. The latter always start a new braille line for ease of reference.

[Where there are bar numbers and rehearsal figures (rather than letters)]: This item [1st tenor part or whatever] is transcribed line-by-line: a line of words, with the corresponding music below, indented two spaces. Print's bar numbers and rehearsal figures are reproduced in the braille, enclosed in special parentheses .=7 (bar numbers) and wordsigns .=> (rehearsal figures) at the relevant point in the music. The latter always start a new braille line for ease of reference.

Print page indicators are enclosed in wordsigns .=> at the relevant point in the music. These always start a new braille line for ease of reference, [as required e.g.:] preceding the rehearsal figure where the two coincide.

Song with Accompaniment.

The words and voice part of this song is transcribed line-by-line: a line of words, with the corresponding music below, indented two spaces.

The accompaniment is transcribed in the bar-over-bar method, chords reading downwards in the right-hand part, and upwards in the left. An outline of the voice is shown as the first line of each parallel and is marked .=">.

Choir (open and short score with accompaniment)

The words and voice part of this piece is transcribed line-by-line: a line of words with the corresponding music below, indented two spaces.

A score is also given showing the voices together, bar-over-bar, chords reading downwards in the soprano and alto, and upwards in the bass and tenor. The unison between voices is shown by .=l placed after the note, as formerly. Likewise the divided voice part is shown by .=b between the notes concerned.

The accompaniment is transcribed in the bar-over-bar method, chords reading downwards in the right-hand part, and upwards in the left. An outline of the leading voice part is shown as the first line of each parallel, and is marked .=">.

ORGAN

This piece is transcribed in the bar-over-bar method, chords reading downwards in the right-hand part, and upwards in the left. The pedal part is shown as the third line of each parallel, and is marked .=^>.

CHORD SYMBOLS

[General layout note.]

In addition, chord symbols are given [e.g.] on a free line above the RH.

The symbols are coded in a fashion that mirrors the print closely: ordinary alphabetical letter names are used, preceded by the capital sign, and accidentals or other print symbols follow unspaced. The special parenthesis sign .=7 represents round brackets in the print. The first chord in a bar is aligned with the relevant music. Subsequent chords in the same bar are single-spaced from each other.

FULL SCORE

This item is presented in full score, bar-over-bar, with bar numbers above the music. All intervals read downwards for convenience, with the exception of the left-hand piano part, which reads upwards in the normal fashion. The score is preceded by a list of print's instrument labels and their braille equivalent.

The words are given, indented, at the end of each parallel. Words or syllables in parentheses indicate an ongoing syllable.

FIGURED BASS

The following figured bass signs have been used in the braille: [e.g.:]

.=;> prefix for figured bass

.=#6 .=#4 Figures below the stave

.=#%6 .=#<6 accidentals before figures

.=#%k isolated accidental below the stave; the dots 1-3 are not required where a bar-line (i.e. space) immediately follows

.=#%k7 column of figures, reading upwards; each column begins with the numeral sign

.=#;6 crossed (raised) figure 6

.=#a a line of continuation

.=#' omitted figure in a string of figures

Where it is necessary to indicate the rhythm of a change of figuring on one note, stem signs are inserted in braille: note that a stem indicates the duration of the preceding figure or column of figures. [If an example is required:] E.g. ,';>\_y\_k#8\_k (= change on second minim).

GUITAR WITH RH (PIMA) FINGERING

Right-hand (PIMA) fingering, where given, is indicated by the following signs: .=p (Pulgar), .=i (Indice), .=m (Mayor) and .=a (Anular). These signs are vertically aligned below the relevant notes on a free line.

ADDITIONAL BRAILLE NOTES

The following is a list of signs and procedures, all ratified by the New International Manual (though NOT the jazz signs at the end), which we would tend to explain in a Note to Braille Edition. Each item will be a separate paragraph in the note. Any such list will be preceded by a general layout comment along the lines of those given above, and followed by any other specific notes pertaining to the job in question.

The sign .=;c is used to represent the "slur to nowhere", where notes ring through without being damped. Ordinary slurs are used to indicate slurs attached to grace notes.

