# The Tactile Times Newspaper

Issue Number 6

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[tactiletimes.org](https://Tactiletimes.org)

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Welcome to the 6th edition of the Tactile Times!

We are Ellie, Lexy and Theo, three young braillists who thought it would be fun to put together a way for children and young people who are braillists, to share news, event information, tips, opinions and ideas. We hope you like it.

We are really excited about the Tactile Times being a way for more and more of us braillists to keep each other up to date, so if you know someone else who might like to get a copy, or to contribute an article, then let us know! To find out more about the Tactile Times and why we set it up, visit <https://tactiletimes.org/about> And you can find more ideas for what to contribute and some accessibility tips at <https://tactiletimes.org/contribute>

This issue is filled with breaking news, technology reviews, recommended sports activities and much, much more, and we hope that you really enjoy reading it.

Best wishes from all of us at the Tactile Times and wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Some navigation tips: We have put a line of 10 +’s between sections and == before each article so you can search for == to find the beginning of articles and +’s to find sections. This method is most useful on devices that cannot navigate by headings (such as Braille displays). On the Touch +, you can navigate by heading by either pressing Enter+V to open the KeyWord preview or reading this issue via the online version. Each section heading is also numbered so you can search for the number of a section followed by a full-stop to find that section.

We have also put headings in for sections and articles:

Heading 1: Title at the top of the document

Heading 2: Sections and contents page

Heading 3: Article titles

Heading 4: Article sections (not used in every article)

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## 1. News

### == Check out our fully-accessible advent calendar!

Every day up until today, there has been a new door available to open on our fully-accessible online advent calendar. You can view all 24 hidden surprises right now, just head to <https://is.gd/JmoVz0>

### == An exciting time for electronic tactile graphics displays

If you are eagerly awaiting the arrival of a tactile graphics display, we have some good news!

Within the last few months, two new prototypes (the Graphiti+ by Orbit Research and the Dot Pad by Dot Inc.) have been launched and [APH also appear to be working with HumanWare on a competitor](https://www.aph.org/aph-is-ready-for-a-braille-revolution/).

Sadly it is very difficult to get your hands on any of these devices in the UK at the moment as they did not come to Sight Village and have only been demonstrated in the U.S., but you can find more information about them below.

[Graphiti Plus](http://www.orbitresearch.com/product/graphiti-plus/)

[DotPad](https://pad.dotincorp.com/)

On a related note, Bristol Braille have also launched the Canute Console. See [below](#_==_Bristol_Braille) for details.

### == APH partners with the Daisy Consortium to develop the EBRF

APH (the American Printing House for the Blind, based in the US), has announced that it has partnered with the Daisy Consortium to begin development on a brand-new type of file called the EBRF.

The file format is looking like it will be the next-generation for BRF’s, with support for tactile graphics, headings and more.

See the full announcement here:

<https://www.aph.org/aph-partners-with-daisy-consortium-on-new-digital-braille-standard/>

### == A sad time for Microsoft Soundscape

On the 12th of December this year, Microsoft announced that the Soundscape app will be discontinued and gave everyone only 3 more weeks to download it.

The iPhone app was very helpful for navigating new environments, and it also contained spatial audio queues. You could set a beacon for a destination to navigate yourself there, and even create your own markers. These were all very unique features. No other app can do this, or even comes close to what Soundscape did.

On the 3rd of January 2023, the app will be pulled from the App Store and made open source. This essentially means all new downloads are blocked, but the code is out there. The most we can hope for is for someone to pick up the code and make a new app from it if we’re lucky.

So download it right now if you don’t already have it and would like to try it out before existing installations are deactivated in June. Let’s just hope that Seeing AI isn’t next in line for the chop. See the full announcement here: <https://aka.ms/ossblog>

### == Speech comes to new Brailliants

HumanWare’s new Brailliant BI 40X braille displays, which came out in December 2020, have now received a major update which unlocks text-to-speech capabilities for the displays.

They have also received numerous new features over the last few months, including a BRF Editor and several new settings.

You can find instructions to get speech working here:

<https://www.humanware.ca/web/en/newsletter/210720220937-TTS.htm>

### == JAWS 2023 released

A new major version of JAWS has just released, and it is well worth the upgrade. From brand-new features like Smart glance to help you navigate the internet, to a whole array of bug fixes and enhancements, there is surely something for everyone to benefit from in this update.

To install it, first check with whoever provides your JAWS license if you’re license includes the upgrade. If it does, just navigate to the Check for updates menu in JAWS (on school computers school IT may need to do this and enter a special password) and then the update will download and install.

Once installed, why not read the full release notes in JAWS menu > Help > What’s new?

### == New update to the Concept2 ErgData app makes it more accessible

Normally app updates are a nightmare for accessibility, but Concept2 has partnered with the ACB (American Council of the Blind) to ensure their app remains accessible after a major visual overhaul. So, if you were holding back on this update, you can click “Update” knowing that the app will still work for you after you do.

