Abstract: Introduction: Students who read braille use assistive technology to engage in literacy tasks and to access the general curriculum. There is little research on the ways in which technology has changed the reading and writing practices and preferences of students who use braille, nor is there much research on how assistive technology is learned by students with visual impairments. Methods: This article describes the first phase of a mixed-methods study that was conducted to investigate the current use of paper braille and assistive technology among students aged 16–22, and the students’ attitudes toward braille and technology as tools for classroom learning in high school and college. The first phase of the study consisted of 12 structured interviews of students from across the United States, which were transcribed, analyzed qualitatively, and coded for themes reported here. Results: The practices used by students fell into three broad themes, (1) the wide variety of devices used for reading and writing, (2) the types of tasks they performed using specific devices, and (3) the ways students learned practices for using braille and technology. Their attitudes fell into three themes as well: (1) preferences about braille and of technology tools, (2) how students chose to use those tools for specific tasks, and (3) the role teachers played in learning to use technology. Discussion: Results of the study indicated the changing nature of how students use various tools and how they select approaches to completing their class work, and the importance for students of being able to make choices regarding tools and strategies. Implications for practitioners: These themes suggest that for students to take advantage of the many choices available to efficiently complete school tasks, they must be proficient in multiple methods and tools for learning.
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Students who are braille readers use assistive technology not only to engage in literacy tasks (such as creating print documents) but also to access the general curriculum. For all of its acknowledged importance, there is little research on the ways that technology has changed the reading and writing practices of students who use braille, nor is there much research on how assistive technology is learned by students with visual impairments. A mixed methods study was conducted to investigate current use of paper braille and assistive technology among students aged 16-22 who read braille, and the Braille Alphabet. Choosing From Braille Curricula. Teaching Strategies. From the beginning of a child’s education, teachers make the difference in making learning accessible to a student with vision loss. Educators should maintain high expectations for these students. Many aids and technologies can assist students with visual impairments in getting around independently, from seeing-eye dogs to specialized canes. For the classroom, page magnifiers come in different shapes and sizes to enlarge words and diagrams on a page. Computer Settings and Equipment. Assistive Technologies. Making Art Accessible. Students with visual impairment can enjoy creating art with the proper lighting, brightly colored equipment, and supplies.