



**International
Standard**

ISO 18968

**Translation-oriented writing — Text
production and text evaluation**

*Rédaction adaptée à la traduction — Production et évaluation de
textes*

**First edition
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Foreword

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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 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).

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This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 37, *Language and terminology*.

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

0.1 Overview

As goods and services are increasingly distributed across international markets, specialized content must be made available in the languages required for each target market. Such content may be translated by human translators, with or without computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools, or by machine translation (MT) systems, with or without subsequent post-editing by a human translator. In this context, translation-oriented writing can reduce the number of translator queries, lower costs, minimize translation errors, and shorten delivery times, particularly when translation technologies are used.

Technical documentation in particular (e.g. product manuals, online help, safety data sheets or assembly instructions) as a form of specialized content is intended to ensure that products are used safely, efficiently and effectively. Standards such as IEC/IEEE 82079-1 define the requirements for technical documentation. In-house style guides supplement these requirements by codifying enterprise-specific writing conventions.

This document provides recommendations for authoring or editing specialized content in the source language intended for translation into one or more target languages and for the evaluation of translation-oriented texts. Some clauses can, however, also be useful to non-specialized texts intended for translation.

0.2 Notations

This document uses structured examples to illustrate textual features to avoid because they can cause problems in translation. The examples in this document have been chosen for illustrative purposes and are not necessarily equally applicable to every language pair (e.g. recommendation in [4.2.2.4](#) is not applicable to Japanese).

The examples are each laid out and formatted to support the recommendations in question. Due to the variety of issues covered, the layout varies throughout this document. However, an attempt has been made to use as consistent a layout as possible.

- Every example contains at least source language content and an explanation. The explanation points out any issues with the source language content and their possible effect on translation. Target language examples are provided only when they provide added value for the explanation and understanding of the issue at hand. The explanation gives information on errors in the target language content that would otherwise not be understood due to readers' lack of proficiency in the target language.
- The symbol (+) is used for positive examples and the symbol (–) is used for negative examples.
- Numbers in parentheses such as (1), (2), (3) indicate possible variants of target language content.
- Characters in parentheses are only used to specify the example type (positive, negative, variant). They do not represent a part of the source or target language content displayed.
- No specific symbol is used for neutral examples.
- The source language of examples is always English; therefore, the source language is not indicated.
- The target languages of examples vary, but are mainly German, French and Italian. The target language is indicated in square brackets in the column or line marking the target language content. Italian target language content, for example, is marked with [it] in accordance with ISO 639.

EXAMPLE 1

Source language content	Target language content [it]
(-) A negative example in English to highlight source language content issues.	(-) A negative example (in Italian) to highlight possible translation errors resulting from the issues in the source language content.
(+) A positive example in English of translation-oriented writing avoiding the issues of the negative example.	(+) A positive example (in Italian) containing no translation error.
Explanation: An explanation pointing out the issues with the source language content and their possible effect on translation.	

EXAMPLE 2

Source language content	Target language content [fr]
(-) A negative example in English to highlight source language content issues.	(1) One possible translation (in French) to highlight possible translation variants. (2) Another possible translation (in French) to highlight possible translation variants.
(+) A positive example in English of translation-oriented writing avoiding the issues of the negative example.	(+) A positive example (in French), containing unambiguous target language content.
Explanation: An explanation pointing out the issues with the source language content and their possible effect on translation.	

Examples in 4.2 are more complex than other examples, since they display the effects of formatting in the text editor on translation with CAT tools. In addition, segments are displayed for the target language content if segmentation is relevant.

EXAMPLE 3

Source language content in text editor	(-) A negative example in English to highlight source language content formatting errors as they would appear in a text editor. (+) A positive example in English, containing no formatting errors.
Source language content in TM system	Source language content examples as they would appear in a TM system during translation. (-) A negative example to highlight the issues CAT tools have with incorrect formatting. (+) A positive example to show how correct formatting avoids negative effects on translation using CAT tools.
Target language content in TM system [de]	(-) A negative example (in German) to highlight possible translation errors in the target language content in the TM system resulting from the formatting errors in the source language content. (+) A positive example (in German) of correct target language content in the TM system resulting from correctly formatted source language content.
Target language content in text editor [de]	(-) A negative example (in German) to highlight possible translation errors in the target language content in the text editor resulting from the formatting errors in the source language content. (+) A positive example (in German) of correct target language content in the text editor resulting from correctly formatted source language content.
Explanation	An explanation pointing out the formatting issues with the source language content and their possible effect on translation with CAT tools.

