# An Introduction to Braille Labelling

Presented by Matthew Horspool for the Braillists Foundation, Tuesday 1 December 2020 at 7:30 PM

## Reasons to Label in Braille

A myriad of technological solutions for labelling exist nowadays, such as the Pen Friend from RNIB or WayAround labels for the iPhone. There are of course uses for multiple approaches, using different labelling strategies for different things, and indeed you may need to use OCR or remote assistance technologies such as Seeing AI, Be My Eyes or Aira to identify items before you label them. Some reasons for choosing to use braille labels include:

* Low cost (both equipment and consumables)
* Low maintenance, with no inherent reliance on batteries
* No equipment required to read the label
* Labels can be easily accessed by others, e.g. on greetings cards, when visitors need to use things, or when selling things labelled in braille to a fellow braille user
* Labels are relatively unobtrusive and can be created in a virtually infinite number of sizes

## Labelling Tape

### Suitable Uses

Labels which only occupy a single line, for example:

* Food boxes, jars, tubs etc
* CD and DVD cases
* Controls on equipment

### Particulars

It can be purchased from RNIB in two widths:

* 9 mm
* 12 mm

And in two colours:

* Clear
* Black

The colour of tape you use is entirely a matter of personal preference: some people find the braille dots easier to see on black tape; others prefer clear tape because what is underneath remains visible.

The width of tape you use depends on how you wish to braille on it:

* Braille Labeller (Dymo gun): takes 9 mm and 12 mm tape. Reizen RL-350, DL65, £31.50 ex VAT. <https://shop.rnib.org.uk/braille-labeller-reizen-rl-350-2660?DL65>
* Braille writing frames: check your frame. The A4 slates from Worth Trust which are being distributed by the Braillists Foundation have slots for 12 mm tape at line 9 and 9 mm tape at line 19. The Marburg frame (RNIB BF07) is basically identical in design and therefore also takes both widths of tape. Some slates, however, only take one of the widths, and some slates do not take labelling tape at all.
* Labelling Tape Adapter for Perkins Braillers: take both 9 mm and 12 mm tape.
* 6dot ™ Braille Label Maker ™: only takes 9 mm tape. Logan Technologies, sold by Taira Technologies, £495 ex VAT. <https://tairatech.com/products/6dot/>

All labelling tape from RNIB is sold in packs of 10 rolls for £16.99 ex VAT. Each roll is 3.5 m long. <https://shop.rnib.org.uk/braille-labelling-tape-89869?DL104>

Other brands of labelling tape can also be used and purchased from, e.g. Amazon.

### Notes on the Braille Labeller

* The dial has letters in both braille and print, allowing sighted people with no knowledge of braille to create braille labels
* The cutting mechanism scores the tape in addition to cutting it, leaving a flap on the label which makes it much easier to peal off the backing

### To Use Labelling Tape with a Writing Frame

Find the correct slot for the braille labelling tape, and then, using the appropriate width of tape, pass the tape from the upper side down through the left hand slot of the frame with the non-adhesive side facing downwards. Draw the tape tight and bring it up through the right hand slot. If you now close the frame, you can write in the normal way working from right to left. Remove the tape carefully afterwards and cut as required and remove adhesive backing if necessary.

[From *Instructions for the Marburg frame (BF07),* published by RNIB]

### Tips

* Use regular scissors to cut the labels if there is no built-in cutting device. If using a frame, you may wish to use the edge of the frame as a guide when cutting the labels off the roll to make sure the cut is straight.
* The adhesive is not always especially strong. Make sure surfaces are completely dry before applying the tape so as not to weaken the adhesive further.
* Once applied, the adhesive tends to hold well enough in the freezer.
* Try to apply labels in a consistent location, e.g. in the top left hand corner of food boxes or along the left hand side of the front of CD cases.
* Abbreviate labels where possible, e.g. "bol" for "bolognaise", so as to minimize their footprint and maximise use of tape.

## Self-Adhesive Labelling Sheets

### Suitable Uses

Labels which occupy more than one line, for example:

* Greetings cards

### Particulars

Perkins-sized cut sheets are available from RNIB in packs of eight. These are best used in a Perkins Brailler:

* Clear, Self-Adhesive Labelling Sheets, DL11, £7.75 ex VAT: <https://shop.rnib.org.uk/clear-self-adhesive-labelling-sheets-2631?DL11>

Tractor feed sheets measuring 11″ ×8.5″ (US Letter size) once removed from the backing sheet are available from Techno-Vision Systems in packs of ten. These are best used in braille embossers such as the Index Basic D, although they can also be separated and used in a Perkins Brailler or hand frame:

* BPL1185, £8.60 ex VAT: <https://www.techno-vision.co.uk/product/self-adhesive-labels-continuous-sprocket-feed-on-11%E2%80%B3-deep-9-5%E2%80%B3-backing-sheet/>

### Measuring the Size of the Label

It is best to do this in advance, but do not cut the labelling sheet to size until the label has been brailled. This will enable tighter margins.

If you have a braille frame, place the item to which the label should be applied on the centre of the frame. On the line above or below the item, count the number of cells which the item covers. Then down the left or right hand side, count the number of lines. Remember these dimensions when brailling on the sheet in your Perkins or preparing files for embossing.

### Cutting the Label

You may use any method, e.g. conventional scissors. However, I personally struggle to cut in a straight line using scissors and therefore prefer to use a paper trimmer.

## Other Tips

### Brailling Directly Onto Greetings Cards

There is no reason not to do this, but beware of glitter or other decoration falling inside a Perkins brailler!

If using a braille frame, a shallow one (e.g. with only four lines) is recommended so that you can feel how far along the card you are.

### Use of Non-Self-Adhesive Plastic

This generally means Brailon (thermoform), available in a range of sizes from RNIB. However, you could also use Acetate sheets such as used on Overhead Projectors, or PVC front covers available from Amazon.

Whole sheets are good for, e.g. recipes, as the braille is extremely hard waring and the sheets are not ruined when subjected to water, thus the braille recipes can be washed.

Sheets can alternatively be cut into thin strips, about the same widths as labelling tape, and a hole punched at one end through which can be threaded an elastic band or piece of string, thus creating re-usable labels which can be tied to things. This strategy could be used for, e.g. labelling clothes as the labels may survive lower temperature wash cycles.

## Further Reading

*Identifying and Labelling Everything: Recognizing the Items in your Life,* by Judy Dixon, published by National Braille Press. Formerly *Label It!* Available in braille, ebraille, Word and DAISY formats for download ($12 USD) or on USB drive ($14.50 USD). <https://www.nbp.org/ic/nbp/LABEL-ID.html>