# Advocating for Braille in the Wider World

## The Braillists Foundation

## Where might braille be useful?

There are various places that braille might be helpful, including the following:

* Buttons on lifts.
* Signage on bathroom doors.
* At bus stops, with the name or number of the stop.
* On train platforms.
* Restaurant menus.
* Numbers on doors in a building, particularly on university campuses.
* Communication, such as letters from the NHS or the council.

## An in-person advocacy strategy.

Advocating face-to-face can be useful in low pressure situations as it gives you the chance to connect with the person you are speaking with. It's particularly helpful when talking with someone about braille who owns a small business, and who may not be educated about braille or why they should provide it. It's not always ideal to speak with someone face-to-face in a situation where you'd want documentation of the conversation, such as when you're trying to get braille letters from your local council.

* Introduce yourself and your connection to the business: I like to start by telling the person who I am, and why I like to visit their business.
* Ask them if they've ever thought about braille signage, or a braille menu.
* Tell them a couple of ways the thing you're asking for would help you. For example you'd be able to browse the menu, and if a group of blind people were visiting they could pass the menu around and so wouldn't need to take up so much time asking an employee to read to them.
* Explain how the business owner can get hold of the braille they need.
* Follow up with an email, with links to transcription companies.

## Benefits of this strategy

This strategy is useful when you want to educate someone about the need for braille from a personal angle, rather than as a legal right. It can help connect you with your community, and builds trust between blind people and the business. Most small business owners don't know how braille transcription works, or even that they should be providing braille. Usually, when they meet a blind person who speaks directly to them about it, they are willing to then investigate how they can get braille in their business.

## Communicating with larger businesses

Communicating with larger businesses often requires a different strategy. If you want a chain restaurant to offer braille menus, it's usually better sending an email rather than speaking with someone at your local branch of the restaurant. Often, the people working at the local branch have no control over these things. Look on the website for an email address, or contact form.

I find it helpful to mention the following in my message:

* There are thousands of braille readers in the UK.
* Braille menus enable us to read independently and access the same level of information as other customers, such as prices.
* A number of chain restaurants already provide braille menus, and so you are disappointed/concerned/surprised that they are not providing the same level of customer service.

You can also include your own personal experiences, such as how accessing braille makes a difference in your life, or you can keep it brief. If they ignore you or say no, it's worth asking to be passed onto someone higher up, as the reality is the person you're communicating with probably isn't the decision maker.

## Your legal right to braille

There are a number of situations in which it's absolutely critical that you have access to the information you need, such as letters from the council or the NHS. You have the right, under the Equality Act, for reasonable adjustments to be made. This absolutely includes communication in an accessible format.

When advocating in these situations it can be helpful to make use of the RNIB toolkits, which guide you through writing to your council and other organisations. The benefits of using these, rather than writing your own letter, is that the majority of the work has been done for you. They are using the correct language, and they are revised based on user feedback. The RNIB also has a legal team which can advise you when you are not receiving accessible communication, and you can contact them through the RNIB helpline.

To access the toolkits, visit: <https://www.rnib.org.uk/campaigning/campaign-resources>