

When I started learning Braille, I was in preschool. At the time, I was only three and a half years old. Because I was so young, I did not realize that I was 'different' from the other kids that I went to school with. While they were having fun in school, I thought that it was "unfair" that I had to learn how to read.

At the beginning, learning Braille was frustrating for me. It was hard to memorize all of the different letters. I didn't understand why the other kids weren't learning it, too.

When I was in kindergarten, I began to realize that the other kids were not reading Braille. This added more frustration. When I would read aloud to my kindergarten teacher, she could not help me with words like she did with other kids. Because of this, I preferred listening to tapes or being read to.

As time passed and my vision teacher helped me become more fluent in reading Braille, I began to love reading Braille more and more. It became fun that I was the only one who could read in the dark in my family. Instead of thinking of Braille as a burden, I began to look for longer books to read. Short books just didn't last long enough anymore.

Soon my vision teacher entered me in the Braille Readers are Leaders contest. Although I did not win anything the first year I entered, it was fun to challenge myself in an area that I enjoyed. After that, I entered the Braille Readers are Leaders Contest for the next several years.

As I grew older, Braille became essential in class. For one thing, I could not see what my teacher was writing on the chalk board. If I wanted to do well on tests, I would have to take notes. I learned how to take Braille notes electronically or with a slate and stylus. Because of this, it is now easier for me to study with Braille notes rather than listening to a tape or trying to recall what was said in class.

Math became more challenging for me in middle school. In eighth grade especially, when I started Algebra, Braille was a necessity. In order to figure out equations, I needed to be able to see my previous steps. It would have taken too long for me to do this verbally. Without Braille, I would not have been able to do Algebra. This, too, was the case with Geometry, especially when I was doing proofs.

Although Braille has helped me with many things in the past, it will continue to be an asset in the future. When I go to college, I will take notes in Braille. Braille will help me recall everything I learn in class.

Now, Braille is something I can honestly say is something I would not want to do without. Unlike tapes, which you need a tape player to listen to, you do not need any other technology to enjoy Braille. Braille has helped me so much in the past and it will continue to do so in the future. I have no regrets about learning Braille. On the contrary, I would not want to live in a world without Braille.