The signs .=\_cc and .=\_c show the beginning and ending respectively of a slur which moves from one part to another.

The sign .="\*c is used to represent a release of the pedal immediately after a note is struck or a rest is begun. The sign .=\*c is retained to represent the pedal being released after the full value of a note or rest.

The sign .=k is used to represent the dotted bar-line in the print.

The sign .=l is used to represent the bar-line in the print.

The signs .=;1 and .="2 indicate the beginning and ending of a square bracket above the stave in the print.

The signs .=;' and .=,2 indicate the beginning and ending of a square bracket below the stave in the print.

The signs .="' and .=,1 indicate the beginning and ending of square brackets enclosing items in the music.

The sign .=<1 is used to represent the grouping of notes. [This note may need to be added to in certain cases in order to clarify whether the notes in question cross over the bar, the half bar or particular strong beats.]

The sign .=5a is used to represent a filled-in note-head without a stem; doubles have been shown by repeating the second half of the sign.

The sign .=5b is used to represent an x-shaped note-head; doubles have been shown by repeating the second half of the sign.

The sign .=5l is used to represent a triangle- or diamond-shaped note-head; doubles have been shown by repeating the second half of the sign. [This should not be used for artificial harmonics in string music.]

The sign .=5k is used to represent notes of indeterminate or approximate pitch; doubles have been shown by repeating the second half of the sign.

The sign .=5' is used to indicate the end of a slanting line designating approximate pitch ("quasi note").

All print editorial markings are preceded by the sign .**="**l.

or

Print editorial markings are mostly preceded by the sign .="l. Note, however, that the signs .="' and .=,1 indicate the beginning and ending of square brackets used to distinguish e.g. editorial accidentals attached to source ornaments.

Accidentals preceded by dot 6 appear above or below the stave in the print.

The sign .=;2 represents the coincidence between notes of both hands.

In the figured bass, stem signs indicate the value for which the preceding figures are played.

The beginning of a line of continuation used with fingering is shown by placing dot 3 after the finger sign, and its end is indicated by remarking the finger (even though this is not done in the print) preceded by dot 6.

Note that the anacrusis has been numbered as bar 1 in the print.

First and second time a and b variant endings in the print are simply shown as the same bar number in the braille.

All alternative fingering, which follows the main fingering in the braille, appears in round brackets in the print. In such passages dot 6 represents an omitted main fingering and dot 3 represents an omitted alternative fingering.

The sign .=\_c indicates a slur not applicable in all verses.

The sign .=ca represents a slur in the first language only; the sign .=cb represents a slur in the second language only. The ordinary slur sign is used in cases applicable in both languages.

The sign .=@L represents a straight line between staves for voice leading; the end of this line is indicated by the sign .=.@L.

Print's ottava indications are shown in braille by two octave signs before the first affected note, giving notated and sounding pitches respectively; notes are thence given at sounding pitch. The end of such a passage is shown by another double octave sign, indicating that notated and sounding pitch are once again the same. [Long ottava passages only:] An ongoing ottava is restated each new print line.

Or

Print's ottava indications have been replaced in the braille with sounding pitches.

[e.g.] The sign .=.1 indicates alternation in 32nd notes.

[e.g.] The sign .=^B indicates repetition in quaver notes; doubles are shown by repeating the second half of the sign.

The sign .=^<1 distinguishes notes of long value.

The sign .=,<1 distinguishes notes of short value.

When two syllables are merged, the sign .=b is placed after the first note affected.

When three syllables are merged, the sign .=l is placed after the first note affected.

The sign .=\_>> indicates the left-hand part with intervals reading downwards.

The sign .=.>> indicates the right-hand part with intervals reading upwards.

The following indicate shift to a new position with notes intervening:

.=@a' (after the first note)

.=,@a (before the second note)

The sign .=^c represents the accumulating arpeggio, where successive notes are tied to a resultant chord.

Where pedal indications coincide with braille bar or beat repeats a pedal down preceding (or pedal up following) the repeat sign is always explicitly stated.

The sign .=\*l represents a diamond-shaped note-head in the print, indicating a harmonic.

