



# **Fluent Braille Reading Recommendations 2025**



**The voice of blind and partially sighted people in Europe**

## 1.Introduction

Braille reading fluency lies at the heart of full literacy for people who are blind or severely visually impaired. Fluent Braille readers can access information efficiently, enjoy reading for pleasure, and participate equally in education, employment, and culture. Yet, despite its vital role, Braille fluency is often underemphasised in teaching and rehabilitation, while reading speed and tactile comfort vary widely among readers.

These Braille Fluent Reading Recommendations have been developed under the auspices of the European Blind Union (EBU), building on the findings of the EBU Braille Working Group [Study on Braille Reading Speed and Fluency \(2024\)](#). These recommendations aim to translate scientific knowledge and practical experience into clear, actionable guidance that supports both learners and teachers of Braille.

The foundation for these recommendations comes from a growing body of international research confirming that Braille fluency can be learned, practised, and strengthened throughout life. Studies such as Stanfa & Johnson (2015), 'Improving Braille Reading Fluency: The Bridge to Comprehension,' show that increasing reading speed directly enhances comprehension and motivation. Instructional approaches like Swenson's 'Flying Fingers' highlight the importance of early, engaging fluency training for beginning readers, while resources from the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) emphasize physical and cognitive strategies such as hand positioning, light touch, and mental anticipation.

Across all these perspectives, one principle is clear: Fluency grows from practice, diversity, motivation, and mindful technique.

These recommendations therefore provide ten key strategies for developing fluent Braille reading — from tactile skill training and ergonomic preparation to mental and motivational approaches. Each recommendation is designed to be practical, adaptable, and inclusive for readers of all ages and levels. These recommendations have been designed to be language-independent, focusing on the universal tactile and cognitive principles of fluent braille reading rather than on specific linguistic patterns.

The intended audience includes:

- Children and adult braille learners
- Teachers and rehabilitation specialists

- Parents and peers
- Policy makers and advocates

The following sections combine research-based insight, teaching experience, and the voices of skilled braille readers across Europe. Together, they form a practical guide to making braille reading not only faster and more accurate, but also more enjoyable and sustainable — a skill for lifelong independence.

## 2. Understanding braille fluency

Fluency in braille reading refers to the ability to read smoothly, accurately, and with appropriate speed and comprehension. It represents an integration of tactile perception, motor coordination, linguistic understanding, and cognitive prediction.

Unlike print reading, which relies primarily on visual input, braille reading depends on active tactile exploration. Each cell must be recognized by touch and translated into linguistic meaning through short-term memory and context. This multisensory process explains why developing fluency takes time and practice.

Research (EBU, 2024; Stanfa & Johnson, 2015) indicates that tactile reading involves the coordination of multiple perceptual and cognitive systems: the fingers act as sensors, the hands as navigators, and the brain as interpreter. Efficient readers learn to minimise unnecessary hand movements, anticipate word patterns, and maintain a rhythm of reading that supports comprehension.

Children typically develop fluency gradually as their tactile sensitivity and vocabulary expand, while adults who learn braille later in life may face challenges related to sensitivity and speed, yet often compensate through higher cognitive prediction and linguistic skills.



### **3. Key strategies for developing fluency**

#### **3.1 Read as much as possible**

Practice is the most powerful method for improvement. Even if reading feels slow at first, frequent reading builds muscle memory and confidence. Set aside daily reading time and gradually increase duration.

#### **3.2 Touch lightly**

A gentle touch improves sensitivity and reduces fatigue. Avoid pressing too hard on the dots, as it slows recognition and can strain your hands.

#### **3.3 Prepare yourself and your environment**

Warm your hands before reading, ensure they are clean and dry, and keep your reading surface stable. Sit upright with relaxed arms.

Hand position and finger posture also play a crucial role in fluency. Keep your wrists relaxed and your forearms almost parallel to the reading surface. The fingers should be slightly curved, resting naturally on the braille line.

The pads of the index and middle fingers — not the very tips — should make contact with the dots. This allows for a larger surface area of tactile perception and reduces strain on individual fingertips.

A gentle, forward-sliding motion with minimal pressure helps maintain sensitivity and prevents fatigue. Some readers find it easier to keep their hands at a slight diagonal angle rather than perfectly perpendicular to the lines, which enables smoother transitions between cells and lines.

#### **3.4 Train your tactiles skills**

Use your fingertips to explore tactile graphics, textures, and games. Engage in tactile exercises like following lines, identifying raised patterns, or distinguishing fine differences between materials.

#### **3.5 Use both hands and multiple fingers**

Effective braille readers make full use of both hands to maintain a smooth and continuous flow across the page. The goal is to minimise pauses between lines and to keep reading rhythm steady.

Experienced readers will typically use the left hand to begin the next line while the right hand finishes the current one — a coordination sometimes referred to as the “scissors technique.” This method helps maintain forward motion and prevents the small interruptions that occur when the

hands move together from the end of one line to the beginning of the next.

In addition, fluent readers often engage four or even six fingers rather than relying only on their index fingers. The additional fingers serve to preview upcoming text, to check alignment, or to maintain spatial orientation on the page.

