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Public information guidance systems —

Part 2: Guidelines for the design and use of location signs and direction signs

Systèmes de guidage destinés à l'information du public —

Partie 2: Lignes directrices pour la conception et l'utilisation des panneaux de direction et de localisation

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Contents

Page

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 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).

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For an explanation on the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the WTO principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: Foreword - Supplementary information

The committee responsible for this document is ISO/TC 145, *Graphical symbols*, Subcommittee SC 1, *Public information symbols*.

ISO 28564 consists of the following parts, under the general title *Public information guidance systems*:

— *Part 1: Design principles and element requirements for location plans, maps and diagrams*

— *Part 2: Guidelines for the design and use of location signs and direction signs*

The following part is under preparation:

— *Part 3: Guidelines for the design and use of information index signs*

Additional parts will be developed in due course.

Introduction

Continued growth in travel and mobility within and between countries has generated a growing range of wayfinding guidance systems and styles containing a wide variety of information. Such systems serve various purposes, such as enabling users to

— understand the range of facilities and points of interest present,

— understand the physical relationship between these facilities and points of interest, and

— determine the best way to reach a required facility or point of interest given their mobility circumstances.

This part of ISO 28564 is concerned with location signs and direction signs used to support wayfinding.

The purpose of this part of ISO 28564 is to provide guidance on the design and use of location signs and direction signs to enable users to assimilate required information swiftly and accurately and act upon the information shown safely and conveniently. It is not the intention to limit design freedom unnecessarily, but to set guidelines and, where appropriate, specifications which reflect relevant research and best practice.

Where appropriate, location signs and direction signs are used in association with fixed location plans, maps and diagrams (see ISO 28564-1), information index signs (see ISO 28564-3[1)]), hand-held maps, mobile electronic devices, as well as human assistance, as part of an integrated wayfinding system.

1) Under preparation.

Public information guidance systems —

Part 2:
Guidelines for the design and use of location signs and direction signs

1 Scope

This part of ISO 28564 gives a range of guidelines for various stages of preparation, design, construction, inspection, updating and testing which comprise a location sign or a direction sign used in public places and working areas.

This part of ISO 28564 is applicable to the design and use of location signs and direction signs used in all sorts of public places, such as shopping centres, stores, hospitals, bus and railway stations, airports, sporting, exhibition halls and entertainment complexes, urban areas, parks, gardens and countryside, public attractions, museums and commercial office buildings. The design and use of location signs and direction signs in working areas can also resort to the content for reference.

It is not applicable to those sectors (for example, traffic signs on a public highway), which are subject to regulations or specified design principles. However, in a given public environment or within a wayfinding and signing design brief, public information sometimes needs to be associated with other messaging, so many of the principles contained in this part of ISO 28564 can be relevant in the planning of a coordinated scheme.

2 Normative references

The following documents, in whole or in part, are normatively referenced in this document and are indispensable for its application. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 17724, *Graphical symbols — Vocabulary*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO 17724 and the following apply.

3.1
location sign
sign used to identify the location of a place, facility or function

3.2
direction sign
sign used to indicate the route to a place, facility or function

3.3
visual element
component used in a sign including graphical symbol, arrow, text, numeral, illustration, colour and shape

4 General

For a specific destination, using only a few location signs can be effective. It might be necessary to use numerous direction signs as part of a route. In either case, a design objective should be to use the minimum number of signs necessary to provide effective guidance.

5 Preparation

5.1 Need

The need for a location sign or a direction sign (or both) can arise for various reasons, for example

a) known difficulties experienced by users in finding a place, facility or function, or

NOTE Sometimes the solution to an apparent problem is best resolved by the re-design of the facility and fittings, the control of other environmental factors or the role, training and deployment of staff rather than by the inclusion, amendment or removal of a sign.

b) changes in an environment or construction of a new environment.

5.2 Brief

Before design work is undertaken, the requirements and objectives should be clearly understood and expressed in a brief. Even where a small number of signs, or even a single sign, is involved, a brief should be prepared.

The brief is the responsibility of the client and should define the following:

a) the physical area to be covered;

b) its relationship to adjacent areas;

c) the information to be shown as determined by the tasks that expected users wish to accomplish;

d) any special requirements concerning presentation of information, the nature and constraints of the site.

