



International
Standard

ISO/IEC 24778

**Information technology —
Automatic identification and data
capture techniques — Aztec Code
bar code symbology specification**

Second edition

*Technologies de l'information — Techniques automatiques
d'identification et de capture des données — Spécification pour la
symbologie de code à barres du code Aztec*

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Contents

	Page
Foreword	vi
Introduction	vii
1 Scope	1
2 Normative references	1
3 Terms, definitions, symbols and functions	1
3.1 Terms and definitions.....	1
3.2 Symbols and functions.....	2
3.2.1 Mathematical symbols.....	2
3.2.2 Mathematical functions and operations.....	2
4 Symbology characteristics	3
4.1 Basic characteristics.....	3
4.2 Summary of additional features.....	3
5 Symbol description	4
5.1 Basic Aztec Code properties.....	4
5.2 Symbol structure.....	4
5.2.1 Aztec code layout.....	4
5.2.2 Core Symbol.....	6
5.2.3 Data fields.....	7
5.3 Symbol character structure and sequence.....	7
5.4 Symbol size and capacity.....	9
6 General encodation procedures	10
7 Symbol structure	11
7.1 Fixed pattern structures.....	11
7.1.1 Fixed pattern types.....	11
7.1.2 Finder.....	11
7.1.3 Orientation bits.....	11
7.1.4 Reference grid.....	11
7.2 Mode message encoding and structure.....	11
7.2.1 Mode message.....	11
7.2.2 Symbol size designator.....	11
7.2.3 Message length designator.....	12
7.2.4 Error encodation for the mode message.....	12
7.2.5 Module placement for the mode message.....	12
7.3 Data message encoding and structure.....	12
7.3.1 Data message.....	12
7.3.2 Source message encoding.....	13
7.3.3 Error encodation for the data message.....	15
7.3.4 Module placement for the data message.....	15
8 Structured Append	16
9 Reader initialization symbols	16
10 Extended Channel Interpretation (ECI)	16
10.1 ECI basic information and references.....	16
10.2 Encoding ECIs in Aztec Code.....	17
10.3 Code sets and ECIs.....	17
10.4 ECIs and Structured Append.....	17
10.5 Post-decode protocol.....	17
11 User considerations	17
11.1 Choice of data and error correction level.....	17
11.2 User selection of encoded message.....	17
11.3 User selection of minimum error correction level.....	18

11.4	User selection of Structured Append.....	18
11.5	User selection of optional symbol formats.....	18
12	Dimensions	18
13	User guidelines	18
13.1	Human readable interpretation.....	18
13.2	Autodiscrimination capability.....	19
13.3	User-defined application parameters.....	19
14	Reference decode algorithm	19
14.1	General.....	19
14.2	Finding candidate symbols.....	20
14.3	Processing the bullseye image.....	20
14.4	Decoding the Core Symbol.....	20
14.4.1	Bullseye mapping of module centres.....	20
14.4.2	Mapping and sampling module centres.....	20
14.4.3	Determining video sign and symbol format.....	21
14.4.4	Determining symbol orientation and mirror image reversal.....	21
14.4.5	Decoding the mode message.....	21
14.5	Decoding the data message.....	21
14.5.1	General.....	21
14.5.2	Mapping the data layers.....	21
14.5.3	Assembling the codewords.....	21
14.5.4	Checking the codewords.....	22
14.6	Translating the datawords.....	22
14.6.1	Bit stream conversion and interpretation.....	22
14.6.2	Creating the data bit stream.....	22
14.6.3	Interpreting the bit stream.....	22
15	Symbol quality	22
15.1	Quality assessment method.....	22
15.2	Symbol quality parameters.....	22
15.2.1	Fixed pattern damage (FPD).....	22
15.2.2	Axial non-uniformity (AN).....	23
15.2.3	Unused error correction.....	23
15.2.4	“Print” growth.....	23
15.2.5	Grid non-uniformity.....	23
15.3	Symbol print quality grading.....	23
15.3.1	Symbol grade.....	23
15.4	Additional print process control measurements.....	23
16	Transmitted data	23
16.1	Basic interpretation.....	23
16.2	Protocol for FNC1.....	24
16.3	Protocol for ECIs.....	24
16.4	Symbology identifier.....	24
16.5	Transmitted data example.....	24
Annex A	(normative) Aztec Runes	26
Annex B	(normative) Error detection and correction	28
Annex C	(normative) Topological bullseye search algorithm	31
Annex D	(normative) Linear crystal growing algorithm	35
Annex E	(normative) Fixed pattern damage (FPD) grading	36
Annex F	(normative) Symbology identifiers	38
Annex G	(informative) Aztec Code symbol encoding example	39
Annex H	(informative) Achieving minimum symbol size	43
Annex I	(informative) Useful process control techniques	46