### == New Soundscape competitor launches on the App Store

Up until now, Soundscape has been the only spatial audio navigation app available, but that will soon change. There is now another app entering the scene, likely trying to fill the gap that [Soundscape’s exit](#_==_A_sad) will create.

It is in Alpha and you can try it out right now by downloading “WaveOut” from the iOS App Store. More information about the new app can be found at <https://waveout.app>

### == Bristol Braille launch the Canute console

Bristol Braille Technology, the makers of the Canute multi-line braille display with 9 lines and 360 cells in total, have launched a very exciting new product, the Canute console.

The original Canute could only handle BRF’s on USB, while the Canute console makes games, word-processing, spreadsheets and even more possible.

Bristol Braille have been taking it on tour in November and they plan to continue the tour, see their website (<https://www.bristolbraille.org>) for tour dates. Also, see below for [my first impressions of the product](#_==_My_first).

### == IBSA blind sport championships come to the UK for 2023

If you’re interested in sport, you might be excited to hear that the IBSA championships (which specifically include blind sports) will be coming to Birmingham in the UK in late August next year. If you have been looking for a chance to watch some professional blind sport, why not come and watch?

### == KeyCode for BrailleNote Touch + has launched

HumanWare, the manufacturer of the BrailleNote Touch +, have launched KeyCoad (a new braille-centric coding application which can help you learn coding with just a Touch + and a micro:bit).

Although the app’s features are fairly limited, it is definitely worth a look if you’re new to coding and not confident on the computer yet. However, buying a Touch + purely for this app is likely not the best idea.

To download it, just [update your Touch +](#_BrailleNote_Touch_+). See [this HumanWare page](https://www.humanware.ca/web/en/newsletter/151120220926-BNT-KeyCode.htm) for more information.

### == World Braille Day is coming up

The 4th of January is World Braille Day. This is Loui Braille’s birthday, celebrated by braille enthusiasts throughout the world.

There are some exciting events coming up from the Braillists on World Braille Day, and you can find all the details on the Braillists website here:

<https://braillists.org/news>

### == The Tactile Times zooms past 100 subscribers!

We are excited to report that our subscriber count has increased by over 35 in the last month, bringing the total to way past the 100 mark.

Thank you to all of you who have subscribed already, and for anyone not subscribed yet you can do so for free at: <https://tactiletimes.org/subscribe>

### == The Braillists launch Braille for Beginners on demand

The Braillists Foundation have launched a new type of braille course. It will help anyone interested to learn how to read uncontracted braille by touch.

If you are interested, you can find all the information on the webpage here:

<https://www.braillists.org/beginners>

### == Launching the Tactile Times shortcut

We are very excited to launch the Tactile Times shortcut, which gives you fast access to everything we have to offer across iPhone, iPad, and even Apple Watch!

It lets you quickly download issues for later, read the latest updates from us or play a quick round of Hangman, all in one place.

The shortcut has a simple main menu, where you select what you would like to do. It also has clear sounds to let you know when it is opened or closed.

If you would like to install it, just head to <https://tactiletimes.org/shortcut>

N.B. This is not an app, it is an iOS Shortcut which behaves like a simple app once installed. For more info, see the link above or [contact us](#_12._Get_in).

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## 2. Fun Things we did

### == NCW GCSE Revision Course

In the Easter holidays this year, several other braillists and I attended a GCSE Revision Course at NCW.

I had a chat to various people at the camp. This may be helpful if you are considering whether to attend in Easter 2023 or not.

You can find more information about the upcoming course here:

<https://www.ncw.co.uk/events/gcse-residential-revision-course-2/>

#### 2a. What have you enjoyed the most so far?

“I have enjoyed meeting new people as well as people I already knew. Also learning new VI techniques in all the subjects we have been in, seeing how NCW's techniques are different from a main-stream, school and for exams. Also coming to NCW again!” – Amy

“Meeting other blind people and be able to communicate braille with them. Also enjoyed learning new blind skills.” - Sofia

“I have enjoyed meeting new people.” - Carys

“I have found the recreational activities quite refreshing and a great opportunity to meet other people.” - Daniel

#### 2b. What could have worked better so far?

“In my opinion, I don't think anything could have worked better.” – Amy

“I would have liked to explore the school and facilities like the gym swimming pool and swing.” - Sofia

“Not really.” - Carys

“I think everything has been to an exceptional standard.” - Daniel

#### 2c. Have you learnt anything new. If so, what?

“Definitely! As mentioned above so many different techniques.” – Amy

“Yes I have. I have learnsh how to rotate shapes on tactile graphs, also how to use light/colour detector, how to use a microwave.” - Sofia

“I learnt some new songs from the quiz.” - Carys

“I've learnt about the efficiency of a microwave in preparing main meals and the use of a temperature probe.” - Daniel

#### 2d. If there was a similar camp again would you come?

“Definitely, I have really enjoyed it!” – Amy

“Yes, I really enjoyed my experience so far and I would really like to repeat it.” - Sofia

