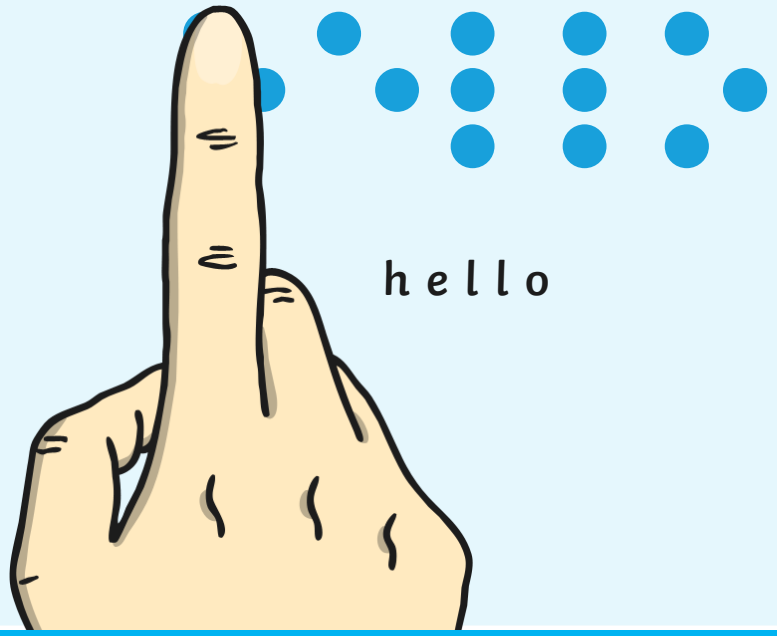
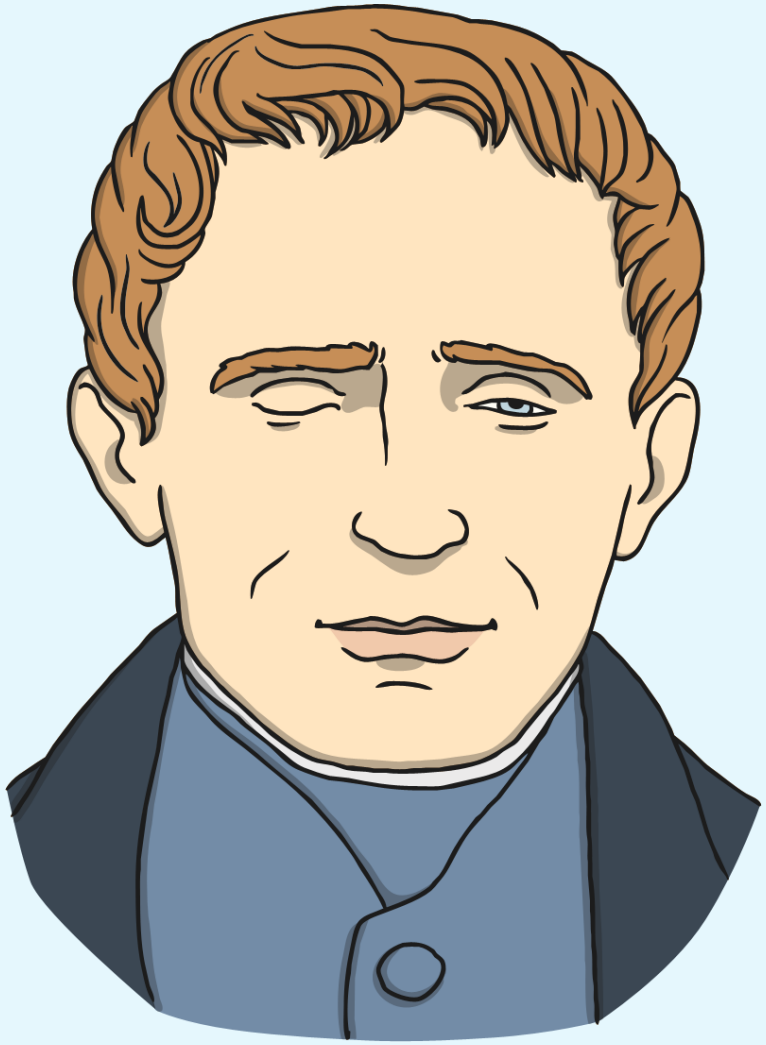
What Is Braille?

Braille is a special code made from six raised dots on a grid. There are __ different combinations of these dots meaning that they can be translated into many languages.
The dots are raised so that blind people can read using their finger tips to feel the patterns of the dots.



Who Invented It?

Louis Braille invented the braille system. He was a Frenchman, who became blind at the age of three after a terrible accident in his father's workshop.
He went to school at the Royal Institute for Blind Youth in France.
At the age of fifteen, he invented the code.