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) and IEC (the International Electrotechnical Commission) form the specialized system for worldwide standardization. National bodies that are members of ISO or IEC participate in the development of International Standards through technical committees established by the respective organization to deal with particular fields of technical activity. ISO and IEC technical committees collaborate in fields of mutual interest. Other international organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO and IEC, also take part in the work.

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 document 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 or www.iec.ch/members_experts/refdocs).

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This document was prepared by Joint Technical Committee ISO/IEC JTC 1, *Information technology*, Subcommittee SC 31, *Automatic identification and data capture techniques*.

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO/IEC 24778:2008), which has been technically revised.

The main changes are as follows:

- introduction of continuous grading for fixed pattern damages (FPDs);
- grading of print growth deleted and added reference to ISO/IEC 15415.

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 and www.iec.ch/national-committees.

Introduction

Aztec Code is a two-dimensional matrix symbology whose symbols are nominally square, made up of square modules on a square grid, with a square bullseye pattern at their centre. Aztec Code symbols can encode from small to large amounts of data with user-selected percentages of error correction.

Manufacturers of bar code equipment and users of the technology require publicly available standard symbology specifications to which they can refer when developing equipment and application standards. The publication of standardised symbology specifications is designed to achieve this.

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Information technology — Automatic identification and data capture techniques — Aztec Code bar code symbology specification

1 Scope

This document defines the requirements for the symbology known as Aztec Code. It specifies the Aztec Code symbology characteristics, including:

- data character encodation;
- rules for error control encoding;
- the graphical symbol structure;
- symbol dimensions and print quality requirements;
- a reference decoding algorithm;
- user-selectable application parameters.

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/IEC 646, *Information technology — ISO 7-bit coded character set for information interchange*

ISO/IEC 8859-1, *Information technology — 8-bit single-byte coded graphic character sets — Part 1: Latin alphabet No. 1*

ISO/IEC 15415, *Information technology — Automatic identification and data capture techniques — Bar code print quality test specification — Two-dimensional symbols*

ISO/IEC 15424, *Information technology — Automatic identification and data capture techniques — Data Carrier Identifiers (including Symbology Identifiers)*

ISO/IEC 19762, *Information technology — Automatic identification and data capture (AIDC) techniques — Harmonized vocabulary*

AIM Extended Channel Interpretations (ECI), Part 1: Identification Schemes and Protocols

AIM Extended Channel Interpretations (ECI), Part 2: Registration Procedure

AIM Extended Channel Interpretations (ECI), Part 3: Register

3 Terms, definitions, symbols and functions

3.1 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO/IEC 19762 and the following apply.

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

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

3.1.1

bullseye

set of concentric square rings used as the finder pattern in Aztec Code

3.1.2

checkword

codeword which is included in a symbol for either error correction or error detection, or both

3.1.3

dataword

codeword which is part of the data message encoded in a symbol

3.1.4

domino

2-module sub-structure of the symbol character in Aztec Code which is the elemental entity used in graphical encoding of the symbol

3.1.5

mode message

short, fixed-length, error-corrected subsidiary message within an Aztec Code symbol which directly encodes the symbol's size and data message length

3.2 Symbols and functions

3.2.1 Mathematical symbols

For the purposes of this document, the following mathematical symbols apply.

