

How can the visually impaired instantly translate any text into Braille?

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Currently, less than 1 percent of all text has a Braille translation. A team of six engineering undergrads at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology — notably all women — have developed a device that would drastically expand reading opportunities for the visually impaired.

The device, called Tactile, converts printed text to Braille in real time. Users can place the device over any block of text, and Tactile takes a picture of what's printed. It then uses optical character recognition software to scan the words, translates them into Braille, and triggers a mechanical system that raises and lowers pins on top of the device so they can be read by the fingers.

The students created Tactile at a hackathon [“just for fun.”](#) but are looking to pursue it as a career after graduation. They've already partnered with Microsoft's #MakeWhat'sNext program to patent and market their device, and say they want to [“promote information equality”](#) and inspire other girls to get involved in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) careers.

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