



Braille toy

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## EDUCATIONAL TOY INTRODUCES BRAILLE AT AN EARLY AGE

 PUBLISHING & MEDIA

### Innovative and affordable product helps young visually impaired children to learn braille

We have already seen a number of products on the market which aim to help blind people learn braille and enhance their experience. Among those products are a [literacy tool](#) enabling independent learning and a [tactile tablet](#) which allows the visually impaired to experience graphical content. Like any other skill, the sooner a child can learn braille the better, however most available products are often considered too complex or expensive for parents to buy.

In their mission to help their visually impaired child, US-based couple Beth and Jake Lacourse have developed an affordable child-friendly device to teach braille in a simple and fun way. The [BecDot](#) gets its name from the couple's young daughter, Rebecca, and is aimed at teaching braille to young children and toddlers. The device consists of four braille cells which react to objects that have pre-programmed near-field communication (NFC) tags attached to them. Once a tag is detected, for example a toy cat, the word cat appears in braille, combined with a sound if the teacher or parent wishes to upload one. The device uses an Arduino Uno microcontroller to drive each individual dot and thus create the word. The prototype was made by 3D printing and allows children to learn the alphabet and to identify short words consisting of up to four letters. The toy also lights up and emits sounds, making it more fun and enjoyable for children to play with. The device, although still in the prototype phase, should be marketed at under USD 100 when it is completed, making it considerably cheaper than existing products of this kind.

This innovative product could revolutionise the way in which visually impaired children partake in society, hopefully driving down blind unemployment rates, and helping these children to integrate from an early age. How else could technology be used to improve the prospects of visually impaired children? Is there still room to make such a device more accessible to those in need?

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