- B the number of bits in each codeword
- C_b the symbol capacity in number of bits
- C_w the symbol capacity in number of codewords
- D the number of data (message) codewords in the symbol
- K the number of error correction codewords in the symbol, equal to $C_w - D$
- L the number of data layers (1 to 32) in the symbol, defining its size
- m the symbology identifier modifier value
- x a general variable used to express error correction polynomials
- (x,y) Cartesian coordinates within the module grid

3.2.2 Mathematical functions and operations

For the purposes of this document, the following mathematical functions and operations apply.

abs()	is the absolute value function
div	is the integer division operator
max(a,b)	is the greater of a and b
mod	is the remainder after integer division

4 Symbology characteristics

4.1 Basic characteristics

Aztec Code is a two-dimensional matrix symbology with the following basic characteristics:

- a) Encodable character set:
 - 1) All 8-bit values can be encoded. The default interpretation shall be:
 - i) values 0 to 127 in accordance with ISO/IEC 646 International Reference Version (IRV), i.e. all 128 ASCII characters;
 - ii) values 128 to 255 in accordance with ISO/IEC 8859-1. These are referred to as extended ASCII. This interpretation corresponds to Extended Channel Interpretation (ECI) ECI 000003. Additional characters may be encoded using the ECI capabilities.
 - 2) Two non-data characters can be encoded: FNC1 for compatibility with some existing applications and ECI escape sequences for the standardized encoding of message interpretation information.
- b) Representation of data: A dark module is a binary one and a light module is a binary zero.
- c) Symbol size:
 - 1) The smallest Aztec Code symbol is 15×15 modules square, and the largest is 151×151 .
 - 2) No quiet zone is required outside the bounds of the symbol.
- d) Data capacity (at recommended error correction level):
 - 1) The smallest Aztec Code symbol encodes up to 13 numeric or 12 alphabetic characters or 6 bytes of data.
 - 2) The largest symbol encodes up to 3832 numeric or 3067 alphabetic characters or 1914 bytes of data.
- e) Selectable error correction:
 - 1) User-selectable, from 5 % to 95 % of the data region, with a minimum of 3 codewords.
 - 2) Recommended level is 23 % of symbol capacity plus 3 codewords.
- f) Code type: Matrix.
- g) Orientation independent: Yes.

4.2 Summary of additional features

The following summarizes additional features that are inherent or optional in Aztec Code:

- a) Reflectance Reversal (Inherent): Though Aztec Code symbols are always shown and described in this document with the finder's centre dark and with dark modules encoding binary 1s throughout, symbols

exhibiting the opposite reflectance characteristics are easily autodiscriminated and decoded with the standard reader.

- b) Mirror Image (Inherent): Images which contain an Aztec Code symbol in mirror reversal, either because they are obtained using a reflected optical path, a reversed scan direction, or from behind through a clear substrate, are easily autodiscriminated and decoded with the standard reader.
- c) Extended Channel Interpretation (Optional): The ECI mechanism enables characters from various character sets (e.g. Arabic, Cyrillic, Greek, Hebrew) and other data interpretations or industry-specific requirements to be represented.
- d) Structured Append (Optional): Structured Append allows files of data to be represented logically and continually in up to 26 Aztec Code symbols. The symbols may be scanned in any sequence to enable the original data to be correctly reconstructed.
- e) Reader Initialization Symbols (Optional): A distinct format of Aztec Code symbol is available for use in bar code menus for reader initialization. The encoded message in these special symbols is never passed on to an application.
- f) Aztec “Runes” (Optional): a series of 256 small, machine-readable marks compatible with Aztec Code are available for special applications. Normative [Annex A](#) defines Aztec “Runes”.

5 Symbol description

5.1 Basic Aztec Code properties

Aztec Code symbols are nominally square, made up of square modules on a square grid, with a square bullseye pattern at their centre. [Figure 1](#) shows two representative Aztec Code symbols, a small 1-layer symbol on the left which encodes 12 digits with 47 % error correction, and a larger 6-layer symbol on the right which encodes 168 text characters with 30 % error correction.



