

10 Things You Should Know About the ISBN



The ISBN is in use in more than 150 countries.

Did you know?

Each book format (hardcover, softcover, e-book) needs its own distinct ISBN.

1. ISBN stands for International Standard Book Number and is a 13-digit number that identifies published books. Once assigned to a book, an ISBN can never be reused.
2. There are five parts to an ISBN number – the current prefix of 978 or 979, the registration group (country), the registrant element (publisher), the publication element (title and format) and the check digit.
3. WHSmith, the largest book retailer in Great Britain, launched the Standard Book Numbering (SBN) system in 1967 as a way to organize books in its new computerized warehouse.
4. The International ISBN Agency, located in London, is the registration authority for the ISBN system worldwide.
5. An ISBN identifies the registrant, title, edition and format of products used by publishers, bookstores, libraries, etc. and is important for ordering, sales reporting and inventory control. An ISBN increases the chances that your book will be found.

- 6. Most bookstores will not feature or sell any book that is not first listed within their warehouse database. To get there, your book must have a unique ISBN.
- 7. ISBNs were 10 digits in length until 2007, when they expanded to 13 digits.
- 8. The single digit last number is the check digit, which now ranges from 0 to 9. The former 10-digit ISBN check digit ranged from 1 to 10. In cases where a 10 was needed, the Roman numeral X was used.

‘Check’ Our Math

Calculate the check digit for ISBN 978-1-48080-635-?

$$\begin{array}{r}
 (9 \times 1) + (7 \times 3) + (8 \times 1) + (1 \times 3) + (4 \times 1) + (8 \times 3) + (0 \times 1) + (8 \times 3) + (0 \times 1) + (6 \times 3) + (3 \times 1) + (5 \times 3) \\
 \hline
 9 + 21 + 8 + 3 + 4 + 24 + 0 + 24 + 0 + 18 + 3 + 15 \\
 \hline
 129 \\
 \\
 130 \text{ (the next highest multiple of 10)} - 129 \\
 \hline
 \text{check digit of 1}
 \end{array}$$

- 9. ISBNs are calculated using a numerical equation in which the check digit confirms the number. The most recent system involves a modulo 10 system where the first digit is to be multiplied by 1, the second by 3, the third by 1, the fourth by 3, etc. All solutions are then added together, and the check digit is added last to make the total a multiple of 10.
- 10. The ISBN does not provide any form of legal or copyright protection. However, some countries legally require the use of an ISBN to identify publications.

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