Translation-oriented writing — Text production and text evaluation

1 Scope

This document gives guidance on authoring, editing and evaluating specialized source language content intended for translation. In addition, this document addresses handover recommendations in connection with the production and translation of specialized content. This document is meant as a practical guidance and recognizes that not all clauses are equally applicable to every use case.

This document is applicable to authors and editors of specialized content intended for translation. It also enables translators and translation service providers to assess the suitability of specialized content for translation. This document is also applicable to tool providers (e.g. to develop and improve automatic source language testing and verification procedures).

This document does not apply to authoring, editing and evaluating fictional, journalistic, advertising and other non-specialized content.

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 20539, *Translation, interpreting and related technology — Vocabulary*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO 20539 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

automatic line break

software feature that automatically adapts the *line break* (3.5) of digital *texts* (3.14) to the layout and creates an approximately uniform line length throughout the text

3.2

exchange format

machine-readable format for representing information that is intended to facilitate exchange of the information between different applications

[SOURCE: ISO 25964-1:—,¹⁾ 3.24, modified — Note 1 to entry deleted.]

1) Under preparation. Stage at the time of publication: ISO/FDIS 25964-1:2026.

3.3

match value

value of correspondence between a segment in the *source text* (3.12) and a segment found in a translation memory

Note 1 to entry: Match value is expressed as a percentage. Higher percentages indicate higher similarities between segments, while lower percentages indicate lower similarities between segments.

3.4

hard break

hard return

hard line break

paragraph break

line break (3.5) interpreted by *text editors* (3.15) as the end of a paragraph

Note 1 to entry: Hard breaks are represented by control characters and interrupt segmentation.

3.5

line break

point at which one line of *text* (3.14) ends and another begins

3.6

language checker

language checking tool

software or software feature that supports users in creating orthographically and grammatically correct, consistent, comprehensible and corporate language-compliant content

3.7

language identifier

language symbol

string of characters assigned to an individual language or a language group for the purpose of identifying it unequivocally

Note 1 to entry: In the ISO 639 language code, the string of characters consists of a string of letters.

EXAMPLE The individual language “Dutch” is assigned the two-letter language identifier “nl”, a three-letter identifier “nld” for use in the field of terminology and other language applications, and another three-letter identifier “dut” for use in the field of librarianship and documentation. The individual language “Polish” is assigned the two-letter language identifier “pl” and the three-letter identifier “pol”. The language group “Khoisan languages” is assigned the three-letter language identifier “khi”.

[SOURCE: ISO 639:2023, 3.7.10, modified — Note 2 to entry deleted.]

3.8

segment end

segment boundary

punctuation mark or other marker used to identify the end of a segment

3.9

segment pair

translation unit

TU

segment of source language content matched with its corresponding target language content

3.10

segmentation

process of splitting a *text* (3.14) into segments

3.11

soft break

soft return

soft line break

line break (3.5) which retains paragraph formatting

Note 1 to entry: Soft breaks are represented by control characters and retain segmentation.

3.12

source text

text (3.14) to be translated into one or more target languages

3.13

target text

translated *text* (3.14) written in the intended target language

3.14

text

content in written form

[SOURCE: ISO 17100:2015, 2.3.4]

3.15

text editor

software that enables a user to create and revise *text* (3.14)

[SOURCE: ISO/IEC 2382:2015, 2126196, modified — Notes 1 and 2 to entry deleted.]

3.16

termbase

terminology database

terminological database

database comprising a terminological data collection

[SOURCE: ISO 26162-3:2023, 3.11, modified — “terminological database” added as an admitted term.]

3.17

TM system

translation memory system

CAT tool that uses a translation memory

3.18

translation-oriented writing

writing for translation

text (3.14) production resulting in content that lends itself to translation

3.19

translation project specifications

set of agreed upon and defined requirements for producing translation output

Note 1 to entry: ISO 17100:2015, Annex B, lists a set of sample project specifications.

Note 2 to entry: For detailed information on developing project specifications, see ISO 11669:2024 Clauses 4 and 5 and Annexes B and C.

[SOURCE: ISO 5060:2024, 3.3.2. modified — Note 2 to entry added.]

3.20

XLIFF

XML Localization Interchange File Format

XML file format for the interchange of translation data or localization data, or both

Note 1 to entry: For more information on XLIFF, see ISO 21720.

4 Recommendations for specialized content intended for translation

4.1 General

Specialized content must fulfil its intended communicative function by having a specific purpose and addressing one or more target audiences.

