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**Information and documentation —  
International Standard Recording  
Code (ISRC)**

*Information et documentation — Code international normalisé des  
enregistrements (ISRC)*

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## Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see [www.iso.org/directives](http://www.iso.org/directives)).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see [www.iso.org/patents](http://www.iso.org/patents)).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation on the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: [www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html](http://www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html). (standards.iteh.ai)

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 46, *Information and documentation*, Subcommittee SC 9, *Identification and description*. ISO 3901:2019  
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This third edition cancels and replaces the second edition (ISO 3901:2001), which has been technically revised.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at [www.iso.org/members.html](http://www.iso.org/members.html).

## Introduction

The International Standard Recording Code (ISRC) is a standard identifying code that can be used to identify sound recordings and music video recordings so that each such recording can be referred to uniquely and unambiguously.

An ISRC identifies a recording through its entire life and is assigned by the producer of the recording or an authorized representative. Once assigned, the ISRC is used by (among others) the producer of the recording as well as by other producers, contributors to the recording, users and licensees of it, collective management organizations representing the owners of the different rights in the recording, broadcasting organizations, media libraries and archives, musicologists, teachers, and application-software developers.

The use of ISRC instead of relying on text matching enables more efficient and accurate identification when information about recordings needs to be stored and retrieved, or exchanged between parties. This is especially true when recordings have similar names but are different, or when variations in spelling, language, or character set make text matching unreliable.

This document sets out the format of ISRC, the mechanisms to ensure uniqueness of codes, and the ways in which ISRC is to be assigned to recordings.

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# Information and documentation — International Standard Recording Code (ISRC)

## 1 Scope

This document specifies the International Standard Recording Code (ISRC) for the unique identification of recordings.

The ISRC is applicable to the identification of audio recordings and music video recordings whether they are in analogue or digital form.

The ISRC is not applicable to the numbering of audio or audiovisual products or carriers. Neither is it applicable to the numbering of packages of audio recordings or music video recordings with other media items.

The ISRC is applicable to music video recordings even if they have been assigned an International Standard Audiovisual Number (ISAN) in accordance with ISO 15706 (all parts), or a Digital Object Identifier (DOI) in accordance with ISO 26324, but it is not applicable to other forms of audiovisual recording.

## 2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

## 3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>

### 3.1

#### audio recording

fixation of sounds

### 3.2

#### music video recording

fixation of sounds synchronized with pictures or moving pictures where (a) the fixed sounds are wholly or substantially a musical performance or (b) the *recording* (3.3) is intended for viewing in association with a recording of a musical performance

Note 1 to entry: This definition includes music videos and concert recordings, together with music-related interviews and documentaries, but does not extend to general audiovisual material, even if it includes music.

### 3.3

#### recording

*audio recording* (3.1) or *music video recording* (3.2)

Note 1 to entry: A recording can be composed of parts that are themselves recordings (see A.1.9).

Note 2 to entry: A recording is distinct from the carrier in which it is embodied for release, even if no other recordings are included.

**3.4**  
**registrant**

entity wishing to assign an ISRC to an applicable *recording* (3.3)

**3.5**  
**digit**

decimal numeral from the range 0 to 9, as represented by decimal codes 48 to 57 of ISO/IEC 8859-1

Note 1 to entry: There is no requirement to use this encoding of these digits when an ISRC is stored or transmitted.

**3.6**  
**legacy country code**

code consisting of two *letters* (3.8) notified to a *registrant* (3.4) under previous editions of this document

**3.7**  
**legacy registrant code**

code consisting of three *alphanumeric characters* (3.9) allocated to a *registrant* (3.4) under previous editions of this document

**3.8**  
**letter**

upper case character of the Roman alphabet from the range A to Z, as represented by decimal codes 65 to 90 of ISO/IEC 8859-1

Note 1 to entry: There is no requirement to use this encoding of these letters when an ISRC is stored or transmitted.

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**3.9**  
**alphanumeric character**  
*digit* (3.5) or *letter* (3.8)

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**4 Structure and format of the ISRC**

**4.1 General**

An ISRC consists of 12 alphanumeric characters. It is divided into three elements in the following order:

- a) prefix code (see 4.2);
- b) year of reference element (see 4.3);
- c) designation code (see 4.4).

**4.2 Prefix code**

The prefix code element shall comprise two letters followed by three alphanumeric characters.

EXAMPLE AA6Q7.

NOTE In previous editions of this document, this element was divided into two elements: two letters representing the country of assignment and three alphanumeric characters allocated to the registrant. The prefix code element follows this syntax for compatibility but is now allocated in accordance with the procedures in [Clause 5](#).



