

# Unicode & eBook Glyphs

Character Support in KDP and Ingram Spark eBook Publishing

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## Summary for Authors

This paper addresses a question that comes up often and gets answered poorly: which special characters can you use in a Kindle or other eBook, and which ones will show up as blank boxes or garbage on a reader's device?

The short answer is: standard typographic characters work reliably. Decorative symbols, ornaments, and dingbats are a gamble unless you embed a font. The encoding of your EPUB file matters as much as which characters you use — a wrongly-encoded file will corrupt even ordinary quotation marks.

### What works reliably

All standard typographic punctuation works on modern Kindle devices and apps, and on the major EPUB platforms (Apple Books, Kobo, Nook, Google Play Books): curly (smart) quotation marks, apostrophes, em dashes, en dashes, the ellipsis character, non-breaking spaces, and standard accented Latin characters. These are all in the Basic Multilingual Plane (BMP) of Unicode, which every current eBook reader supports.

### What requires caution

Decorative symbols — ornaments, arrows, dingbats, fleurons, and similar characters — depend on whether the device's built-in fonts include them. KDP does not embed fonts in reflowable eBooks by default, so if the Kindle's system font doesn't contain a given glyph, the character shows as a box or is dropped entirely. The same applies to other platforms.

### What does not work

Legacy symbol fonts — Wingdings, Webdings, Zapf Dingbats used as a font rather than their Unicode equivalents — do not work in eBooks under any circumstances. These fonts map symbols to letter code points (the letter 'J' displays as a smiley face, for example). In an EPUB, that encoding is stripped away and the reader sees the underlying character — a 'J' — not the symbol. Many of these symbols now have proper Unicode code points and will work if used as Unicode characters rather than as font characters.

### The encoding problem

The single most common cause of corrupted special characters in Kindle eBooks is missing or incorrect character encoding declaration. An EPUB file must explicitly declare UTF-8 encoding in its content files. Without that declaration, KDP's conversion engine may interpret the file as ISO-8859-1 (Latin-1), which cannot represent curly quotes, em dashes, or any character above code point 255. The result is garbled text — the familiar 'â€™' instead of an apostrophe. This is a file preparation problem, not a character support problem.

### **The bottom line for authors**

Use typographic punctuation freely. Use decorative symbols cautiously, and test in Kindle Previewer before publishing. Avoid legacy dingbat fonts entirely. If you need a specific ornament or symbol to render reliably across all devices and platforms, embed a font that contains it — but be aware that KDP does not recommend embedded fonts for reflowable eBooks, and readers can override them.

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## Part 1: Technical Background

### Unicode and UTF-8

Unicode is the universal character encoding standard that assigns a unique code point to every character, symbol, and glyph used in any writing system. As of Unicode 16.0 (2024), the standard defines over 149,000 characters across 168 scripts. The full Unicode range spans code points from U+0000 to U+10FFFF, organized into 17 planes of 65,536 code points each.

The Basic Multilingual Plane (BMP), U+0000 through U+FFFF, contains virtually all characters needed for modern publishing in any language, including all Latin-based scripts, most typographic punctuation, and a large set of symbols and dingbats. Characters above U+FFFF (Supplementary Planes) include emoji, historical scripts, and specialized technical symbols.

UTF-8 is the encoding scheme used to store Unicode characters as bytes. It is the dominant encoding for web content and EPUB files. As of 2026, approximately 99% of web pages use UTF-8. UTF-8 is backward compatible with ASCII: the first 128 code points (U+0000–U+007F) are identical to ASCII and require only one byte each. Characters above U+007F use two to four bytes.

**Citation:** Unicode Standard 16.0, Unicode Consortium, 2024. <https://www.unicode.org/versions/Unicode16.0.0/>

**Citation:** UTF-8, Wikipedia, retrieved June 2026. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UTF-8>

### How KDP Handles eBook Files

KDP accepts EPUB, DOCX, HTML, KPF (Kindle Package Format), and plain text as eBook input formats. EPUB is the recommended format for the most reliable conversion result. As of March 2025, KDP no longer accepts MOBI files.