“Yes” – Carys

“Yes” - Daniel

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## 3. A Favourite Recipe

### == Chocolate Pistachio Fudge

#### Ingredients

* 350 grams chopped dark chocolate (minimum 70% coco solids)
* 1 × 397 grams can of condensed milk
* 30 grams butter
* Pinch of salt
* 150 grams pistachios

#### Method

1. Put the chopped chocolate, condensed milk, butter and salt in a heavy-based pan on a low heat, and stir to melt.
2. Put the nuts into a freezer bag and bash them with a rolling pin, until broken up into both big and little pieces.
3. Add the nuts to the melted chocolate and condensed milk and stir well to mix.
4. Pour and spatch this mixture into a foil tray 23cm / 9 inch square, smoothing the top.
5. Let the fudge cool, and refrigerate until set. You can then cut it into small pieces. You can best achieve this by cutting the fudge so that you get 8 rows across and 8 rows lengthways, and this should give 64 pieces, each approx. 2.75cm / 1⅛ inches square.
6. Once cut, it can be kept in the freezer — no need to thaw just eat straight away.

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## 4. Languages

### == Major app overhaul for Duolingo users on iOS

Duolingo have recently made some major changes to how their app works on iOS. This includes moving around tabs, changing where things are and the renaming of some features, for example the Duolingo Plus subscription has been renamed Super Duolingo.

This seems quite annoying to me, as I had only just got used to the complicated layout in the first place. Also, it seems the amount of things that gems (the virtual currency you earn in the app) can be spent on is slowly but surely decreasing.

Nevertheless, Duolingo is still a great language learning app, and I encourage anyone new to it to give it a try, you can even complete your first lesson without an account.

By Theo, 15

### == Method 2 Language tables for BrailleNote Touch

For any Touch+ users learning a language at school, we have some good news.

The type of braille used by foreign-language learners in the UK (a variant of uncontracted UEB containing accents), has previously been unavailable for electronic use. It is now available on the Touch+.

If you would like to have a go with it, first make sure you are updated (we have a guide on this in [the tech section](#_==_How_to)).

To add it to your existing Language profile, access the options menu with Space+O, select Configure language profiles and then the name of your profile and then select the corresponding Method 2 table from, slightly counterintuitively, the English UEB menu (HumanWare have a helpful YouTube tutorial on this).

You can also add it to a new language profile with similar steps.

For me it has got some getting used to as I have used French and German in Grade 1 form but with foreign punctuation, but it is well worth it.

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## 5. Music

### == Recordings of Tactile Times readers performing Music

Recordings of music and other audio files are available in various doors of our online accessible advent calendar, just visit <https://is.gd/JmoVz0> to check it out.

Audio files with music that you may find include:

• 9th – A Christmas Carol from Kate

• 13th – Sankta Lucia’s song

• 20th – Gabriels Obo from Ellie

• 24th – We Wish you a Merry Christmas

And many, many more…

So why not have a browse of the advent calendar now?

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## 6. Technology

### == How to update a BrailleNote Touch + or Brailliant

When updates come out for your devices, you will likely be very excited. Here is how to get the updates downloaded.

#### Before you start

We know that you will naturally be very excited, but you really shouldn’t update if:

* You are in the middle of, or are about to start, a set of exams
* Your school IT department or QTVI told you to hold off on the update
* The update has been reported unstable by lots of users.

We know that sometimes you just can’t wait to get your hands on the update, but if any of these three points apply to you there is a good reason to hold off.

If you shouldn’t be updating or don’t want to, turn off Automatic updates. On the Touch+ simply open the KeyUpdater app from the All Apps menu to do this, and them turn them off under preferences. Brailliants aren’t going to do full updates automatically, but you may wish to turn off “automatic check” under Space+O > Software Update to prevent constant nagging about updates.

If none of these three points apply to you, let’s run through how to update

#### BrailleNote Touch +

The below instructions are for the BrailleNote Touch + only. The original touch does not get updates anymore, in fact not even security patches.

If you see an alert saying an update is ready to be installed, just select “Install” and let the device update automatically.

If not, manually update by:

1. Use Space+Dots456 to go to the bottom of the Main menu. You should be placed on “All applications”.
2. Press Enter to select this.
3. Press the letter K as many times as needed until “KeyUpdater” is shown.
4. Press enter to open the app.
5. Select “Application updates” and then select “Install” if needed.
6. Wait for the Update to complete.

#### Brailliant BI 40X

The new Brailliant BI 40X series of braille displays are currently receiving regular updates.

To update your braille display:

1. Press Space+O to open the options menu
2. First, select “WiFi” and check you are connected to a network. If not, connect to one. If there is no network available to you, you can use your phone hotspot.
3. Exit the WiFi menu to go back to the options menu.
4. Select “Software update” and then select “Check for update”.
5. The braille display will install an update if available. Wait for the process to complete.

### == Sight Village Central 2022

I attended Sight Village on Wednesday 29th June 2022 in Solihull. I got permission to miss school to go, which was really fun.