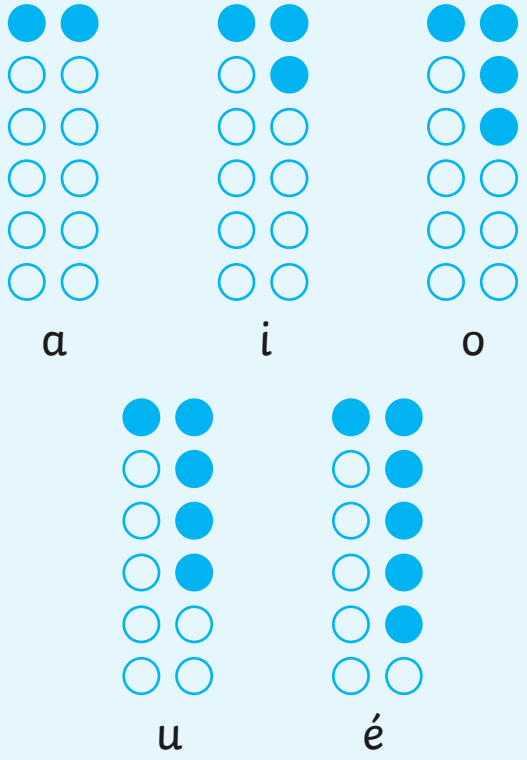
What Came Before Braille?

Whilst Louis Braille was at school, blind people read very large books where the usual letters were raised up so that blind people could use their fingers to feel the shape of each letter. This was used a lot, but it was a slow process.

It would have been similar to feeling embossed letters and numbers on coins today.

How Did Braille Develop?

Whilst at school, Louis' class had a visit from Charles Barbier, who was a captain in the French army. He had invented a system in 1808 called 'night writing' or 'sonography', which meant that soldiers could communicate in the dark by feeling raised dots. The code was based on twelve dots (two columns of six) and was very complicated to understand.
However, this gave Louis Braille the idea to create a much simpler version that blind people could use to read and write.

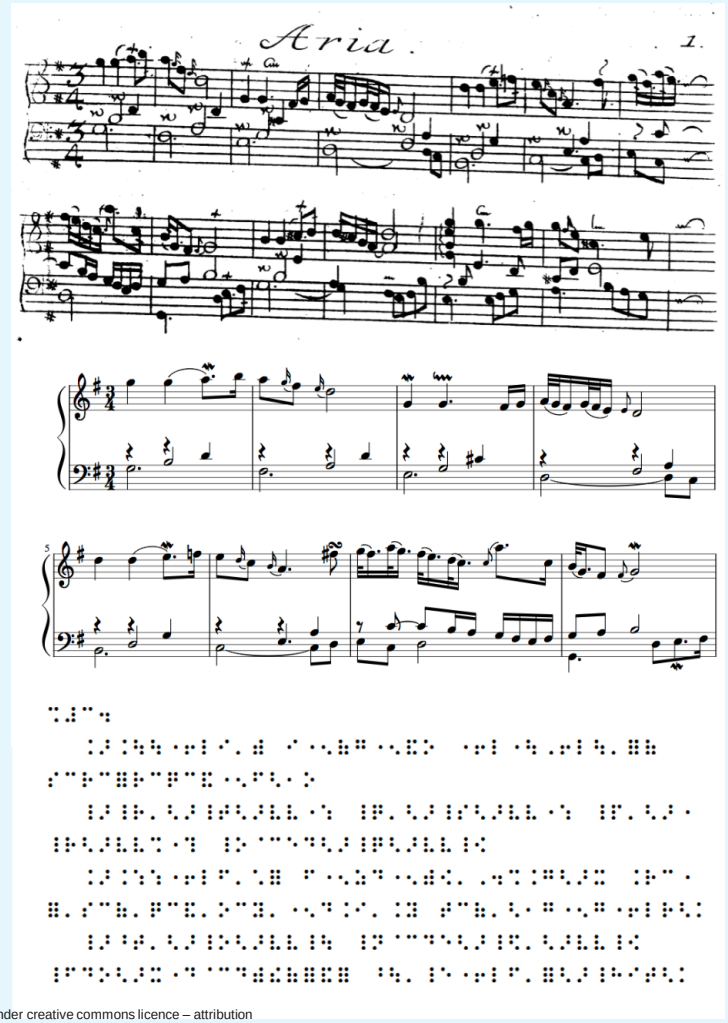


How Was It Written?

