



ISBN Guides: Basic Information

Welcome to My Identifiers **Basic Information** user guide. The purpose of this guide is to give you an overview of the basic terms and information to get started. This guide is one of a series of user guides available to you.

A close-up photograph of the spines of several books standing on a shelf. The spines are in various colors: yellow, green, black, blue, red, green, blue, red, and black. The books are slightly out of focus, creating a sense of depth.

WHERE BOOK DISCOVERY BEGINS!

What is MyIdentifiers.com?

MyIdentifiers.com provides publishers with tools and resources to purchase and assign book “**identifiers**” such as ISBNs, SANs, barcodes, and other emerging identifiers.

At MyIdentifiers.com, you will find a host of discoverability services and solutions for publishers, including automated tools to update or add to title listings in Bowker Books In Print®. The most common reason for visiting MyIdentifiers.com is to obtain an ISBN and bar code for your book product, and to register your titles.

Key Word Guide

ISBN —International Standard Book Number.

Bar code—the graphic with vertical lines that encodes numerical information for scanning purposes.

SAN —The Standard Address Number (SAN) a unique seven-digit identifier used to signify a specific address of an organization that participates in repetitive transactions with other members of the industry.

UPC or GS1—assigned number for music or performance CDs.

ISSN or BIPAD—assigned numbers for magazines, periodicals, and serials of any type. Available from the Library of Congress. These do not receive an ISBN.

ISBN—International Standard Book Number

What is an ISBN?

An ISBN is a 13-digit number that uniquely identifies a printed book, audio book, ebook, or video.

Who needs an ISBN?

Any publisher whose intent is to sell books or book-like products in physical book stores, on Amazon.com, through wholesalers, or other online stores or libraries, need ISBNs.

A publisher is a person or firm whose business is the publishing* of books or other publications to which an ISBN can be assigned, and may include ebook publishers, audio cassette and video producers, software producers, museums, libraries and associations with publishing and digitizing programs.

**A printing company is a manufacturer, not a publisher.*

What is the purpose of an ISBN?

The purpose of an ISBN is to establish and identify one title or edition of a title, in a specific format, from one specific publisher.

The ISBN number is unique to that edition, allowing for more efficient marketing of products by booksellers, libraries, universities, wholesalers, and distributors.

*See list on the next page

Example 1

Title X in paperback format only, with a print run of 1,000 copies, only needs 1 ISBN

Example 2

Title Y available in three formats: hardcover, paperback and audio book (same title) = 3 products = 3 ISBNs

ISBNs never expire and there are no renewal fees. You cannot reuse an ISBN once it has been assigned to a product.

Without an ISBN, your book may never be discovered in bookstores, either online, or down the street from your house. ISBNs are linked to essential information allowing booksellers, and readers, to know what book they are buying, what the book is about, and who the author is.

Where can I purchase an ISBN?

The U.S. ISBN Agency at Bowker is the only official source of ISBNs in the United States and its territories. With an ISBN, you can manufacture your publications and sell them anywhere in the world. The U.S. ISBN Agency can only assign ISBNs to publishers located in the United States and its territories. Publishers located in other countries must obtain their ISBNs from their local ISBN agency.

Products / Entities Eligible for ISBNs

Products / Entities Eligible for ISBNs

The ISBN is intended for a monographic publication text that stands on its own as a product, whether printed, audio or electronic. ISBNs are never assigned to music, performances, or images, such as art prints or photographs.

What product/entity needs an ISBN?

Audiobooks
Broadsides/broadsheets
Brochures and pamphlets
Compact disc (non-music)
Chapters, paragraphs, charts
Coloring books
DVD-instructional
Ebooks (digital books)
Graphic novels
Historical documents
Journals & diaries
Loose-leaf volumes
Maps
Pamphlets & brochures
Podiobooks
Puzzle books
Software, only if educational

What product/entity is not required for an ISBN?

Advertising and promotional materials
Blogs
Board games
Calendars
Clothing
Coffee mugs and other utensils
Comic books
Digital customized publications
DVD-entertainment
Electronic schedulers
Electronic/video games
Emails
Food or medicine
Greeting cards
Magazines
Music/performance CDs

Online databases
Periodicals
Personal documents, if digitized
Pictures and photographs
Playing cards and tarot cards
Postcards
Posters and art prints
Search engines
Serials (magazines, periodicals, etc)
Sheet music
Shirts
Stationery items
Toys, including stuffed animals
Web-based books
Web-based games

The differences between an ISBN and a barcode

At the U.S. ISBN Agency, we receive frequent questions in reference to the relationship between ISBNs and barcodes. Many people believe they are one and the same. This misunderstanding can create frustration during the publishing process.

The differences between an ISBN and a barcode are significant.

- An ISBN is a number that acts like an ordering number.
- A barcode is a price tag. It is the graphic with vertical lines that encodes numerical information for scanning purposes.

You must have an ISBN to get a barcode.

- Most major bookstores have electronic point of sale systems that enable them to keep track of their sales and stock, and to reorder books by scanning the barcode.
- Most retailers will not accept books which are not barcoded. In addition, many distributors make use of barcodes in their warehouse systems.
- Placement of the barcode must be on the back cover of your book product.

There are several different barcode systems in the United States. In order to sell your book in a bookstore, the standard is the **EAN Bookland** barcode.

Where can I purchase a barcode?

Bowker offers a barcode service at MyIdentifiers.com, but barcodes can be purchased through variety of sources, such as through your book designer or printing company. Barcodes purchased through MyIdentifiers are stored in your account and can be downloaded from there.

Once a barcode is made, it cannot be revised. If you want to change the price of an item, you must purchase a new bar code. However, you can use the same ISBN as long as the product and price have not changed.

Learn how to set up your account and how to obtain an ISBN in our new Myidentifiers.com