KDP converts submitted EPUB files to its internal Kindle format (KFX or KF8/AZW3 depending on device). During this conversion, character encoding is critical: if the EPUB content files do not explicitly declare UTF-8 encoding, KDP's conversion engine may interpret the file as ISO-8859-1 (Latin-1). ISO-8859-1 only supports 256 characters and cannot represent curly quotes (U+2018, U+2019, U+201C, U+201D), em dashes (U+2014), or any other character above code point 255. The result is corrupted text — garbled multi-character sequences instead of a simple apostrophe or em dash.

The encoding declaration must appear in each EPUB content file's HTML header:

*<meta http-equiv="content-type" content="text/html; charset=UTF-8">*

*or in the XML declaration: <?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>*

KDP's Kindle Publishing Guidelines (section on text encoding, accessible from the KDP help center at [kdp.amazon.com](https://kdp.amazon.com)) confirm that UTF-8 is the required encoding. Older KDP beginner documentation that advised 'avoid UTF-8' and 'use Latin-1 format' was incorrect and has since been superseded.

**Citation:** KDP Kindle Publishing Guidelines, Amazon, 2026.  
[https://kdp.amazon.com/en\\_US/help/topic/GU72M65VRFPH43L6](https://kdp.amazon.com/en_US/help/topic/GU72M65VRFPH43L6)

**Citation:** 'What Happens to Your EPUB When Amazon Converts It to Kindle?', ebookpbook.com, April 2026.  
<https://www.ebookpbook.com/2026/04/11/epub-to-kindle-conversion/>

## How Ingram Spark Handles eBook Files

Ingram Spark requires an EPUB file (EPUB 2 or EPUB 3 reflowable) and does not accept Kindle-specific formats. The file must be EPUBCheck 3.0.0 compliant. Enhanced EPUB 3 files with audio or video are not currently accepted.

Ingram Spark distributes to multiple retail and library platforms (Apple Books, Kobo, Barnes & Noble, OverDrive, Hoopla, and others), each with its own rendering engine. A character that displays correctly on one platform may not on another. The EPUB standard requires UTF-8 encoding, and a compliant EPUB 3 file will declare encoding correctly. The practical character support question on Ingram Spark is therefore largely a question of which fonts the reading application uses on the reader's device.

**Citation:** IngramSpark User Guide Version 3.2, IngramSpark, May 2026.  
<https://www.ingramspark.com/hubfs/downloads/user-guide.pdf>

**Citation:** 'File Requirements to Publish and Distribute Ebooks', IngramSpark.  
<https://www.ingramspark.com/blog/file-requirements-for-ebooks>

## Why Glyph Support Varies by Device

The Unicode standard defines code points for characters; it does not guarantee that any given device has a font that includes the corresponding glyph. A character that exists in Unicode will only display correctly if the rendering font contains a glyph for that code point.

For reflowable KDP eBooks, the Kindle device or application uses its built-in fonts unless the publisher has embedded a font and the reader has enabled 'Publisher Font' in display settings. Built-in Kindle fonts cover the full Latin script range, common punctuation and symbols, and a substantial set of special characters — but they do not cover all of Unicode's 149,000+ characters. Kindle devices running older firmware may support fewer characters than current devices.

The practical consequence: standard typographic characters in the BMP are reliably supported across current Kindle devices and apps. Characters from specialized Unicode blocks (ornamental dingbats, geometric shapes, arrows, musical symbols, etc.) are font-dependent and should be tested.

**Citation:** Jutoh eBook software knowledge base, KB0113: 'Why do special 'dingbat' symbols not show on some ereaders?' <https://www.jutoh.com/kb/html/section-0116.html>

## Part 2: Character Reference Tables

The following tables list characters commonly encountered in fiction and nonfiction publishing, organized by category. Support levels are based on current Kindle devices and apps (KFX format), EPUB 3 reading systems, and published documentation as of June 2026.