Specialized content is characterized by certain features such as:

- credibility and relevance;
- appropriateness and correctness;
- formal grammatical cohesion and functional semantic coherence of meaning to ensure that the content is comprehensible in a given language;
- correct, consistent and domain-appropriate terminology;
- due consideration of the specific communicative situation between author and target audience;
- relationship with other specialized content;
- clear document structure.

Additional consideration should be given to any specialized content intended for translation. On the formal side, the fact that specialized content will be processed using a computer is critical. Prior to translation, specialized source language content is usually imported into TM systems. See [4.2.1](#) for additional detail. On the content side, both country-specific and culture-specific elements should be avoided, as these kinds of elements limit the international applicability of specialized content. See [4.2](#) to [4.5](#) for additional detail.

4.2 Formatting

4.2.1 General

Often, specialized source language content is translated using CAT tools. TM systems divide texts into individual segments, matching source and target segment pairs and storing them for future retrieval in a translation memory (TM). In order to prevent incorrect segmentation or the need for manual interference in the TM system's pre-set segmentation, such as merging and splitting of segments, texts should be formatted correctly. For example, incorrectly placed line breaks and the like can result in incorrect segmentation of the source text. Incorrect segmentation of the source text will cause the formation of inappropriate segment pairs in the TM and will therefore render them unusable for future translation. If such inappropriate segment pairs are accepted without validation, they can even cause translation errors. To avoid unpredictable and irregular formatting results, the built-in text editor formatting and style functions should be used as opposed to manual formatting. Failure to use built-in style features can result in unnecessary corrective work, which in turn demands extra time and effort, and entails extra cost, cutting into overall translation process efficiency.

The text editor's built-in setting should be set to display paragraph marks and formatting symbols in order to ensure that the formatting is visible. When these marks and symbols are visible, unnecessary, incorrect or inconsistent formatting can be identified and removed prior to translation.

When a source text is drafted, it should also be borne in mind that the text can expand or contract in length when translated into other languages and that extra space should therefore be included in the layout, where necessary. Because of the expansion and contraction factor, line breaks, tabs or other manual interventions intended to optimize the source-language layout can also be rendered in completely different positions in the target language.

4.2.2 Formatting in terms of text flow and segmentation

4.2.2.1 Hard breaks

Recommendation: Hard breaks should not be manually inserted within sentences.

Line breaks are used to influence where the line ends. Software applications are designed to automatically break the line as close to the margin as possible at or toward the end of the defined line. Line breaks can include a blank space (e.g. space character), an existing hyphen, manually predetermined hyphenation (soft hyphen, zero-width space), or predetermined, automatic hyphenation.

When automatic line breaks are used, the text is displayed across several lines in the text editor, but will not be split into several segments by the TM system. However, manually inserted line breaks, especially hard breaks, can be interpreted by segmentation utilities as segment breaks, which has a negative impact on segmentation in CAT tools and can result in translation errors.

A hard break (symbol: ¶) is an end-of-line marker interpreted by text editors as the end of a paragraph.

A hard break always marks a segment end for automatic processes. Inappropriately placed hard breaks cause incorrect segment pairs to be formed in the text editor and unnecessary corrective work, such as merging segments manually. Especially where the sentence structure in the target language requires a different word order than in the source language, a hard break can cause the source language and target language content to misalign if the segmentation is not corrected manually.

EXAMPLE 1

Source language content in text editor	(-) Large distances and thick walls reduce the coverage of the radio¶ signal.	
Source language content in TM system	Segment 1	Large distances and thick walls reduce the coverage of the radio
	Segment 2	signal.
Target language content in TM system [de]	Segment 1	Große Entfernungen und dicke Wände reduzieren die Reichweite des
	Segment 2	Funksignals.
Source language content in text editor	(+) Large distances and thick walls reduce the coverage of the radio signal.	
Source language content in TM system	Segment 1	Large distances and thick walls reduce the coverage of the radio signal.
Target language content in TM system [de]	Segment 1	Große Entfernungen und dicke Wände reduzieren die Reichweite des Funksignals.
Explanation	The two segments created by the hard break contain two incomplete text fragments: The first segment is lacking an end of sentence character, and the second segment starts with a lower-case letter and contains no verb. — This makes it more difficult (for humans and computers) to interpret the source language content as one message in one sentence. — This suggests an inappropriate segmentation for CAT tools. — This divides the multi-word term “radio signal” into two separate components. This division can prevent language technology processes from working correctly, such as machine translation or terminology look-up during translation, term extraction or named entity recognition. The sentence without hard breaks conveys one message, produces no segmentation errors and displays the multi-word term correctly.	