Sight Village is a great event where you can get your hands on the latest blind tech and try it out.

I definitely recommend that you ask your school for permission to attend next year, as it is a great event which I think young braillists are missing out on.

Here are some of my experiences from the event.

#### Hable One

Three different stands were all showcasing a new, compact device called the Hable One. It is a new way to input braille into a phone or computer, and also control iPhones and Android phones.

You hold it in your hand like a game controller (different to how you would hold a braille display). I had a go with it and it inputted text very well.

#### Braille Sense 6

Sight and Sound had the Braille Sense 6 on their stand. Although this was on Android 10 (two versions more recent than the Touch +) there is no particular reason why it won’t just be left behind and not able to access any Android updates like all the other Android braille notetakers released before it. I found there were quite a lot of complex menus to get lost in and a lot more keys on the front of it, but that may just be because I am used to the Touch.

#### HumanWare Stand and presentation

It was an enjoyable experience to visit Andrew and Martin at the HumanWare stand. Although lots of the tech they had there was already familiar to me, it was still a fun visit. Andrew did a presentation about coding and after it I got to have a quick go with KeyCode (a coding app coming to the Touch + in the September update). The app can flash code to a micro:bit, but sadly can’t run code directly. After 5 minutes of use I had already found a bug, but that was expected as it is not ready for release yet.

#### Computer Room Services

As usual, I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to Steve’s table full to the brim with accessible tech. This year, he had the new Daisy player, an accessible MP3 player, navigation devices, and a lot more on display. He even brought his very own Wi-Fi network with him!

Sadly, the accessible vibrating power pack (which I have at home and really like) is out of stock but it sounds like a new version of it is being developed.

#### Amazon Echo

I visited the Alexa stand quite late on in the day. I was excited about their new feature that recognised things you were holding, but sadly the technology behind it got mixed up and started reading out nonsense from my T-shirt. Hopefully this tech will improve in the future.

I visited several more stands, but listing them all here would take up too much space.

Hopefully, that gives you a good overview of the latest in blind tech and what to expect if you ever visit Sight Village yourself.

You can find out more about Sight Village at <https://www.qacsightvillage.org.uk>

By Theo, 15

### == How AirTags can help you find your things

Apple has now launched AirTags, which are essentially Bluetooth trackers that you can attach to various items to find them using your iPhone. They are round and roughly the size of a 2p coin, but thicker.

At first glance, there may be no immediate visible differences compared to Tile and other competitors, but AirTags have a couple of features that make them more useful.

#### More precise finding

If you have a supported iPhone, you can find your AirTags using a new technology called Ultra wide band. This means that VoiceOver can say “5 metres to your left” or “2 metres behind you”. This is extremely helpful to find the exact location of the Air Tag if you cannot hear the quiet sound it makes.

To try this out, just go to the “Items” tab in the Find My app and then select the name you gave the Air Tag followed by the “Find” button. Just make sure you have your phone pointing in the same direction you are facing.

#### More devices to report lost items

The concept of Bluetooth trackers only works if you have a large number of users who can automatically report the location of an item if it is lost. AirTags rely on built-in features of more than a billion iPhones around the world for this, so there are lots of devices that will report your Air Tag’s location if it gets lost.

### == Top tips for using multiple GPS apps together

It is rare that you will be able to find a navigation/GPS app which is perfect for everything, so you may end up using two, or even three, of these apps at the same time. Here are my top tips for anyone considering to do this.

#### Set different voices for each app

If multiple apps are going to talk to you at the same time, you need to be able to easily tell the difference between them.

You should have a look in the settings of your app and change one of the voices from the default one. One with a female voice and the other with a male voice will provide the biggest contrast.

#### Bring a power pack

One GPS app alone can eat through your phone battery very quickly, and so multiple ones can eat through it even faster.

Make sure you have a power pack or other way to charge your phone if it is about to run out.

#### Close any navigation or GPS apps you aren’t actively using

Most iPhone apps can be left open in the app switcher for months, or even years, with little consequences to battery life. However, navigation and GPS apps, particularly ones designed for blind people that aren’t widely used, are an important exception.

These apps should be closed using the app switcher when not actively in use. It is quick to ask Siri to open them or find them on the Home screen again when you need them. To access the app switcher press the home button twice quickly if you have one, and if not swipe up from the bottom of the screen until you have heard three clicks in a row increasing in pitch.

To close an app while focused on it in the app switcher, swipe up with three fingers or use the “Close” action by swiping up/down until you find it once the rotor is set to “Actions”.

It sounds complicated, but you will get used to it if you practice enough.

#### Download offline maps if available

Mobile signal isn’t perfect everywhere, and you may find yourself in a tricky situation if an app you rely on unexpectedly goes offline.

In Google Maps, you can download entire areas for offline use. We recommend you do this while on a WiFi network so you don’t accidentally use up all your data.

In Soundscape, key places should be set as markers, as these can be navigated to offline if needed.