The sign .=;b' is used at the beginning of a braille system to show the continuation of a phrase which extends over two or more lines in the print.

In bars of unspecified length the sign .=\*7 indicates the beginning of a passage which is repeated. The first repeat sign .=7 signals the end of the passage.

The sign .=>'' is used at the beginning of a braille system to indicate dashes emanating from an ongoing expression in the print; the sign .=>' indicates the end of the expression.

The guitar part is given at written pitch throughout. All intervals and in-accords read downwards.

Two dot threes following a barré and/or fret indication represent a line of continuation; the sign .=>' indicates the end of the continuation line. Note that a barré and/or fret indication on a single note can be assumed to last for the duration of that note.

[Guitar] Arrows in the print indicating the direction in which chords should be played have been transcribed in the braille thus:

.=<b Downward arrow, i.e. descending in pitch

.=<' Upward arrow, i.e. ascending in pitch

or

The signs for downstroke .=<b and upstroke .=<' reflect the movement of the arm across the strings, i.e. in descending and ascending string order respectively. Note that print arrows by their nature go in the opposite direction, i.e. upwards (for ascending pitch) in the first case, and downwards (for descending pitch) in the second.

In the Kyrie the word "eleison" has consistently been set as four syllables. [Or three as appropriate]

In some cases of finger substitution, the finger to be substituted is not shown in the print: note that the implied initial fingering is always shown in the braille.

A spaced hyphen in the words indicates a "word slur" or "carry over", implying no breath or break in the sound.

On account of the variation in setting from verse to verse, some print repeats have been written out in the open score. Note that the sequence of print pages and bar numbers is interrupted as we repeat the music for subsequent verses. Where print repeats have been written out, the attendant repeat dots and variant ending signs have simply been removed.

The following signs for French accented letters have been used in this transcription:

.=& ;c cedilla

.== ;e acute

.=( ;a grave

.=! ;e grave

.=) ;u grave

.=\* ;a circumflex

.=< ;e circumflex

.=% ;i circumflex

.=? ;o circumflex

.=: ;u circumflex

.=$ ;e diaeresis

.=] ;i diaeresis

.=\ ;u diaeresis

The following signs for German accented letters have been used in this transcription:

.=! eszett

.=\ ;u umlaut

.=[ ;o umlaut

.=> ;a umlaut

The following signs for Italian accented letters have been used in this transcription:

.=( ;a grave

.=! ;e grave

.=) ;u grave

.=\* ;a circumflex

.=< ;e circumflex

.=% ;i circumflex

.=? ;o circumflex

.=: ;u circumflex

.=/ ;i grave

.=+ ;o grave

The following signs for Spanish accented letters have been used in this transcription:

.=( ;a acute

.=! ;e acute

.=) ;u acute

.=] ;n tilde

.=\ ;u diaeresis

.=/ ;i acute

.=+ ;o acute

The prefix .=# precedes any references to the sharp .=%, flat .=< and natural .=\* signs within literary text.

The beginning and end of a transcriber's note is shown in the braille by the signs .=@.< and .=@.> respectively.

The special parenthesis sign .=7 represents opening and closing round brackets enclosing a performance direction in print.

The music sign .=,' is used to indicate the beginning of a short music example or item of music code. The literature sign .=;2 signals the beginning of the following section of text or ensuing punctuation. Note that where punctuation follows an item in music code, the literature sign will precede the punctuation, unspaced from the music code.

JAZZ SIGNS

1. The sign .=<c before a note represents a small inverted arch in the print, indicating a "dip" in pitch.

2. The sign .=c<b following a note represents a falling curved line after the note in question.

3. The sign .=c<' following a note represents a rising curved line after the note in question.

4. The sign .=@a<b following a note represents a falling straight line after the note in question.

5. The sign .=@a<' following a note represents a rising straight line after the note in question.

6. The sign .=<bc before a note represents a curved line falling to the note in question.

7. The sign .=<'c before a note represents a curved line rising to the note in question.

8. The sign .=<b@a before a note represents a straight line falling to the note in question.

9. The sign .=<'@a before a note represents a straight line rising to the note in question.