Western Cape Government
Education
FOR YOU

Interesting Braille facts you didn't know

World Braille Day falls on 4 January every year and aims to "raise awareness of the importance of Braille as a means of communication" for those with blindness or visual impairments, explains the United Nations.

In fact, the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) estimates that globally, 43 million people are blind and 295 million more suffered from "moderate to severe visual impairment" in 2020. The World Health Organization reports that at least 2.2 billion individuals "have a near or distance vision impairment. In at least 1 billion of these, vision impairment could have been prevented or is yet to be addressed."

Considering this and the significance of Braille for communication, Perkins School for the Blind shares interesting Braille facts:

- **It was first a military code.** Referred to as "night writing", the French army developed the system of code in 1819 to communicate silently. "Fifteen-year-old French schoolboy Louis Braille learned about the code, and eventually developed the more usable, streamlined version of the braille alphabet we know today."
- **Braille books are longer.** Braille takes up more space than the traditional English alphabet. The Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire is 10 volumes in braille.
- **Braille is available in many languages.** "There are braille versions of Chinese, Spanish, Arabic, Hebrew and many others."
- **Braille family games.** Braille Lego and UNO and Monopoly for low vision are commercially available.

How to care for your eyesight

So, knowing how many individuals experience visual impairment, how can we ensure the health of our eyes? The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shares how:

- **Eat right for healthy eyesight.** Leafy greens, such as spinach and kale, and foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon and tuna.
- **Rest your eyes from bright screens.** "Try the 20-20-20 rule: Every 20 minutes, look away about 20 feet in front of you for 20 seconds."
- **Protect your eyes with shade.** Opt for sunglasses if you spend most of your time outside in the sun. "When purchasing sunglasses, look for ones that block out 99 to 100 percent of both UV-A and UV-B radiation."
- **Have eye exams regularly** to ensure your eyes are healthy.