### 4.3 Year of reference element

#### 4.3.1 Year of reference — Normal

The year of reference element identifies the year in which the ISRC is assigned to the recording (see [A.1](#)). The year of reference element shall consist of two digits representing the last two digits of the year in which the ISRC is assigned.

EXAMPLES Year = 1998: Year of reference element = 98; Year = 2015: Year of reference element = 15.

#### 4.3.2 Year of reference — Other

The ISRC Registration Authority may authorize and publish other schemes for the specification of the year of reference element. It shall ensure that these schemes provide for the unique assignment of ISRCs to recordings.

### 4.4 Designation code

The designation code shall consist of five digits. The code shall be left-packed with zero digits.

EXAMPLE 00047.

### 4.5 Visual presentation

Informative recommendations on how an ISRC should be treated when it is used in practical applications are included in [Annex C](#).

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## 5 Assignment of an ISRC

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### 5.1 Assignment — General

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An ISRC shall be assigned under either [5.4](#) or [5.5](#).

ISRCs shall be assigned in a manner consistent with the principles for the application of ISRC specified in [Annex A](#).

### 5.2 Registrants with legacy allocations

Where a registrant has been allocated a legacy registrant code and notified of a legacy country code under a previous edition of this document, the prefix code shall be constructed by combining

- a) that legacy country code, and
- b) that legacy registrant code.

In these circumstances, the designation codes shall be taken from the full range from 00000 to 99999.

### 5.3 Registrants requiring the allocation of prefix code and designation code range

On the request of a registrant, the ISRC Registration Authority shall allocate them

- a) a prefix code, and
- b) a range of designation codes.

The ISRC Registration Authority shall ensure that such allocations are unique. It shall ensure that allocations do not cause collisions with

- a) other allocations made under [5.3](#),

- b) ISRC assignments made under [5.5](#),
- c) legacy allocations and ISRC assignments made under previous editions of this document, and
- d) as far as possible, code assignments known to have been made, even if these were not fully compliant with this document or its previous editions.

The ISRC Registration Authority shall not normally allocate a further prefix code and range of designation codes to a registrant which has already been allocated either (a) a legacy registrant code under a previous edition of this document or (b) a prefix code and range of designations codes under this document. The ISRC Registration Authority may, however, allocate a further prefix code and range of designation codes to such a registrant if it determines that this is justified by operational circumstances. The ISRC Registration Authority shall provide detailed guidance in the ISRC Handbook.

### 5.4 Assignment of ISRCs by registrants

Where a registrant has constructed a prefix code under [5.2](#) or been allocated a prefix code under [5.3](#), an ISRC shall be assigned to a recording by combining

- a) the prefix code,
- b) the year of reference using the last two digits of the year in which the code was assigned, and
- c) a designation code from the range allocated.

Within the range of designation codes allocated for use with a prefix code, a designation code shall be assigned only once in any particular year, and hence, each assigned ISRC shall be unique.

Each ISRC assigned under [5.4](#) shall be associated with certain information about the recording to which it has been assigned. The ISRC Registration Authority shall publish a specification of this information.

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### 5.5 Automated assignment

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The ISRC Registration Authority may authorize the automated assignment of ISRCs to recordings. For each country, territory, or group of countries or territories where automated assignment is authorized, the ISRC Registration Authority shall specify and publish technical and administrative information stating how such an ISRC may be assigned.

The ISRC Registration Authority shall specify and publish the descriptive information about such recordings that shall be submitted to allow an ISRC to be assigned under [5.5](#).

An ISRC shall not be assigned to a recording under [5.5](#) if an ISRC has previously been assigned to that recording.

A recording to which an ISRC is to be assigned under [5.5](#) shall be associated with the required descriptive information and this information shall be submitted using the specified interface. Provided no prior assignment of an ISRC to the recording has been made under [5.5](#) or (as far as the ISRC Registration Authority can reasonably determine) otherwise, an ISRC shall be assigned. If a prior assignment has been made, the registrant shall be informed of this assignment.

The ISRC Registration Authority shall ensure that ISRCs assigned under this clause are unique and do not collide with assignments made under [5.4](#), under previous editions of this document, and as far as possible with other ISRC assignments known to have been made, even if these were not compliant with this document.

All assignments made under [5.5](#) shall be entered into a single registry. Access to this registry shall be provided to users of the ISRC system.

The ISRC Registration Authority may authorize and publish schemes for the inclusion of other assignments of ISRCs into the registry.

## 6 Administration

The ISRC system shall be administered by the Registration Authority for this document (i.e. ISO 3901), hereafter referred to as the ISRC Registration Authority, as specified in [Annex B](#).

The name and contact information of the Registration Authority for this document can be found at <http://www.iso.org/mara>.

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