EXAMPLE 2

Source language content in text editor	(-) Switch off the warning tone using¶ the alarm button.		
Source language content in TM system	Segment 1	Switch off the warning tone using	
	Segment 2	the alarm button.	
Target language content in TM system [de]		Variant (1)	Variant (2)
	Segment 1	Den Warnton ausschalten unter Verwendung	Den Warnton mit
	Segment 2	der Alarmtaste.	der Alarmtaste ausschalten.
Explanation	In this case, the translator has no good option to translate the source text split into two segments into the target language. Variant (1): The language pairs contain the same content both in the source and the target language content segments. In future translations, the content of identical pre-translated segments will most likely match the intended meaning. However, the complete sentence of the translation does not comply with the German grammar rules and will irritate readers. Variant (2): The verb is translated and positioned correctly to comply with the German grammar rules. However, when the wording “the alarm button.” is used in another context, the TM system will identify it as a 100 % match, which then can result in an incorrect translation, because the German target language content in Variant (2) also contains the content “switch off”.		

EXAMPLE 3

Source language content in text editor	(-) Switch off the warning tone using¶ the alarm button.		After 10 seconds the display is switched off.¶
Source language content in TM system	Segment 1	Switch off the warning tone using	
	Segment 2	After 10 seconds the display is switched off.	
	Segment 3	the alarm button.	
Explanation	The order of segments in the TM system is not always the same as in the text editor. Finding the matching segments takes time and is a potential source of errors.		

4.2.2.2 Soft breaks

Recommendations:

- Soft breaks should be avoided in the middle of a sentence if they serve no purpose other than for layout.
- Soft breaks should be avoided at the end of a sentence.

A soft break (symbol: ¶) forces a new line, but does not interrupt paragraph formatting or segmentation. Soft breaks are therefore preferable to a hard break within a sentence.

However, the soft break is also stored in the TM and thus reduces the match value of the segment. The probability that the sentence will occur in exactly the same way, i.e. with the line break in exactly the same place in another text, is low, and an adjustment by the translator will therefore be necessary.

Because the target text and source text can vary in length, it is often necessary to remove or move the soft breaks in the target language content to keep the layout as it is in the source language content.

EXAMPLE 1

Source language content in text editor	(-) Artificial neural networks are a fundamental component of deep learning, mimicking the ↵ human brain to process complex data.
Source language content in TM system	Artificial neural networks are a fundamental component of deep learning, mimicking the ↵ human brain to process complex data.
Target language content in TM system	Künstliche neuronale Netze sind ein grundlegender Bestandteil des Deep Learning und ahmen das ↵ menschliche Gehirn nach, um komplexe Daten zu verarbeiten.
Target language content in text editor [de]	Künstliche neuronale Netze sind ein grundlegender Bestandteil des Deep Learning und ahmen das ↵ menschliche Gehirn nach, um komplexe Daten zu verarbeiten.
Explanation	The soft break in the source language content in the text editor helps to keep “human brain” together in one line. Since the soft break is displayed in the TM system’s editor during translation, it is very likely that it will be placed in the same location in the target language content. However, this will cause unwanted line breaks in the translated texts due to the different text lengths of English and German.

Since soft breaks do not interrupt segmentation, they should not be used to separate entire source language content into different lines. Instead, a hard break should be used.

EXAMPLE 2

Source language content in text editor	(-) Email: info@example.com ↵ Office hours: Monday to Friday from 8:00 am to 6:30 pm	
Source language content in TM system	Segment 1	Email:
	Segment 2	info@example.com ↵ Office hours:
	Segment 3	Monday to Friday from 8:00 am to 6:30 pm
Source language content in text editor	(+) Email: info@example.com¶ Office hours: Monday to Friday from 8:00 am to 6:30 pm	
Source language content in TM system	Segment 1	Email:
	Segment 2	info@example.com
	Segment 3	Office hours:
	Segment 4	Monday to Friday from 8:00 am to 6:30 pm
Explanation	In the negative example, the soft break after the email address causes parts of the two lines to appear in one segment because there is no segment end marker (e.g. full stop) following the email address. In the TM system, both the email address and all content before the next segment end marker (colon) of the next line appear in one segment. This reduces the value of the segment for later reuse. If both lines are separated by a hard break as in the positive example, then the segments are separated correctly with respect to their status as information units.	