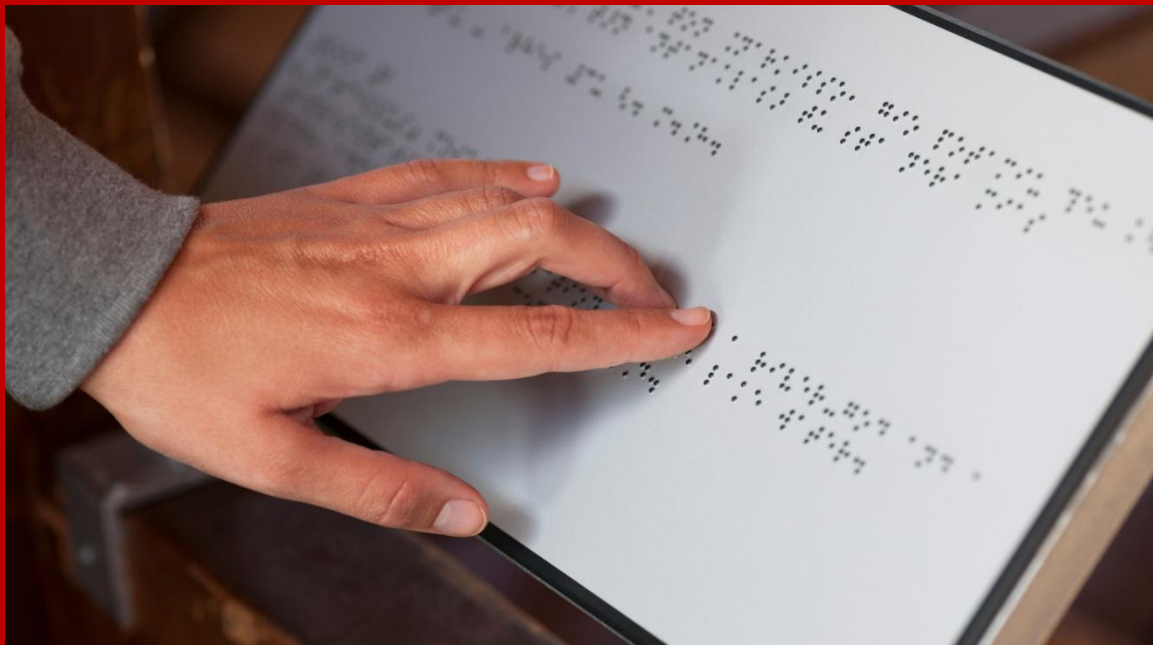
Research summarised in *Flying Fingers* (Swenson, *Paths to Literacy*) and supported by the AFB American Way article on braille productivity shows that multi-finger reading promotes tactile anticipation — the ability to sense upcoming braille cells before they are consciously interpreted.

Developing this skill requires gradual practice. Start by placing your middle fingers lightly next to your index fingers, allowing them to “follow” the motion. Over time, let them share part of the reading task. The aim is not speed alone but smoother, more rhythmic movement of both hands.

Practical tip: Try reading simple, repetitive texts using both hands simultaneously. Focus on keeping your movement fluid rather than fast — fluency begins with rhythm, not speed.

### **3.6 Read braille produced on a variety of materials**

Expose yourself to different writing styles - books, newspapers and magazines, short labels, bank statements and utility bills - as well as Braille written on different surfaces— paper books, plastic labels or signage, and Braille displays. Reading varied content and dot types increases flexibility and adaptability.



### 3.7 Read with your brain

Engage in cognitive strategies like anticipating words from context, grouping phrases into meaningful units, and predicting sentence flow. Such mental activity enhances speed and comprehension simultaneously. As you progress, try to recognize braille cells not only as individual characters, but as familiar tactile patterns representing parts of words or entire words. Perceiving these configurations as holistic shapes — rather than a sequence of dots — helps your brain process text faster and more intuitively.

### 3.8 Read with others

Participate in shared or guided oral reading. Read aloud to others or with a partner who gives feedback. Echo reading — synchronizing your reading pace with a recording — can also be highly effective.

### 3.9 Challenge your speed

Occasionally read faster than you can comfortably manage. Even when you miss some words, this exercise trains your tactile recognition and builds overall speed.

### 3.10 Read what you love

Motivation sustains learning. Choose texts you enjoy and that give you a sense of success after short sessions. Remember: every line you read independently is an achievement to be proud of.





#### **4. For teachers and trainers**

Teachers and rehabilitation professionals play a crucial role in fostering braille fluency. Instruction should be individualised, emphasizing both accuracy and speed through engaging activities. Regular assessment, positive feedback, and motivational reinforcement help learners progress steadily. Encouraging self-monitoring and reflection can also help readers recognize their own improvement.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Fluent braille reading is both a technical skill and a form of personal empowerment. It connects tactile, cognitive, and emotional engagement with the written word. By practising regularly, diversifying reading materials, and nurturing motivation, every braille reader can grow in confidence and enjoyment.

As these recommendations demonstrate, fluency is not a fixed ability but a continuous journey — one that opens doors to knowledge, communication, and independence.

#### **6. References and further reading**

- European Blind Union (2024). Study on Braille Reading Speed and Fluency.
- Stanfa, K. & Johnson, N. (2015). Improving Braille Reading Fluency: The Bridge to Comprehension. *Journal of Blindness Innovation and Research*, Vol. 5, No. 2.
- Swenson, A. (n.d.). Flying Fingers: Fluency Instruction for Beginning Braille Readers. *Paths to Literacy*.
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## **7. Disclaimer**

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