
**Information and documentation —
International Standard Book Number
(ISBN)**

*Information et documentation — Numéro international normalisé du
livre (ISBN)*

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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).

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).

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For an explanation on the voluntary nature of ISO 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. (standards.iteh.ai)

The committee responsible for this document is ISO/TC 46, *Information and documentation*, Subcommittee SC 9, *Identification and description*. ISO 2108:2017
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This fifth edition cancels and replaces the fourth edition (ISO 2108:2005), which has been technically revised. It specifies the responsibilities of registrants who apply for and assign ISBN to qualifying publications. Since January 2007, ISBN is only valid in the supply chain in its 13-digit form so the specifications relating to the 10-digit ISBN and its respective calculation method have been removed. A new informative annex describes how an ISBN can be resolved on digital networks such as by being registered as an ISBN-A to become “actionable” or by incorporation into URN:ISBN. Additional specifications on associated metadata and the assignment of ISBN, particularly with respect to digital publications, are also included.

Introduction

Since its inception in 1970, the International Standard Book Number (ISBN) has been internationally recognized as the identification system for the publishing industry and its supply chains. An ISBN enables separate identification of similar publications, such as the same publication made available separately in different product forms, or with different product form features. The ISBN accompanies a monographic publication from its initial acquisition or commission by the publisher and onwards throughout the supply and distribution chain.

As an identifier for publications, ISBN fulfils a critical role in supporting the needs of the book supply chain. The ISBN system serves as a key element of ordering and inventory systems for publishers, booksellers, libraries, and other organizations. It is the basis for collecting data on all editions of monographic publications for directories and databases used throughout the book supply chain. A publication identified by ISBN can be made available more widely and through more outlets, maximizing its sales potential. The use of ISBN also facilitates rights management and the monitoring of sales data for the publishing industry.

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Information and documentation — International Standard Book Number (ISBN)

1 Scope

This document establishes the specifications for the International Standard Book Number (ISBN) as a unique international identification system for each product form or edition of a separately available monographic publication published or produced by a specific publisher that is available to the public. It specifies the construction of an ISBN, the rules for its assignment and use, the metadata to be associated with the ISBN allocation, and the administration of the ISBN system.

This document is applicable to monographic publications (books), not to textual works (content). Monographic publications include individual sections or chapters where these are made separately available and certain types of related products that are available to the public irrespective of whether those publications are made available for sale or on a gratis basis. Examples of applicable and non-applicable products are provided in [Annex A](#).

NOTE More detailed, operational guidance is provided in the latest version of the Users' Manual available from the Registration Authority for this document (see [Clause 7](#)).

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 639-2, *Codes for the representation of names of languages — Part 2: Alpha-3 code*

ISO 3166-1, *Codes for the representation of names of countries and their subdivisions — Part 1: Country codes*

ISO 8601, *Data elements and interchange formats — Information interchange — Representation of dates and times*

ISO/IEC 15420, *Information technology — Automatic identification and data capture techniques — EAN/UPC bar code symbology specification*

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 <http://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>

3.1

check digit

final character in the *ISBN* (3.8) string which is related to all preceding characters in the string by a specified mathematical algorithm and which may be used to verify the accuracy of the *ISBN* (3.8) string

3.2 continuing resource

publication that is issued over time with no predetermined conclusion and made available to the public in any *product form* (3.12), usually issued in successive or integrating issues which generally have numerical and/or chronological designations

Note 1 to entry: Continuing resources include serials such as newspapers, periodicals, journals, magazines, blogs, etc. and ongoing integrating resources such as loose-leaf publications that are continually updated, and websites that are continually updated. Continuing resources do not qualify for assignment of ISBN.

3.3 Digital Object Identifier DOI®

persistent and actionable identifier of an entity — physical, digital, or abstract — on digital networks that is part of the DOI system

Note 1 to entry: See ISO 26324.

Note 2 to entry: A DOI name when compliant with DOI syntax is a string that specifies a unique object within the DOI system.

3.4 Digital Rights Management DRM

technology based on encryption software used to control access to the content and which is distinct from the *product form* (3.12) of a specific digital publication

Note 1 to entry: Different settings may be applied within the DRM software to enforce usage constraints or enable particular additional features.

Note 2 to entry: A single edition of a publication may be made available through different vendors who each apply different DRM software and/or differing usage constraints.

Note 3 to entry: “Social” DRM denotes a particular type of DRM in which credentials about the customer are recorded in the product using watermarking technology but which does not enforce any usage constraints. Unless “social” DRM is explicitly stated, references to DRM in this document signify DRM technology based on encryption software.

3.5 edition

manifestations of a publication embodying essentially the same content

Note 1 to entry: A single edition of a publication may be published in multiple product forms.