4.2.2.3 Hyphenation

Recommendations:

- Manually inserting hyphens in order to influence layout should be avoided. Instead, the automatic hyphenation feature should be used.
- Non-breaking hyphens should be used instead of hard or soft breaks in order to prevent an unwanted line break after a hyphen.

Hyphens are used to join words and to separate syllables of a single word. “Automatic hyphenation” is a software feature that automatically hyphenates words at the end of lines to improve the document’s appearance.

When automatic hyphenation is used, the hyphens shown in the text editor at the end of the line do not appear in the TM system or in the TM as hyphens. However, manually inserting hyphens to influence hyphenation can lead to issues in the TM system.

Additional hyphens manually inserted for layout purposes (e.g. to change where the line breaks automatically) do not influence segmentation, but will be imported into the TM system as a regular character.

EXAMPLE 1

Source language content in text editor	(-) The economics and history departments at the university are offering an interdisciplinary seminar on Asia.
Source language content in TM system	The economics and history departments at the university are offering an interdisciplinary seminar on Asia.
Target language content in TM system [fr]	Les départements d’économie et d’histoire de l’université proposent un séminaire interdisciplinaire sur l’Asie.
Explanation	The hyphen inserted manually for layout reasons is displayed as a hyphen in the middle of the word “interdisciplinary” in the source segment. It does not affect the target language content, but if the source text is later updated and the hyphen deleted, it will lead to the TM match being reduced to a fuzzy match in a subsequent translation. Also, if “interdisciplinary” and its translations are saved in the termbase, term recognition will likely not work for “interdisci-plinary”. This can lead to incorrect or inconsistent use of terminology in the target language content.

In order to keep the source text within the TM clean and reusable, the automatic hyphenation feature of the text editor should be used instead of manual hyphenation. Automatic hyphens will be displayed in the text editor, but will not be imported into the TM system as regular characters.

For certain hyphenated words or units of words separated by hyphens, automatic line breaks should be avoided. Disabling automatic line breaks can facilitate reading fluency and prevent related units from being placed on different lines.

Where a line break after a hyphen is unwanted, a so-called “non-breaking hyphen” or “no-break hyphen” can be inserted instead of a normal hyphen. Non-breaking hyphens should be used where hyphenated character strings should not be separated at the end of a line. This applies, for instance, to character strings containing single letters, abbreviations, numbers, or to formulae.

Non-breaking hyphens are usually displayed as such in the TM system and can be used also in the target language content, if applicable.

EXAMPLE 2

Source language content in text editor	(-) The teacher has provided the students with information sheets on how to calculate the K-factor. (+) The teacher has provided the students with information sheets on how to calculate the K-factor.
Source language content in TM system	The teacher has provided the students with information sheets on how to calculate the K-factor. The teacher has provided the students with information sheets on how to calculate the K[-]factor.
Target language content in text editor [de]	(-) Die Lehrkraft hat Studierenden Informationsblätter bereitgestellt, mit denen sie den K-Faktor berechnen können. (+) Die Lehrkraft hat Studierenden Informationsblätter bereitgestellt, mit denen sie den K-Faktor berechnen können.
Explanation	In the positive example, a non-breaking hyphen is used within “K-factor”. It prevents the automatic line break behind “K-”. Instead, the whole expression is moved to the next line. The same applies for the target language content if the non-breaking hyphen is used in the translation as well.

4.2.2.4 Lists

Recommendation: Lists in the middle of a sentence should be avoided.

Where a sentence begins before and continues after a list, segments in many languages fail to align properly and misaligned segment pairs of no use for future translations will be stored in the TM. Misaligned segment pairs in the TM can lead to translation errors when reused without checking.

EXAMPLE

Source language content in text editor	(-) When mounting the holding plate — bolts, — fasteners, and — glue must be used.	
Source language content in TM system	Segment 1	When mounting the holding plate
	Segment 2	bolts,
	Segment 3	fasteners, and
	Segment 4	glue
	Segment 5	must be used.
Target language content in TM system [fr]	Segment 1	Lors du montage de la plaque de maintien,
	Segment 2	des boulons,
	Segment 3	des fixations, et
	Segment 4	de la colle
	Segment 5	doivent être utilisés.
Explanation	In some languages, the target language content can be structured in the same way. However, in this French example, the verb “doivent” must be plural, because the list contains several items. The segment pair stored in the TM is “must be used – doivent être utilisés”. “must” can be used with singular and plural parts of speech, but “doivent” can only be used in a plural context. Additionally, “utilisés” will likely have to be inflected depending on the gender and number of the parts of speech to which it refers.	

For more information and another example on lists inside sentences, see [4.4.2.6](#).