### == iOS 16 – Should you update or wait?

Apple has now released iOS 16 to the public, and you are likely itching to get your hands on the newest release of iOS. But is it a good idea to download it if you use VoiceOver?

I have done some testing to find out.

Upsides:

#### Lock screen widgets

One of the biggest features of iOS 16 is the ability to totally customize your lock screen by adding widgets, photos and more. This is a really great feature, as you can see the latest weather forecasts or the top items on your homework list without even unlocking your phone (although I don’t know if I want my homework list sitting on my lock screen!).

#### Show Wi-Fi passwords in the Settings app

Have you forgotten your long, complicated home Wi-Fi password yet again? With iOS 16 you no longer need to find a safe and secure place to put a braille or electronic copy, you can just view it right in the Settings app. The feature is completely secure too, you just tap on the Password field on the network info page and you will be prompted for Face ID, Touch ID or your passcode before being allowed access to the password.

Downsides:

#### Distorted VoiceOver voices

When using the default Daniel voice installed with iOS, it puts a strange emphasis on the end of a sentence or line. This seems like a strange bug to be caused by an update, but it really does happen.

#### Safari toolbar keeps collapsing while browsing

One of the most annoying bugs is that the toolbar in Safari (with “Back”, “Forward”, “Share”, etc…) will auto-collapse while browsing. This is really annoying, as if you want to go back to the previous page you first have to use your finger to find the address bar on the screen and then double-tap it.

These are only a couple of the upsides and downsides, you can find plenty more bugs on [AppleVis’s list](https://www.applevis.com/blog/accessibility-bugs-introduced-resolved-ios-16-blind-low-vision-users) and plenty more reasons to upgrade on the Apple website.

So, the decision is up to you, but make sure to think carefully before clicking that “Update” button, as once you’ve updated, there’s no going back.

### == The Tech-VI announcement list

I recently became aware of an announcement-only mailing list devoted purely to assistive tech for blind people. Although the list is ran from America, it still has plenty of useful information sent around that has been interesting to me (I attended a webinar about accessible textbooks sent to the list the very day I subscribed).

Although there are a fair few emails a day, you can opt for a daily/weekly digest instead.

The list is particularly great as the subject lines are always descriptive and clear (with the added bonus of a constant prefix which is helpful for email sorting rules) and the entire article being mentioned is always included in the main body of the email if possible.

You can find the list page at: <https://groups.io/g/tech-vi>

To subscribe, send a blank email to: tech-vi+subscribe@groups.io

And if you’d prefer weekly newsletters devoted to accessible tips for your tech, check out: <https://toptechtidbits.com> (sent out each Thursday, specifically for accessible tech tips) and <https://accessinformationnews.com/> (sent out each Monday, for more general access news).

There are also several other extremely helpful email groups for users of specific pieces of assistive technology and more general ones too, more information to come in the next issue!

### == My first impressions of the Canute console

I was very lucky to have the opportunity to come and see the Canute console on tour in London in the evening of Wednesday 16th November.

Although all I really got was a first glimpse of the device, it was still very exciting.

The centre piece of the new console is the Canute multi-line braille display, which appears to slot into some kind of dock. There is a keyboard integrated into the dock which slides out from underneath, and a laptop-style screen positioned above the Canute (imagining the Canute was the keyboard of a laptop).

While the original Canute was only capable of reading specially-formatted braille files from Duxbury, the new prototype of the Canute console can display Python code, and run it as well.

After reading through the code behind a Snake game, I was able to have a go at playing the game. I have never been able to play Snake before due to its graphical design, so this was an amazing experience. There was a braille “for” sign which moved around the screen (controlled by the arrow keys) and you had to position it on top of the braille letters to eat them and win the game.

So in conclusion I think that the Canute console is really cool and a massive leap forward from the original Canute.

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## 7. Sports

### == Visiting the Olympic velodrome

I got the chance to visit the Olympic velodrome (called the Lee Valley Velo-Park) in Stratford in October half term.

It was really good fun. I was attending a special session they run there once every month for blind athletes and athletes with other disabilities. They organised finding a pilot for me to ride a tandem with which meant you didn’t have to source one yourself.

The experience was really amazing (particularly my fastest 18.1-second lap) and I encourage other blind people to give it a try.

If you would like to book, you can call the Velo-Park on 0208 221 2445

**By Theo, 15**

### == Strava club

The Tactile Times now runs a Strava club for anyone who is interested in joining.

The club provides a way to share activities, encourage each other, receive important updates directly via Strava and more.

To join or find out more visit <https://strava.com/clubs/tactiletimes>

### == Fantasy Football league

If you like football you might be interested in joining an online Fantasy Football league which we have set up for Tactile Times readers, three people have already joined! You will need to set up your own team for this year’s Premier league if you would like to join.

You can do this using a free, accessible app and website. To join the Tactile Times league you will need to visit the link below:

<https://fantasy.premierleague.com/leagues/auto-join/69v9c7>

For more information visit:

 <https://tactiletimes.org/ttnfpl>

For more details about this league visit the link above or get in touch.