Louis made his own equipment for writing braille – it was called a 'planchette'. Planchette is a French word meaning 'little plank', and it was a small plank of wood with holes in it. He would hold it over the paper and use a tool to make small dips in the paper. When the paper was turned over, it had raised bumps. This also meant that he had to write the braille from right to left and do the codes as mirror images as he was working on the back of the paper.

Developing the Code

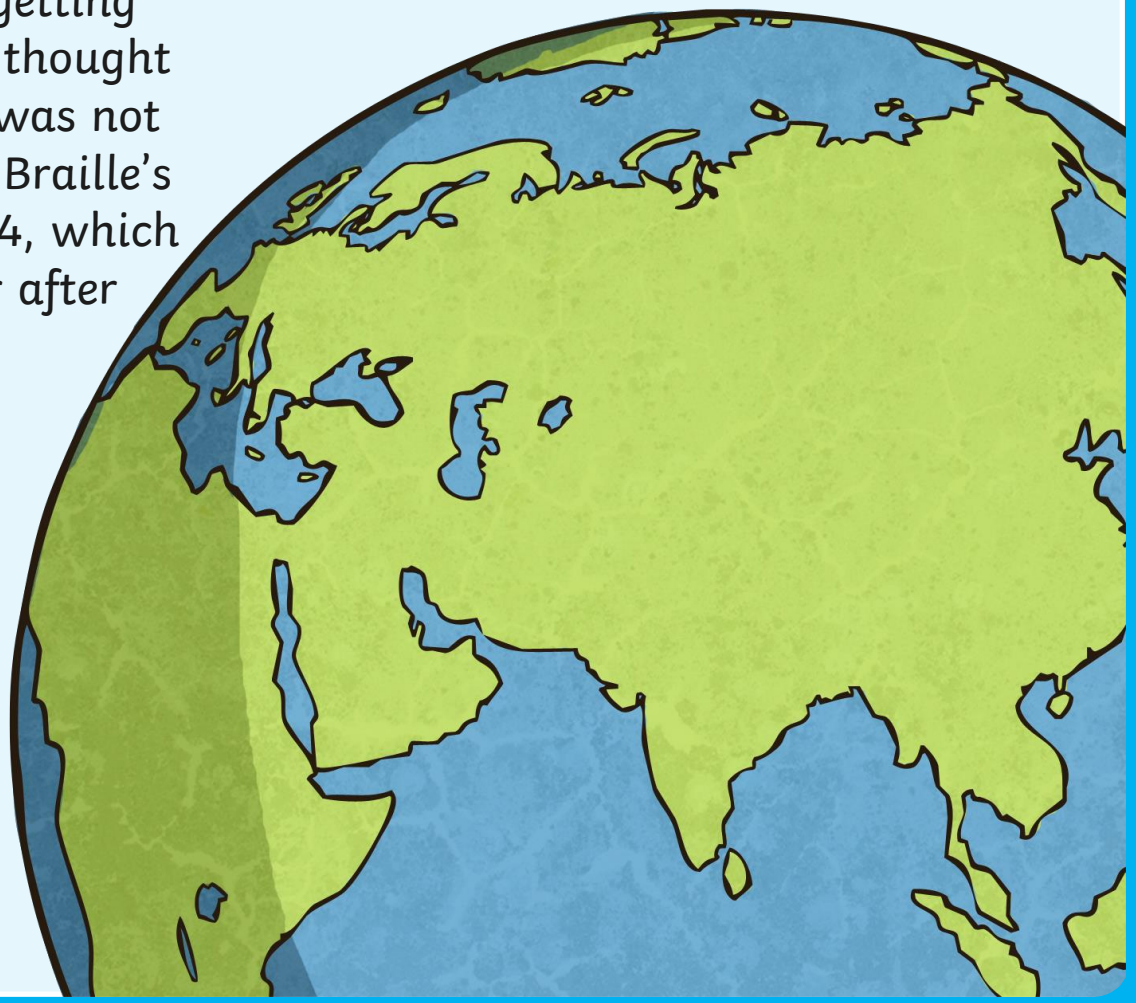
Louis Braille continued to develop his braille code right up until his death in 1852, but it wasn't officially used until after he died.
There are _____ possible combinations of patterns using the six dots of the braille cell.
Louis also went on to create a braille code that covered numbers, mathematical symbols and musical symbols.



When Did It Take Off?

