Scope and Assignment of ISBN

**Eligible products**

In principle, publications that are ***monographic*** (i.e. one-off publications not periodicals or serials etc), ***text-based*** (or predominantly text-based) and ***available to the public***are considered eligible within the scope of the ISBN Standard.

**Some examples of the types of publication that qualify for ISBN are:**

* Printed books and pamphlets (and their various product forms)
* Braille publications
* Publications that are not intended by the publisher to be updated regularly or continued indefinitely
* Audiobooks (talking books) either on a physical carrier or accessible on the Internet for download or streaming
* Digital publications (e-books) either on physical carriers (such as machine-readable tapes, diskettes, or CD-ROMs) or on the Internet (for download or streaming)
* Digitised copies of printed monographic publications that are available in the supply chain
* Microform publications
* Educational or instructional software, films, videos, DVDs, transparencies either on a physical carrier or accessible on the Internet for download or streaming
* Mixed media publications where the principal constituent is text-based, e.g. book with CD or book with DVD
* Individual articles\* or issues of a particular continuing resource where these are made available separately (but not the continuing resource in its entirety)
* Art books and illustrated books with a title page and/or text or captions
* e-book apps provided that they have a significant textual content and can be considered a monographic publication and are available to the public. Pictures, moving image and sound may be included
* Maps and atlases

\*Where individual articles are made available separately by a publisher, they qualify as monographic publications and shall be assigned an ISBN. This does not apply in the case of offprint or preprint copies that are ordered by the author(s) of the article for their own distribution purposes.

*Publishers should contact their*[***national ISBN agency***](https://www.isbn-international.org/agencies)*for advice as to whether or not a specific product is eligible for ISBN.*

**Ineligible products**

Any publication that is without a defined end should not be assigned an ISBN. For example, publications that are intended to be regularly updated and to continue indefinitely (such as journals, serials, magazines, newspapers, updating looseleafs, updating websites) are ineligible for ISBN.

**Some examples of products that do not qualify for ISBN are:**

* Continuing resources treated in their entirety as bibliographic entities (individual issues may qualify for ISBNs)
* Abstract entities such as textual works and other abstract creations of intellectual or artistic content
* Printed or digital materials that are intended for marketing or promotional purposes only such as advertising matter, widgets and the like
* Printed music
* Art prints and art folders without title page and text
* Personal documents (such as a digital curriculum vitae or personal profile)
* Greetings cards
* Music sound recordings
* Software, films, videos, DVDs or transparencies that are intended for any purpose other than educational or instructional
* Digital bulletin boards
* Emails and other digital correspondence
* Games
* Customized or personalised books not intended for general availability
* License key vouchers to access digital monographic publications on the Internet

Sometimes, other types of items are produced such as stationery items or toys that are based on characters in particular books, etc. These types of materials cannot be identified by ISBN but should be numbered by other systems such as EAN UPC bar codes. Modern scanning equipment reads and processes the different kinds of bar-coded numbers.

For further information including clarification about whether or not a particular type of product may qualify, please contact your [**national ISBN agency**](https://www.isbn-international.org/agencies)[.](http://isbn-international.pp.cineca.it/content/national-isbn-agencies)

**Principles of assignment**

**Displaying the ISBN on publications**

When an ISBN has been assigned it should always be displayed on the publication concerned. This is important for easy identification and, when the ISBN is displayed in bar code format, libraries and bookshops for example will be able to process incoming stock and outgoing sales quickly and accurately.

There are particular places on a publication where the ISBN should be displayed:

* On a **printed book** an ISBN should be included on the copyright page (also called the title verso page) or at the foot of the title page if there is no room on the copyright page. If there is no bar code, then the ISBN should also be on the back cover or jacket preferably on the lower right.
* In the case of **digital publications** (such as compact discs, online publications, etc.), the ISBN must appear on the title display, that is the first display page or on the 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). For more information on using ISBN with digital publications, click [***here***](https://www.isbn-international.org/content/guidelines-assignment-e-books/26).
* For **eligible educational/instructional films, videos, and transparencies**, the ISBN must appear on the credit titles.
* If the **publication is issued in a container that is an integral part of the publication** (e.g., a compact disc, cassette, or diskette), the ISBN should be displayed on any labels included with that container. If it is not possible to display the ISBN on the container or its label, then the ISBN should be displayed at the bottom of the back of any permanent packaging for that container (e.g., the box, sleeve, or frame).

 More detailed information about how to assign ISBNs and when a new ISBN is required is available [***here***](https://www.isbn-international.org/content/isbn-assignment).