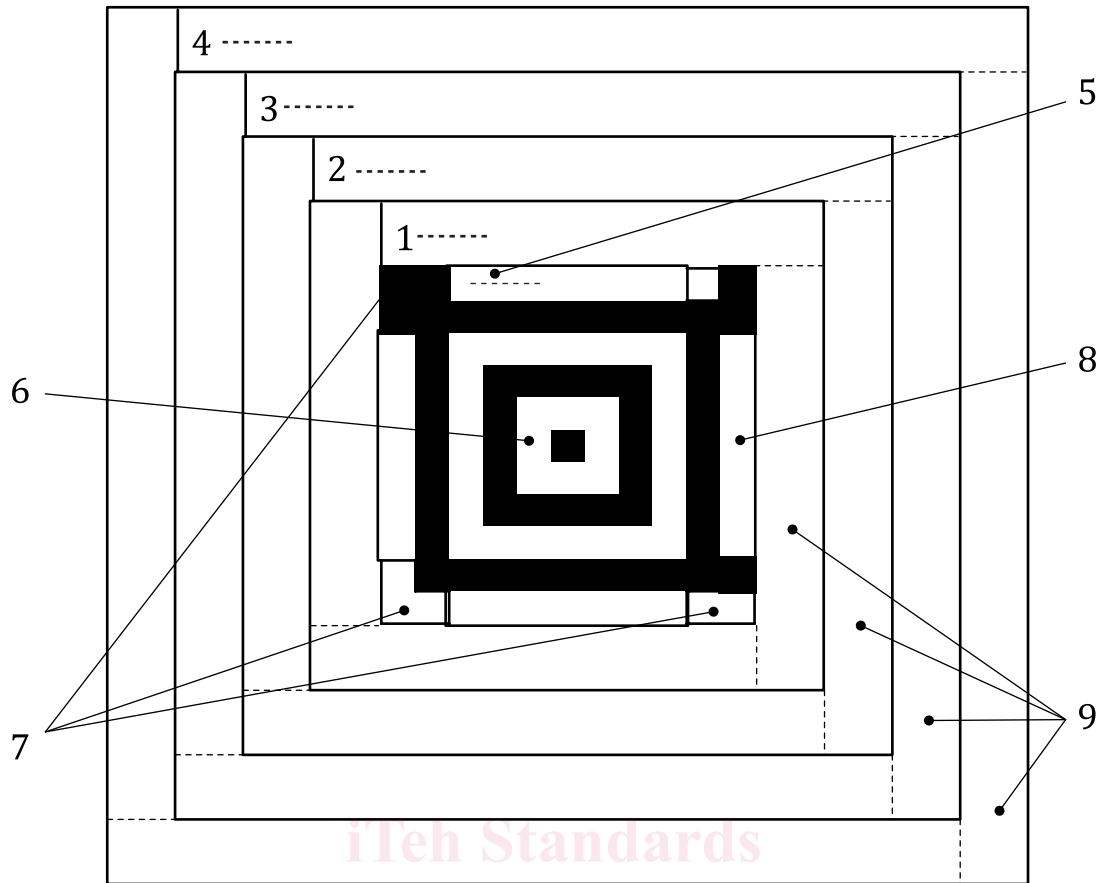
Figure 1 — Representative Aztec Code symbols

These symbols illustrate the two basic formats of Aztec Code symbols: on the left is a “compact” Aztec Code symbol, visually characterized by a 2-ring bullseye, useful for encoding shorter messages efficiently. On the right is a “full-range” Aztec Code symbol, visually characterized by a 3-ring bullseye, which supports much larger symbols for longer data messages. Since encoders can autoselect and decoders auto discriminate between the two formats, a seamless transition is achieved to cover the full spectrum of applications.

5.2 Symbol structure

5.2.1 Aztec code layout

The underlying structure of a compact Aztec Code symbol is shown in [Figure 2](#), and that of a full-range Aztec Code symbol is shown in [Figure 3](#). In both cases, the Aztec Code symbol has at its centre a Core Symbol which is then surrounded by data fields on all four sides.