*Note: 'Reliable' means confirmed working on current Kindle hardware and apps and standard EPUB readers. 'Font-dependent' means the character exists in Unicode and will work if the device font supports it — test before publishing. 'Do not use' means the approach will fail regardless of device.*

**Table 1: Typographic Punctuation**

| Glyph | Unicode | Name                                       | Notes / Support                                                |
|-------|---------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| ‘     | U+2018  | Left single quotation mark                 | Reliable. Use in place of apostrophe at start of word.         |
| ’     | U+2019  | Right single quotation mark / apostrophe   | Reliable. Standard typographic apostrophe.                     |
| “     | U+201C  | Left double quotation mark                 | Reliable. Standard opening double quote.                       |
| ”     | U+201D  | Right double quotation mark                | Reliable. Standard closing double quote.                       |
| —     | U+2014  | Em dash                                    | Reliable. Use Unicode character, not double hyphen.            |
| –     | U+2013  | En dash                                    | Reliable. Range (pp. 12–15), minus sign substitute.            |
| ...   | U+2026  | Horizontal ellipsis                        | Reliable. Use this, not three periods, to avoid orphaned dots. |
|       | U+00A0  | Non-breaking space                         | Reliable. Prevents unwanted line breaks.                       |
|       | U+00AD  | Soft hyphen                                | Reliable in most readers; some ignore it.                      |
| ■     | U+2011  | Non-breaking hyphen                        | Reliable on current Kindle; test on older devices.             |
| ■     | U+2015  | Horizontal bar (quotation dash)            | Reliable. Used in some dialogue styles instead of em dash.     |
| ,     | U+201A  | Single low-9 quotation mark                | Reliable. Used in some European typographic conventions.       |
| „     | U+201E  | Double low-9 quotation mark                | Reliable. German and other European opening quote.             |
| <     | U+2039  | Single left-pointing angle quotation mark  | Reliable. French-style single guillemet.                       |
| >     | U+203A  | Single right-pointing angle quotation mark | Reliable. French-style single guillemet.                       |
| «     | U+00AB  | Left-pointing double angle quotation mark  | Reliable. French and other European double guillemet.          |
| »     | U+00BB  | Right-pointing double angle quotation mark | Reliable. French and other European double guillemet.          |

| Glyph | Unicode | Name        | Notes / Support                                                           |
|-------|---------|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ■     | U+203D  | Interrobang | Font-dependent. Works on current Kindle if system font supports it. Test. |

**Table 2: Accented and Extended Latin Characters**

The full Latin Extended-A and Latin Extended-B Unicode blocks (U+00C0–U+024F) are reliably supported on all current Kindle devices and in all major EPUB reading systems. The following lists common characters encountered in English-language fiction that uses foreign names, loanwords, or non-English dialogue.

| Glyph | Unicode | Name                              | Support                                  |
|-------|---------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| é     | U+00E9  | Latin small e with acute (é)      | Reliable                                 |
| è     | U+00E8  | Latin small e with grave (è)      | Reliable                                 |
| ê     | U+00EA  | Latin small e with circumflex (ê) | Reliable                                 |
| ë     | U+00EB  | Latin small e with diaeresis (ë)  | Reliable                                 |
| à     | U+00E0  | Latin small a with grave (à)      | Reliable                                 |
| â     | U+00E2  | Latin small a with circumflex (â) | Reliable                                 |
| ä     | U+00E4  | Latin small a with diaeresis (ä)  | Reliable                                 |
| ö     | U+00F6  | Latin small o with diaeresis (ö)  | Reliable                                 |
| ü     | U+00FC  | Latin small u with diaeresis (ü)  | Reliable                                 |
| ñ     | U+00F1  | Latin small n with tilde (ñ)      | Reliable                                 |
| ç     | U+00E7  | Latin small c with cedilla (ç)    | Reliable                                 |
| ß     | U+00DF  | Latin small sharp s — Eszett (ß)  | Reliable                                 |
| Æ     | U+00C6  | Latin capital AE ligature (Æ)     | Reliable                                 |
| æ     | U+00E6  | Latin small ae ligature (æ)       | Reliable                                 |
| ■     | U+0141  | Latin capital L with stroke (■)   | Reliable                                 |
| ■     | U+0142  | Latin small l with stroke (■)     | Reliable                                 |
| ■     | U+014C  | Latin capital O with macron (■)   | Reliable                                 |
| ■     | U+014D  | Latin small o with macron (■)     | Reliable — used in Japanese romanization |