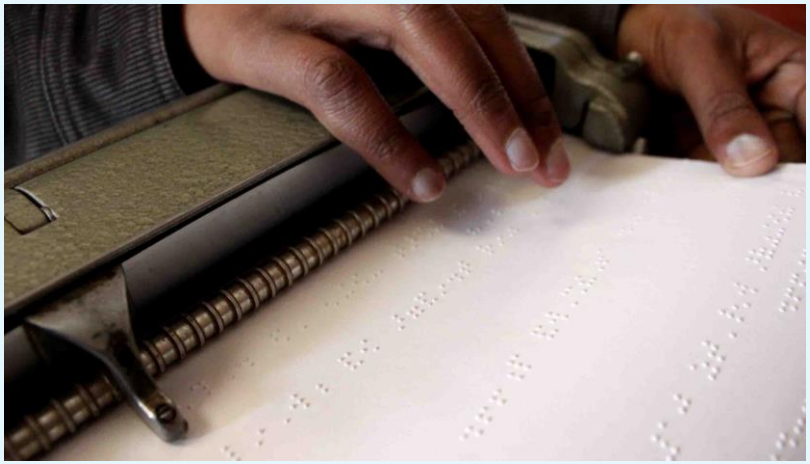
Even though braille was getting more popular and people thought it was a great system, it was not made official in France – Braille's home country – until 1854, which was unfortunately a year after Louis Braille died.

Since then, braille has spread all over the world and came to Britain in 1861.



How Is Braille Written Today?

Nowadays, people can still use something similar to Louis Braille's planchette, called a slate. As Braille did, writers using this method need to work backwards, as a mirror image.



There is also better technology available today in the form of braillers (braille writers), which are machines much like typewriters that can type braille. Amazing computer technology is also being developed all the time.

It's time to investigate ...

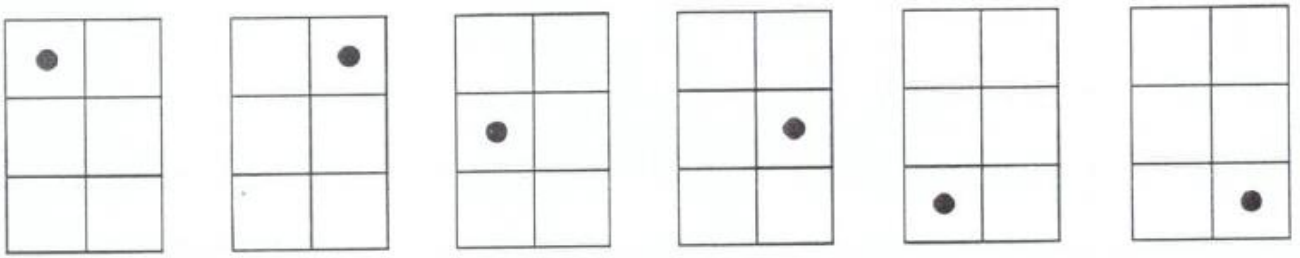
9 Braille

What you need: Squared paper marked into 2 × 3 rectangles, pencil

When Louis Braille invented his method of reading by touch, he needed a way of arranging a number of dots in a particular array. He chose to use a 3 × 2 rectangular array. In this he could distribute one, two, three, four, five or six raised dots.

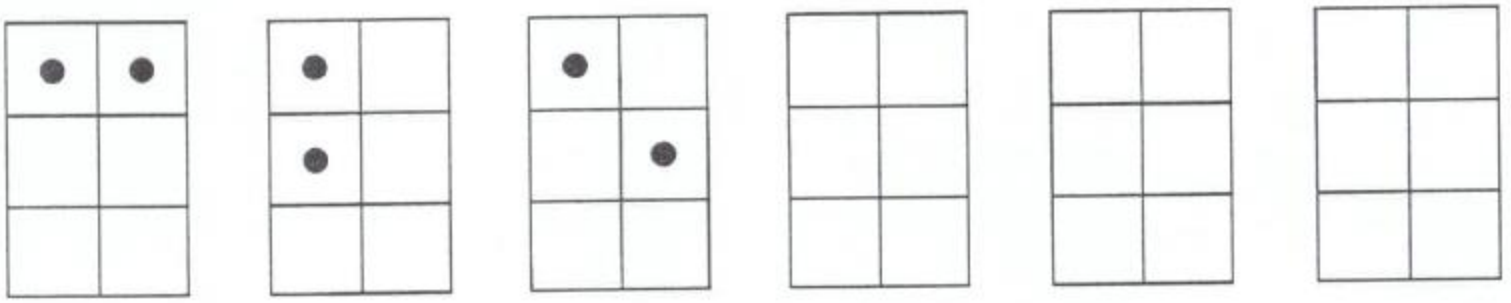
He had to find out how many ways he could put one dot in an array.

There were six, like this:



It's time to investigate ...

How many ways could he put two dots?
Use these rectangles to investigate, then continue on squared paper.



Investigate the ways he could have arranged three, four, five or six dots. How about 0 dots?

How many different ways are there altogether of arranging dots in a 3×2 array?

Have a Go...

Use a white board or paper to try writing a word using the braille code.