Key

- 1 layer 1
- 2 layer 2
- 3 layer 3
- 4 layer 4

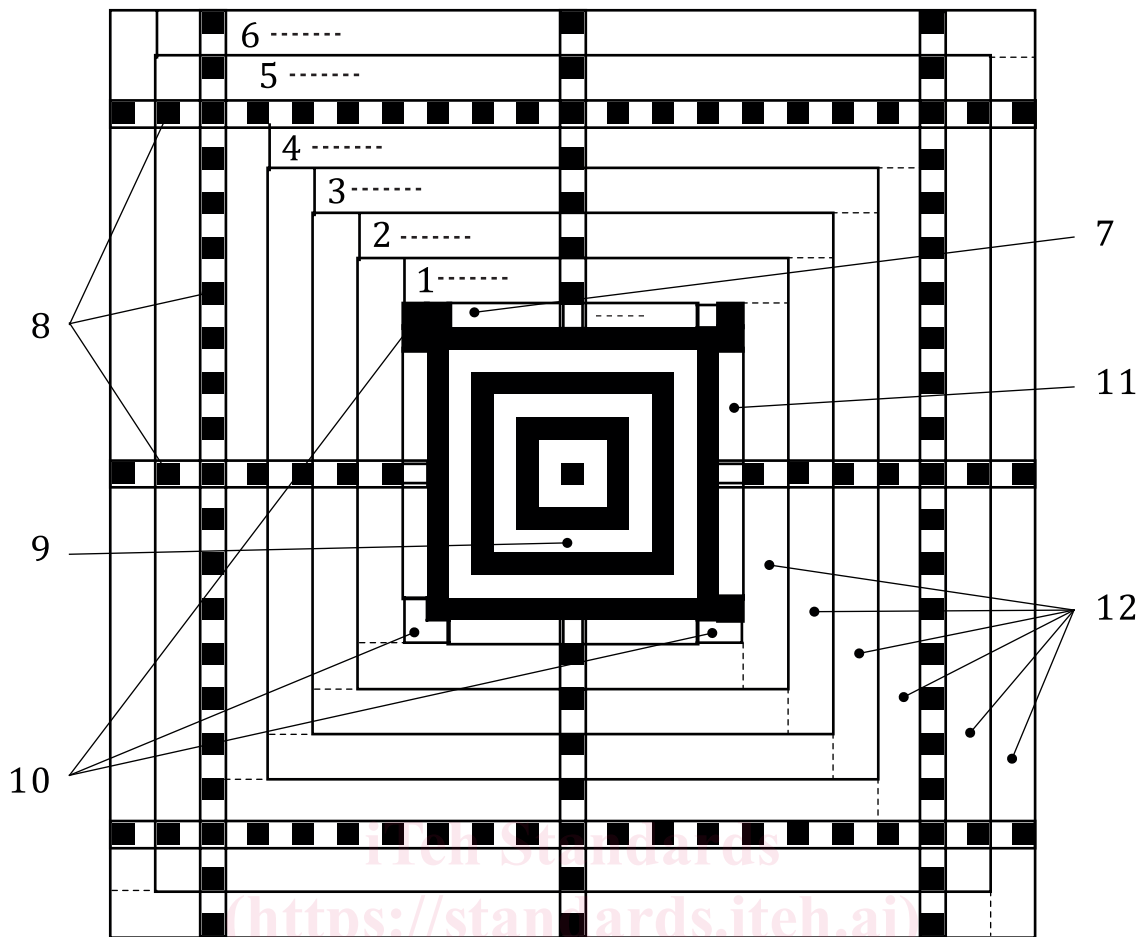
Fixed structures:

- 6 finder pattern
- 7 orientation patterns

Variable structures

- 8 mode message
- 9 data layers

Figure 2 — Structure of a “compact” Aztec Code symbol



Key

- 1 layer 1
- 2 layer 2
- 3 layer 3
- 4 layer 4
- 5 layer 5
- 6 layer 6
- 7 mode bits

Fixed structures

- 8 reference grid
- 9 finder pattern
- 10 orientation patterns

Variable structures

- 11 mode message
- 12 data layers

Figure 3 — Structure of a “full-range” Aztec Code symbol

5.2.2 Core Symbol

5.2.2.1 Core Symbol position and content

The Core Symbol, always square and at the exact centre of an Aztec Code symbol, consists of a finder pattern, orientation patterns, and a mode message. This core covers an 11 × 11 module area in compact symbols and