**Table 3: Common Symbols**

| Glyph | Unicode | Name             | Notes / Support |
|-------|---------|------------------|-----------------|
| ©     | U+00A9  | Copyright sign © | Reliable        |

| Glyph | Unicode | Name                         | Notes / Support                                           |
|-------|---------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| ®     | U+00AE  | Registered sign ®            | Reliable                                                  |
| ™     | U+2122  | Trade mark sign ™            | Reliable                                                  |
| °     | U+00B0  | Degree sign °                | Reliable                                                  |
| ·     | U+00B7  | Middle dot ·                 | Reliable. Also used as interpunct or list separator.      |
| •     | U+2022  | Bullet •                     | Reliable                                                  |
| ■     | U+2023  | Triangular bullet ■          | Reliable on current devices; test older firmware.         |
| –     | U+2013  | En dash (also used as minus) | Reliable                                                  |
| ±     | U+00B1  | Plus-minus sign ±            | Reliable                                                  |
| ×     | U+00D7  | Multiplication sign ×        | Reliable                                                  |
| ÷     | U+00F7  | Division sign ÷              | Reliable                                                  |
| ‰     | U+2030  | Per mille sign ‰             | Reliable                                                  |
| ■     | U+2031  | Per ten thousand sign ■      | Font-dependent. Test.                                     |
| §     | U+00A7  | Section sign §               | Reliable                                                  |
| ¶     | U+00B6  | Pilcrow / paragraph sign ¶   | Reliable                                                  |
| †     | U+2020  | Dagger †                     | Reliable. Used for footnote reference.                    |
| ‡     | U+2021  | Double dagger ‡              | Reliable. Second footnote reference mark.                 |
| ■     | U+2042  | Asterism ■                   | Font-dependent. Often used as scene break. Test.          |
| ✧     | U+2727  | White four pointed star ✧    | Font-dependent. Test.                                     |
| ★     | U+2605  | Black star ★                 | Font-dependent. Generally works on current devices. Test. |
| ■     | U+2606  | White star ■                 | Font-dependent. Test.                                     |
| ´     | U+00B4  | Acute accent ´               | Reliable                                                  |
| `     | U+0060  | Grave accent `               | Reliable                                                  |

**Table 4: Scene Break Ornaments and Fleurons**

Scene breaks in fiction are commonly represented by a centered row of asterisks (\* \* \*), a single centered ornament, or a horizontal rule. The following Unicode characters are used for this purpose. Support varies; the safest approach for ornamental scene breaks is an image rather than a character.

| Glyph   | Unicode      | Name                                            | Notes / Support                                                     |
|---------|--------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| * * *   | U+002A       | Asterisk (spaced)                               | Reliable. The traditional safe choice.                              |
| ■       | U+2042       | Asterism ■                                      | Font-dependent. Works on many current Kindle devices. Test.         |
| ❖       | U+2767       | Rotated floral heart bullet ❖                   | Font-dependent. Confirmed working on Kindle (Dingbats block). Test. |
| 🌿       | U+2766       | Floral heart / hederia 🌿                        | Font-dependent. Confirmed working on Kindle (Dingbats block). Test. |
| *<br>*  | U+273D       | Heavy teardrop-spoked asterisk<br>*             | Font-dependent. Test.                                               |
| *<br>*  | U+2738       | Heavy eight pointed rectilinear<br>black star * | Font-dependent. Test.                                               |
| ❖       | U+2756       | Black diamond minus white X ❖                   | Font-dependent. Test.                                               |
| ——<br>— | U+2014<br>x3 | Three em dashes ——                              | Reliable. Simple horizontal rule substitute.                        |
| —       | U+2014       | Single em dash                                  | Reliable. Minimal scene break marker.                               |

