
**Information and documentation —
International Standard Musical Work
Code (ISWC)**

*Information et documentation — Code international normalisé des
œuvres musicales (ISWC)*

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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).

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

For an explanation of 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 www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 46, *Information and documentation*, Subcommittee SC 9, *Identification and description*.

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO 15707:2001), of which it constitutes a minor revision. The changes are as follows:

- [Clause 2](#), the mandatory Normative references clause has been added and subsequent clauses have been renumbered;
- [Clause 4](#), references to the International ISWC Agency have been removed and the registration authority URL www.iso.org/maintenance_agencies has been added;
- [Clause 5](#), references to ISWC agency have been removed;
- former A.1.1, the header has been removed and the content has been combined with the main header [A.1](#).

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.

Introduction

This document has been developed in collaboration with the International Confederation of Societies of Authors and Composers (CISAC).

The International Standard Musical Work Code (ISWC) system was developed by the member societies of the International Confederation of Societies of Authors and Composers (CISAC). CISAC's purpose in creating an ISWC for musical works is to enable more efficient administration of rights to those works on a worldwide basis. The ISWC provides an efficient means of identifying musical works in computer databases and related documentation and for the exchange of information between rights societies, publishers, record companies and other interested parties on an international level.

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Information and documentation — International Standard Musical Work Code (ISWC)

1 Scope

This document specifies a means of uniquely identifying a musical work. It standardizes and promotes internationally the use of a standard identification code so that musical works can be uniquely distinguished from one another within computer databases and related documentation and for the purposes of collecting societies involved in the administration of rights to such works.

The International Standard Musical Work Code (ISWC) identifies musical works as intangible creations. It is not used to identify manifestations of, or objects related to a musical work. Such manifestations and objects are the subject of separate identification systems, such as the International Standard Recording Code (ISRC) for sound recordings, the International Standard Music Number (ISMN) for printed music, and the International Standard Audiovisual Number (ISAN) for audiovisual works.

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 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

check digit

added digit which may be used to verify the accuracy of a standard number through a mathematical relationship to the digits contained in that number

Note 1 to entry: Adapted from ISO/IEC 7064.

3.2

musical work

work (3.3) composed of a combination of sounds, with or without accompanying text

3.3

work

distinct, abstract creation of the mind whose existence is revealed through one or more expressions (e.g. a performance) or manifestations (e.g. an object)

4 Construction of an ISWC

4.1 Basic construction

An ISWC consists of a prefix element followed by nine digits and a check digit, as follows:

- prefix element (1 character);

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- work identifier (9 digits);
- check digit (1 digit).

When an ISWC is written or printed, the letters ISWC shall precede it. For ease of reading only, hyphens and dots may be used as separators between the elements of the identifier.

EXAMPLE ISWC T-034.524.680-1

4.2 Prefix element

The first element of an ISWC shall be the letter “T”. If necessary, the registration authority may, at its discretion, designate another alphanumeric character in place of “T” in order to expand the numbering capacity of the ISWC system and/or to indicate the beginning of a new phase in the assignment of ISWC to musical works.

4.3 Work identifier

The second element of an ISWC shall be the work identifier. The work identifier is a 9-digit numeric code.

Work identifiers for musical works shall be in the numeric range of 000000001 to 999999999.

4.4 Check digit

The third element of an ISWC shall be the check digit. The check digit of an ISWC is calculated on a weighted modulus 10.

The formula for calculating the check digit is shown in [Annex B](#).

5 Registration authority

The ISWC shall be supervised, coordinated and administered by a registration authority whose details can be found at www.iso.org/maintenance_agencies.

6 Association of an ISWC with descriptive metadata

An ISWC shall be associated with descriptive data (see [Annex C](#)) about the musical work it identifies by means of a database repository maintained by the registration authority which registered that work.

An ISWC shall be used as specified in [Annex A](#).

7 Association of an ISWC with digital content

An ISWC may be associated with digital expressions and manifestations of a musical work by employing appropriate techniques (e.g. encryption and watermarking) to facilitate tracking the use of that work.

Annex A (normative)

Guidelines for the use of an ISWC

A.1 Works for which an ISWC may be allocated — Eligible repertoire

An ISWC may be assigned to any musical work, published or unpublished, newly created or already existing, irrespective of its copyright status.

Modified versions, excerpts and composite musical works shall be allocated an ISWC separate from the ISWC of the work(s) from which they are derived.

Examples of modified versions are as follows:

- changes to the content of a musical work, with the exception of minor alterations;
- new arrangements (e.g. a Bach Invention for Piano, arranged for chamber orchestra);
- translations of the literary text of a musical work.

Examples of excerpts are as follows:

- movements and other principal divisions of a musical work which might be known as something other than the title for the entire work (e.g. “Ode to Joy”, the last movement of Beethoven's 9th Symphony);
- any work that is recognized as being an excerpt from a larger work, even though the type of excerpt may be unknown.

Examples of composite works are as follows:

- a medley consisting of existing works or excerpts of such works performed in a continuous sequence;
- a work containing samples of pre-existing works, such as a new song in which a rap lyric is sung over a rhythm track from a previously recorded work.

A.2 Administration of the ISWC system

The registration authority may delegate certain tasks and services as described in this annex to registration agencies. Registration agencies often hold an important role in the allocation of ISWCs. Therefore, potential registrants are advised to consult the website of the registration authority¹⁾ to find information concerning the most appropriate registration agency to contact and the tasks and services it has been delegated.

A.3 Allocation of an ISWC

A.3.1 The registration authority shall allocate ISWCs to musical works upon request. Specific use cases related to creators or types of works are fully described in the registration authority manual (see [A.6](#)), as these may change from time to time according to the music market evolution.

1) www.iso.org/maintenance_agencies

A.3.2 Following the allocation of an ISWC, the ISWC and its related metadata shall immediately be registered with notifications to the appropriate parties involved.

A.3.3 The same ISWC shall not be allocated to more than one musical work.

A.3.4 If more than one ISWC has inadvertently been assigned to the same musical work, each of those ISWCs may remain in circulation for that work.

A.3.5 Once allocated, an ISWC shall never be re-used for another musical work, even if it is found to have been issued in error.

A.4 Descriptive metadata

Descriptive data about each musical work to which an ISWC is assigned shall be captured. Elements of such descriptive data, which may vary from time to time according to the registration authority manual, shall include, as a minimum, the following:

- a) at least one original title for the work (as defined in [C.2](#));
- b) all creators of the work with their respective roles indicated (see [C.3](#));
- c) whether or not the work is derived from an existing work and, if so, the type of derivation (see [C.4](#));
- d) in the case of a derived work, the ISWC of the source work(s), or the title(s) where no ISWC exists for the source work(s).

A.5 ISWC database

A database of ISWC codes and the associated descriptive metadata shall be maintained. Musical works which are used internationally, or which potentially could be registered more than once shall also have their ISWC information entered into the database.

The registration authority specifies the type and format of metadata associated with ISWC registrations and the policies and mechanisms by which that data may be accessed.

A.6 Registration authority manual

Full details of the allocation and application of the ISWC are explained in the registration authority's manual available from the registration authority²⁾.

2) www.iso.org/maintenance_agencies