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## 8. Jokes

You can find plenty of jokes in our online accessible advent calendar. See access instructions in the News section. The link is:

<https://games.tactiletimes.org/advent.html>

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## 9. Games

### == Hangman

We have an accessible Hangman game that can be played in any web browser. We are still improving it so please do get in touch with suggestions or ideas. The game is available on our new games website at: <https://games.tactiletimes.org> or via the link on our homepage.

### == Escape Room

We now have an accessible online escape room on our Games website for you to have a go at. It is made for people using a screen reader on a phone, iPad, computer, tablet or other device.

The escape room contains several puzzles which you will need to complete before you can escape. The system will remember your progress so you can leave and come back later at any time. Once you have escaped you will get access to a special success page which can only be viewed after escaping.

You can get started by tackling the first puzzle here:

<https://games.tactiletimes.org/escape-room/>

### == C-race

This is a game using a Perkins brailler where the aim is to see how quickly you can do a line of c’s across a portrait page of A4 (32 braille cells). You do three attempts and take an average of your time. The current record is 6.4 seconds. If you beat the record, send your time in and you will become the champion… Until someone beats you!

The current record has stood unbeaten for four whole years since we launched in 2018. Do you think you have what it takes to become the new champion? Then get playing!

You can find an up-to-date leaderboard and more details here: <https://games.tactiletimes.org/crace.html>

### == Try out our Chatbot!

We are experimenting with how useful a chatbot could be in providing help and advice. Our chatbot currently only understands a limited amount of questions about different areas of our website, and we need some people to help try it out!

Please note that our chatbot is nowhere near being as advanced as AI bots such as [the recently-released ChatGPT](https://chat.openai.com), it is just a bit of fun.

You can go to <https://games.tactiletimes.org/chatbot.html> to try it out.

Try asking questions such as How can I subscribe?, How can I view issues?, Where can I find your blog?, etc…

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## 10. Upcoming events

So, what’s coming up over the next month or two? We have had a look, so you don’t have to!

Believe it or not, quite a few of these events are not even advertised on the web, apart from in the Tactile Times!

### == The Braillists Foundation

The Braillists are running two really exciting (and free!) online seminars on World Braille Day, 4th January 2023

* World Braille Day Conference, 9:15 – 12:45

Keynote address by well-known BBC broadcaster Peter White, as well as panel discussions, and a workshop, which will cover: Braille at school, Braille in Further/Higher Education and Employment, and Braille for Leisure.

* Braille Technology Throughout the Ages, 7:00 pm onwards

An evening panel discussion focussing on braille technology: its past, present and future. The panel will include historians, people working in the braille technology industry today, and developers of the next generation of braille hardware and software.

You will need to register for both events in advance (email help@braillists.org if you have difficulties completing their form). You can find more details on both events on the following link: <https://www.braillists.org/>.

The Braillists run lots of good one-off braille related events through the year, so we advise everyone to keep a close watch on their website ([www.braillists.org](http://www.braillists.org)). Their regular events are:

* The Braille Bar (a sort of braille clinic) on the second and fourth Tuesday of every month, at 7:30pm.
* Masterclasses, which run on the third Tuesday of every month, at 7:30pm.
* Book Club (every Thursday), where a small community of braille readers come together to read a novel on their braille displays.

To register for any of these regular events, visit the Braillists events page at <https://braillists.org/events>

For all the latest goings on in the world of braille, you can also sign up for their newsletter via the form on the following link: [www.braillists.org/newsletter/signup](http://www.braillists.org/newsletter/signup)/

You can find past recordings of their podcast on their website, or via any podcast supplier, or on the following link: [www.braillecast.com](http://www.braillecast.com). The latest episode was a discussion around writing software and working in the technology industry in general when using a braille display.

You can contact them on help@braillists.org

### == LOOK UK

* Creative Arts Day with UCAN

Saturday 28th January 11am – 4pm, The Courtyard, Edgar St, Hereford, HR4 9JR

Interactive creative arts activities, to help develop new skills and have lots of fun gaining a ‘Discover’ level Arts Award. No experience is necessary. You will need to bring a packed lunch and get ready to have fun.

For ages 7 to 25, and it’s free. For more information contact Aimee on 07909 043121 or email aimee@look-uk.org

* High Ropes Adventure

Friday 24th February 1 – 4pm, Oaker Wood Leisure, Kingsland, Leominster, HR6 9PT

High Ropes Challenges & Team Building Activities, including the zipwire, leap of faith and gladiator challenge.