**Note on the Dingbats block (U+2700–U+27BF):** Many characters in this block were confirmed rendering correctly on Kindle devices (Tim C. Taylor, 2014, tested on Kindle hardware). However, device firmware updates and app changes since 2014 may have affected support. Always test in Kindle Previewer.

**Citation:** Tim C. Taylor, 'Kindle support for Unicode pt2: how to use Unicode,' 2014.

<https://timctaylor.wordpress.com/2014/02/24/kindle-support-for-unicode-pt2-how-to-use-unicode/>

**Table 5: Currency Symbols**

| Glyph | Unicode | Name           | Support                                         |
|-------|---------|----------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| \$    | U+0024  | Dollar sign \$ | Reliable (ASCII)                                |
| £     | U+00A3  | Pound sign £   | Reliable                                        |
| €     | U+20AC  | Euro sign €    | Reliable                                        |
| ¥     | U+00A5  | Yen sign ¥     | Reliable                                        |
| ¢     | U+00A2  | Cent sign ¢    | Reliable                                        |
| ₣     | U+20A3  | French franc ₣ | Font-dependent. Historic; use sparingly.        |
| ₽     | U+20BD  | Ruble sign ₽   | Font-dependent. Added Unicode 7.0 (2014). Test. |



| Glyph | Unicode | Name                | Support                                                           |
|-------|---------|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ■     | U+20BF  | Bitcoin sign ■      | Font-dependent. Added Unicode 10.0 (2017). Test on older devices. |
| ₹     | U+20B9  | Indian rupee sign ₹ | Font-dependent. Test.                                             |

**Table 6: What Does Not Work**

| Approach                                              | Problem                                                                                                                                          | Alternative                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Wingdings / Webdings / Zapf Dingbats font characters  | These are legacy overlay fonts. In an EPUB, the font is ignored and the underlying character code is rendered — a letter, not a symbol.          | Find the Unicode equivalent of the symbol needed. Most Wingdings symbols now have Unicode code points.       |
| Characters from Supplementary Planes (above U+FFFF)   | Older Kindle firmware and some EPUB reading systems do not support characters above U+FFFF. Emoji and many decorative symbols are in this range. | Use BMP equivalents where available, or replace with an image.                                               |
| Em dash created from double hyphen in source document | Double hyphens (--) may not be converted to em dashes (U+2014) during EPUB conversion. Result varies by tool.                                    | Use the actual Unicode em dash character U+2014 in the source.                                               |
| Three periods typed separately as ellipsis            | Three individual periods can break across a line, orphaning the last period. On narrow screens (phones) this is a frequent problem.              | Use the Unicode ellipsis character U+2026.                                                                   |
| EPUB without UTF-8 encoding declaration               | KDP's conversion engine may interpret as ISO-8859-1, corrupting any character above code point 255.                                              | Declare UTF-8 in every EPUB content file header.                                                             |
| Fractions typed as characters (½, ■, ¼ etc.)          | Common fractions (½ U+00BD, ¼ U+00BC, ¾ U+00BE) are reliable. Less common fractions (■ U+2153, ■ U+2154, etc.) are font-dependent.               | Reliable fractions: use their Unicode code points. Unusual fractions: use plain text form (1/3) or an image. |

## Part 3: Font Embedding as a Solution

Embedding a font in an EPUB file is the only reliable way to guarantee that a specific glyph renders as intended across all devices. If a font containing the needed glyph is embedded and the reader has 'Publisher Font' enabled in their display settings, the character will display correctly.