3.6 GS1 prefix

unique string of three digits issued by the GS1 Global Office and allocated exclusively to the Registration Authority for ISO 2108

3.7 imprint

trade name or brand under which a work is published

Note 1 to entry: A publishing company may have multiple imprints in order to target their books at specific markets.

Note 2 to entry: In some cases, multiple imprints may be the result of mergers or acquisitions of different companies who wish to differentiate their brands.

Note 3 to entry: An imprint is a name and not only a logo.

3.8

International Standard Book Number

ISBN

identifier for *monographic publications* (3.10) allocated under the aegis of the Registration Authority to a *registrant* (3.16) in accordance with the specifications of ISO 2108

3.9

ISBN-A

service that allows an *ISBN* (3.8) to be expressed in the DOI system by including it in the syntax string of a *DOI* (3.3)

Note 1 to entry: ISBN-A enables a specific ISBN to become actionable or clickable on the web.

3.10

monographic publication

publication conceived as a whole in one part or intended to be completed within a finite number of parts by its *publisher* (3.15) and made available to the public in any *product form* (3.12)

3.11

print on demand publication

publication that is printed in response to a customer order rather than being supplied from existing stock held by the distributor or *publisher* (3.15)

3.12

product form

basic physical or digital properties of a publication that differentiate it as a product

EXAMPLE The same edition of a publication may appear in different product forms including the following: hardcover; paperback; CD audio book; Braille; online e-book.

3.13

product form detail

additional clarification or detail further describing the *product form* (3.12) of a particular publication

EXAMPLE Additional detail may be required in order to describe particular product forms of the same edition of the same publication adequately, e.g. jacketed hardcover, trade paperback, PDF, or EPUB.

3.14

product form feature

physical or technical characteristics of a particular publication that give more information about its particular usability and accessibility

EXAMPLE Further information may be required about the features of particular product forms of the same edition of the same publication in order to describe them adequately, e.g. colour of cover, text font and size, or DVD region.

3.15

publisher

individual or corporation responsible for all stages in the creation, production, distribution, and marketing of digital or printed publications

Note 1 to entry: The publisher is normally responsible for the content and for any financial risk involved in the process.

Note 2 to entry: Authors may be their own publishers, taking on the above functions themselves; this is known as self-publishing.

3.16

registrant

person or organization that has requested and received a valid and genuine *ISBN* (3.8) allocated under the aegis of, and according to the rules specified by, the Registration Authority to identify a *monographic publication* (3.10)

Note 1 to entry: The registrant is usually the publisher of the publication, but exceptionally may be an intermediary who is acting on behalf of, or in place of, the publisher.

3.17

registration group

area of operation defined by the Registration Authority for ISO 2108 which may be based on country, language, or region

3.18

supply chain

network of producers, distributors, and retailers bringing goods and services to consumers

3.19

usage constraint

limit(s) of what a user can do with a particular digital *monographic publication* (3.10)

Note 1 to entry: Usage constraints for a digital publication are usually set within the DRM software.

Note 2 to entry: If the same content is available separately with different sets of usage constraints, then each of these sets will constitute a separate monographic publication.

EXAMPLE The usage constraints that are set for a publication control whether it is possible to permit text to speech, print a certain percentage of the pages, and/or whether it is possible to lend the book to another consumer.

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4 Construction of an International Standard Book Number

4.1 General structure of an ISBN

An ISBN shall be allocated in accordance with the specifications of [Annex A](#). An ISBN shall consist of 13 digits¹⁾ comprised of the Arabic numerals 0 to 9 only and shall be made up of the following elements:

- a) GS1 element;
- b) registration group element;
- c) registrant element;
- d) publication element;
- e) check digit.

When an ISBN is displayed in human readable form (i.e. a form meant primarily to be read or written by a person, in contrast to a form primarily meant to be used by data processing equipment), it shall be preceded²⁾ by the letters ISBN and each of the elements of the ISBN should be separated from the others by a hyphen as in the following example.

EXAMPLE ISBN 978-90-70002-34-3

1) In earlier editions of this document, which were in effect prior to 1 January 2007, a 10-digit ISBN was specified which consisted of the Arabic numerals 0 to 9 although, in the case of the check digit only, the letter X could sometimes occur.

2) During the transition from the 10-digit to the 13-digit ISBN, ISBNs were sometimes written as ISBN-10 or ISBN-13 followed by the respective number of digits of the ISBN. ISBNs are now only valid in 13-digit form so all ISBNs shall start solely with ISBN.

In countries where the Latin alphabet is not used, the appropriate abbreviation for “International Standard Book Number” in the local script may be given in conjunction with the required letters ISBN in the Latin alphabet.