For ages 7 to 25, and it‘s free. For more information contact Aimee on 07909 043121 or email aimee@look-uk.org

### == Sight and Sound

Sight and Sound are still running ‘Webinar Wednesdays. Recordings from the most recent editions (such as their Christmas episode from 7/12) are on the following link: https://www.sightandsound.co.uk/media/

To register to receive emails about Sight and Sounds’ upcoming webinars, you can fill in the form that’s on the following link: https://sightandsoundtechnology.us7.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=967baeca2666e923876de6b3c&id=a2cb8c674a

### == VICTA

VICTA have tonnes of different activities lined up for 2023. There are too many for us to list them all here. We have put a selection of our favourites below, but you can see the full list on their website: <https://www.victa.org.uk/our-services/activity-calendar/>

* [York’s Chocolate Story Day – Tour & Workshop](https://www.victa.org.uk/victa-calendar/york-chocolate-story/)

14 February 2023, York, and for 10 – 13 year olds.

* South Lakes Activity Residential

3 to 5 April 2023, YMCA Lakeside, Ulverston, for 10 to 13 year olds.

* Self Advocacy Course

March 2023 (regular sessions on Thursday/Monday evenings) and an in-person workshop on 15 to 16 April 2023. For 14 – 17 year olds.

* [The Blind Farmer](https://www.victa.org.uk/victa-calendar/blind-farmer/?portfolioCats=131)

20 May 2023, Inclusive Farm, Bedfordshire, for families

* [Spring Family Weekend 2023](https://www.victa.org.uk/victa-calendar/spring-family-weekend-2023/)

26 to 29 May 2023, South Yorkshire, for families

* [Summer Family Weekend 2023](https://www.victa.org.uk/victa-calendar/summer-family-weekend-2023/)

28 to 31 July 2023, North East Wales, for Families

### == British Blind Sport (BBS)

BBS held a successful ‘Have a go day’ in York recently. There will be more in 2023, including one in Scotland, but the dates are not fixed yet.

BBS also have a wide range of pre-recorded workouts to help keep everyone active over the festive season. You can find them on the following link:  [https://www.youtube.com/c/BritishBlindSportOrgUK/playlists](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fbritishblindsport.us20.list-manage.com%2Ftrack%2Fclick%3Fu%3Db04cf878ec2057391987ab2e9%26id%3D4f7fd01e76%26e%3D18b07f4015&data=05%7C01%7Cholroydg%40ebrd.com%7Cc38f9651fd994955b1ff08daddc1de6d%7C172f475268744876bad5e6d61f991171%7C0%7C0%7C638066122936675171%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=SJiok%2B%2BOYibzOPInhCIxq2E2gDZQMf787EF0NGNcuIY%3D&reserved=0)

And, a date for your diary. The 2023 IBSA World Games will be held in Birmingham this summer, from 18 – 27 August. The IBSA World Games are the largest high-level international event for athletes with visual impairments, with more than 1000 competitors from more than 70 nations likely to take part.

### == Sight Tech Global

Sight Tech Global is a two day series of seminars dedicated to, “Shaping New Technologies to Create a More Accessible World for People with Blindness and Visual Impairments.“

The Vista Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (based in Silicon Valley) have organised this twice now, with the latest version taking place on 7-8 December 2022. They get the best, most cutting edge speakers from all the big tech companies to come and speak about the latest VI/Blind tech developments.

We mention it here, as all the sessions are recorded, and you can watch them whenever you like. We highly recommend having a look! You can find them on the following link: [https://sighttechglobal.com](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fsighttechglobal.com%2F&data=05%7C01%7Cholroydg%40ebrd.com%7Cc924c3d44a994aa6e0e308dae350fb3e%7C172f475268744876bad5e6d61f991171%7C0%7C0%7C638072234298932162%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=vSaa2DTFoUe%2BXSBS3M2Vy0ElXQ2XtTxjA4zJLNFM134%3D&reserved=0)

### == APH

* Lego Braille Bricks Seminars

Lots of seminars are planned for 2023 where the Lego braille bricks are used for educational purposes. We have listed some below, and you can find all the details on this link: <https://www.aph.org/lego-braille-bricks-live-sessions>

January 4, 4pm UK time, Exploring different braille codes around the world.

February 1, 4pm UK time, Developing numerical and geometry skills, and understanding symmetry.

March 6, 4pm UK time, Daily-living activities, and sharing best practices, experiences, tips

April 5, 4pm UK time, Making music

May 3, 4pm UK time, Doing Science

### == Annual CSUN Assistive Technology Conference

March 13 2023 - March 17th 2023, in California

This is more of a trade show than a conference. It’s the biggest single annual event where you can get your hands on the assistive VI/blind technology of the future.

All the details are on this link: <https://www.csun.edu/cod/conference/sessions>

### == HumanWare

Through much of 2020, HumanWare were organising webinars on how best to use their technology. These stopped in 2021, but you can still find most of the older ones on YouTube.

Check them out on this link: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLDWfRB9hDxLNiQC_dkmreT47gcgLrakMI>

### == Vocal Eyes

Vocal Eyes has a mission to: ‘Bring theatre, museums, galleries and heritage sites to life for blind and visually impaired people.’

They organise audio description, and sometimes touch tours too. And they send out a weekly newsletter, which has a listing of accessible online arts and culture.