KDP supports embedded OTF and TTF fonts in reflowable eBooks. KDP does not recommend embedding fonts for reflowable content because: (1) readers can turn off publisher fonts; (2) embedded fonts increase file size; (3) some older devices don't support KF8 rendering and may not display embedded fonts at all. KDP does not support Type 1 (PostScript) fonts — books using these are rendered in Kindle's default fonts.

For fixed-layout eBooks (children's books, graphic novels, highly designed titles), font embedding is the standard approach and is expected.

Font licensing is the publisher's responsibility. A desktop font license does not automatically permit embedding in a distributed eBook file. OTF and TTF font files contain an embedding permission flag — fonts marked 'no embedding' will cause errors during EPUB validation. Google Fonts and fonts released under the SIL Open Font License (OFL) permit embedding.

**Citation:** KDP Text Guidelines — Reflowable, 'Using Embedded Fonts.'  
[https://kdp.amazon.com/en\\_US/help/topic/GH4DRT75GWWAGBTU](https://kdp.amazon.com/en_US/help/topic/GH4DRT75GWWAGBTU)

### Testing Before Publishing

The only reliable way to verify character rendering is to test the file before publishing. KDP provides Kindle Previewer as a free download — it simulates rendering on multiple Kindle devices and apps. Any character that shows as a box or question mark in Kindle Previewer will show the same way on the actual device.

For Ingram Spark and other EPUB platforms, EPUBCheck (available at <https://github.com/w3c/epubcheck>) validates file compliance. Testing on actual devices or in Calibre's eBook viewer provides the most accurate rendering preview.

The image substitution approach — replacing a problematic character with a small inline image — is a reliable if inelegant workaround for characters that cannot be guaranteed to render correctly. This is particularly useful for unusual scene break ornaments.

## Part 4: Notes on This Research and Its Limitations

This document was researched and written using Claude (Anthropic) as the research tool. The following sources were consulted and are cited throughout:

- KDP Kindle Publishing Guidelines (kdp.amazon.com, 2026)
- KDP Text Guidelines for Reflowable Books (kdp.amazon.com, 2026)
- IngramSpark User Guide Version 3.2 (ingramspark.com, May 2026)
- IngramSpark File Requirements for Ebooks (ingramspark.com)
- Unicode Standard 16.0 (unicode.org, 2024)
- UTF-8, Wikipedia (retrieved June 2026)
- EPUB 3.3 Specification, W3C (w3c.github.io, 2026)
- Tim C. Taylor, 'Kindle support for Unicode pt1 and pt2' (2014)
- ebookpbook.com, 'What Happens to Your EPUB When Amazon Converts It to Kindle?' (April 2026)
- EPUBSecrets, 'Avoiding Bad Punctuation Breaks in eBooks' (2024)
- Jutoh KB0113: 'Why do special dingbat symbols not show on some ereaders?'
- Various KDP Community forum posts and independent formatter documentation

### What this document does not cover

KDP does not publish a definitive, comprehensive list of supported Unicode characters for Kindle devices. The 'font-dependent' designation throughout this document reflects that gap: the character exists in Unicode, the code point is valid, but rendering depends on which font the device uses. That is a variable neither the author nor the publisher controls.

Glyph support also varies by Kindle firmware version. A character confirmed working on a Kindle Paperwhite (11th generation, 2023) may not render on a first-generation Kindle or an older Kindle app. The tables in this document reflect support on current (2024–2026) devices and apps.

This document does not cover: right-to-left scripts (Arabic, Hebrew); CJK (Chinese, Japanese, Korean) characters; mathematical notation; IPA phonetic symbols; emoji; characters from the Supplementary Multilingual Planes. These are categories where the question of eBook support is substantially more complex and where KDP's international publishing guidelines apply.

Readers with specific technical requirements — particularly those preparing eBooks for distribution through Ingram Spark to multiple retail platforms — should verify character rendering on target platforms before publishing.