4.2 GS1 element

The first element of an ISBN shall be a three-digit GS1 prefix. Technical information specifying valid GS1 prefixes assigned to ISBN shall be available from the Registration Authority (see [Annex B](#)) for this document.

4.3 Registration group element

The second element of an ISBN shall indicate the registration group. It identifies a specific national, geographic, language, or other such grouping to which the ISBN belongs.

The registration group element is allocated by the Registration Authority.

The registration group element varies in length according to the publishing output within the group concerned. The length of this element for any registration group is determined by the Registration Authority. Technical information which specifies validation rules for registration group length shall be available from the Registration Authority.

4.4 Registrant element

The third element of an ISBN shall indicate the registrant for that ISBN. This element shall be allocated from the ranges assigned to each registration group according to rules specified by the Registration Authority. In the majority of cases, the registrant element shall refer to one publisher. Under certain circumstances, more than one publisher may share a registrant element, usually as a result of mergers or other commercial activities involving particular publications. Also, within each registration group, or within a specific range within a registration group, a common block of registrant elements may be reserved for the purpose of assigning individual ISBNs to publishers.

Exceptionally, a registrant element may be assigned to an intermediary who is acting on behalf of a publisher or has been unable to obtain an ISBN from the publisher. An intermediary who is commissioned by the publisher simply to fulfil the ISBN paperwork shall not be assigned a registrant element in their own right.

The registrant element varies in length according to the projected publication output of each publisher. The length of this element shall be determined in accordance with the agreed specifications of the ISBN system for assigning ranges of the ISBN as defined within this document and in guidelines issued by the Registration Authority. Technical information that specifies validation rules for registrant element length within a particular registration group shall be available from the Registration Authority.

4.5 Publication element

The fourth element of an ISBN shall be the publication element. The publication element shall be allocated in accordance with the specifications of [Annex A](#). It is usually assigned to the publication by the publisher of the monographic publication. However, in some cases, an ISBN from within a common registrant element block reserved for that purpose may be allocated.

The length of the publication element is determined by the length of the registration group and registrant elements that precede it.

4.6 Check digit

The fifth and final element of an ISBN is the check digit. The check digit for an ISBN is calculated using a modulus 10 algorithm. Further details on this method are provided in [Annex C](#).

5 Assignment of an ISBN

5.1 A registrant element shall be allocated, upon application from the registrant of a qualifying monographic publication, from the ranges allocated to that registration group by the Registration Authority. Registrants who only intend to produce one publication may be assigned an ISBN from a common registrant element block reserved for that purpose within the ranges of that registration group.

5.2 As part of the application for an ISBN or ISBN registrant element, the registrant shall supply basic administrative contact details according to the specification and direction of the Registration Authority in order to allow the completion of registration into ISBN assignment records.

5.3 As part of the application for an ISBN or ISBN registrant element and each time an ISBN is assigned, the registrant shall supply metadata specific to the publication to which the ISBN has been, or will be, assigned according to the specification and direction of the Registration Authority (see [Annex D](#)).

5.4 Once an ISBN is assigned to a publication, that ISBN shall not be altered, replaced, or re-used.

5.5 If publishers are using intermediaries to generate products with different product form details or product forms with differing features or usage constraints of their e-books, then they should provide separate ISBNs for the intermediaries to assign to each separate product. If a publisher does not provide ISBNs to an intermediary for each separate product, then the intermediary may assign their own ISBNs in order to identify the products uniquely if they are made available in the supply chain. ISBN registrant elements will be provided to intermediaries for this purpose. ISBNs and related metadata shall be reported back to the publisher and to other bibliographic agencies along with the publisher's original ISBN (if it exists), which shall also be included in order that sales data can be aggregated for the same title.

6 Location and display of the ISBN on publications

6.1 General

The ISBN shall always appear on the item itself.

6.2 Printed publications

6.2.1 The ISBN shall be printed on the verso of the title page of the publication or, if this is not possible, at the foot of the title page itself or in conjunction with the copyright notice.

6.2.2 The ISBN shall be represented in machine-readable form as a bar code on the publication. When an ISBN is represented as a bar code, it shall use the EAN/UPC bar code symbology in accordance with ISO/IEC 15420. In a bar code, the ISBN should be displayed in human readable form immediately above the bar code symbol. The ISBN shall be printed at the foot of the outside back cover, if practicable, and/or at the foot of the back of the jacket (if the publication has one). If neither of these positions is possible, then the ISBN shall be printed in some other prominent position on the outside of the publication.

6.3 Digital publications and other non-print product forms

6.3.1 If the publication involves visual display of content, stored in digital form (e.g. an online publication or a CD-ROM), the ISBN shall appear on the page or screen that displays the title or its equivalent (e.g. the initial screen displayed when the content is first accessed and/or on the screen that carries the copyright notice).