* The next audio described performances, with touch tours, are:
* Cinderella, at the Wycombe Swan Theatre, 29/12
* Aladddin at the Harrogate Theatre Harrogate, 30/9
* Northern Ballet: The Nutcracker, Leeds, 31/12

You can see more details on: <https://vocaleyes.co.uk/whats-on/>

### == Sight Village

Sight Village, is a UK trade show where you can generally get to know about, and get your hands on, the latest blind specific and low vision technology.

‘Sight Village Central’ is moving next year, but not far. It will still be in Birmingham. The 2023 dates are 17 – 18 July. Further details are on this link: <https://www.qac.ac.uk/exhibitions/sight-village-central--2023-new-venue/1.htm>

QAC are also running another Sight Village event in Wales, which will take place at the All Nations Centre in Cardiff. You can find out more and pre-register once available here: <https://www.qac.ac.uk/exhibitions/sight-village-wales/467.htm>

### == New College Worcester

NCW have events throughout the year, but they currently only have the events below on their website.

* Twilight: VI Technology

This will take place on 8th February from 3:30pm to 5:00pm. It is advertised as a webinar that will provide useful tips and advice for students who are Vision Impaired in accessing and using the information technology.

For more details on this webinar, and to find out when the news ones come up, you should keep an eye on the following link: <https://www.ncw.co.uk/event-directory/>

* GCSE Revision Course

This will take place from the 29th to the 31st of March 2023. There will be a choice of VI curriculum sessions (e.g. ILS, Mobility, IT) and also some lesson s on Maths and English.

More info here: <https://www.ncw.co.uk/events/gcse-residential-revision-course-2/>

* Saturday Café

NCW run a virtual session each Saturday called Saturday Café. The aim is to brin g blind and visually impaired people between 7 to 17 together.

More info here: <https://www.ncw.co.uk/events/saturday-cafe/>

* Summer Activity Break

NCW are bringing back their annual Summer activity break for 2023. This has been a really fun event, particularly for making new friends.

More info here: <https://www.ncw.co.uk/events/summer-activity-break/>

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## 11. Craft

### == Cinnamon and Apple Christmas Decorations with Braille

#### What You’ll Need:

* 225ml or 1 small mug of applesauce (smooth, babyfood is good!)
* 115g or 1 small mug of cinnamon

Cinnamon can be expensive but we have found you can get it for a good price in big packs from Flying tiger ([https://flyingtiger.com/products/ground-cinnamon-3000840?\_gl=1\*v5khov\*\_up\*MQ..\*\_ga\*MTY2NzgyNzMyOS4xNjcxNzkyMDY3\*\_ga\_6C7F3V1WH3\*MTY3MTc5MjA2Ni4xLjAuMTY3MTc5MjA2Ni4wLjAuMA](https://flyingtiger.com/products/ground-cinnamon-3000840?_gl=1*v5khov*_up*MQ..*_ga*MTY2NzgyNzMyOS4xNjcxNzkyMDY3*_ga_6C7F3V1WH3*MTY3MTc5MjA2Ni4xLjAuMTY3MTc5MjA2Ni4wLjAuMA) )

* cookie cutters
* drinking straw
* toothpick
* whole cloves or decorating edible silver balls
* thin ribbon or string

#### Making Your Cinnamon Apple Ornaments

* Mix the 1 mug of applesauce and the mug of cinnamon in a bowl. You may need to add a bit more cinnamon, depending on the consistency of the applesauce brand you use. If you run out of cinnamon, a little whole wheat flour works well, too.
* Combine the applesauce and cinnamon until it is the consistency of cookie dough; not too wet, but not crumbly either. You will have to get your hands in there to really get it all mixed up.
* Sprinkle some cinnamon or whole wheat flour on your working surface and lay your dough out for rolling. This dough actually rolls fairly easily, but you can wrap your rolling pin in parchment paper to reduce stickiness if you wish.
* Roll to the dough out to about half a cm thickness
* Use cookie cutters to cut out your ornaments (we love star shapes here!) and lay them on a parchment lined baking tray.
* Once all your ornaments are on the cookie sheet, use a straw to make holes in the top of each ornament.
* Then if adding braille, use a toothpick to make little 6-dot braille cells on each ornament so that you can place cloves there to make braille letters.
* Make your letters using cloves or edible silver balls. You will have to trim the ends off your cloves to make them fit
* You can just leave your ornaments out to dry for 24 to 48 hours, which we would recommend if you use the silver balls to decorate. But you can also bake them at 200° for 1 hour. The ornaments do seem to be a bit stronger after baking.
* Let your ornaments cool, then string them with pretty ribbons or string.
* Hang them on your tree or around the house, they will smell gorgeous!
* The cloves work well for the braille because they smell nice, they are very tactile and they handle the baking without melting… but they aren’t very high contrast, the silver balls are a better contrast so just choose whatever you prefer.

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## 12. Get in touch and website

If you would like to send in a short article, joke or game, or if you have not subscribed yet and would like to subscribe, please do get in touch using the details below.

Email: info@tactiletimes.org

Website: [tactiletimes.org](https://tactiletimes.org)

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### This is the end of Tactile Times Issue 6

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