If relevant, the brief should also define the requirements for maps and locations plans (see ISO 28564-1), information index signs (see ISO 28564-3[2)]), and requirements or methods for coordination with location signs and direction signs.

5.3 Information to be included in the brief

The following information of the covered area should be included:

— the characteristics of the expected users;

— the types and positions of the facilities in the area;

— the routes and decision points relating to specific destinations;

— the possible setting position and the anticipated normal viewing distances;

— accessibility and other user requirements;

— additional information, if appropriate, e.g. travel time and distance;

— the proportion of the expected users for whom the use of the local languages can be insufficient;

2) Under preparation.

— any statutory or regulatory requirements.

5.4 Gathering data

When the facilities within the area to be covered are in the planning stage, information should be obtained, as appropriate, from architects, designers, engineers and other professionals with knowledge relevant to the task.

When the facility is already in use, additional information can be obtained by

a) observing users' behaviour,

b) consulting with users,

c) consulting with local police, shopkeepers, reception, information desk staff and others who might have experience of wayfinding issues within the area to be covered, and

d) reviewing any existing location signs and direction signs in the area to be covered and in adjacent areas.

NOTE A site visit is normally needed to gain familiarity with the environment and, where possible, to observe and document relevant behavioural patterns.

Once gathered, the data should be reconciled with the brief.

5.5 Positioning

Examples of the positioning of location signs and direction signs are shown in Annex A.

Location signs and direction signs are typically positioned as follows:

a) fixed to, applied on or projected from vertical surfaces (see Annex A);

b) suspended from ceilings, roofs or soffits (see Figure A.1);

c) projected from floors or attached to existing floor projections (see Annex A).

Location signs should be positioned above or immediately adjacent to the destination. Direction signs should be placed at or prior to decision points (such as crossings, junctions) and elsewhere to give reassurance or minimize confusion.

Placement height and angle should be carefully considered to take into account whether users are standing or seated and their direction of approach to the sign.

In an existing environment, careful consideration should be given to how viewing of the signs can be affected by

— existing signs and other features (for example, lighting, advertising),

— ambient and natural lighting, and

— physical obstructions.

In an environment yet to be designed or constructed, the building design and the plan for location signs and direction signs should be coordinated, as far as practical to ensure the following:

— building structure, services and other facilities do not compromise the optimum location for and visual perception and clarity of signs;

— building structure allows for the fixing and erection of signs in necessary locations;

— optimum ambient and natural lighting conditions for the reading and interpretation of signs.

5.6 Planning strategy

Having gathered the necessary information, a strategy defining the content, number and placement of signs required to address the brief should be prepared. Normally, the strategy takes the form of a plan or elevation showing the physical position (and possibly the scale) of signs, together with an associated schedule with specifications for the signs indicated on the plan or elevation. The strategy should also identify other required changes (for example, the removal or alteration of existing signs).

NOTE For complex projects, or where the signs involved are large and costly, other techniques, such as 3D or video modelling, are appropriate.

6 Design principles, characteristics and layout of visual elements

6.1 Design principles

6.1.1 Legibility and conspicuity

The visual elements should be clear, legible and conspicuous by ensuring, for example,

a) the use of highly legible fonts,

b) the use of standardized graphical symbols where available,

c) contrast with the background upon which the sign is placed and the environment within which it sits,

d) contrast with other environmental visual elements, including advertising or commercial signs and decorative colour schemes, and

e) appropriate spacing and scaling.

6.1.2 Consistency

When a series of location signs and direction signs is required, an integrated design philosophy should be followed with the same terminologies and graphical principles (for example, font style, size and weight, colour and placement) throughout (see Annex A).

The design philosophy should be consistent with associated location plans, maps and diagrams (see ISO 28564-1), with information index signs (see ISO 28564-3[3]), and with hand-held maps and IT applications.

NOTE Consistency is important to promote user familiarity and comprehension of the signs.

6.1.3 Simplicity

The design should be as simple as practicable. The following should be taken into account.

a) The display on an individual sign of only the number of messages which can be assimilated simply and accurately by the intended users.

NOTE If more messages are required at a given location, it can be appropriate to use more than one sign.

b) Use of the simplest expression for each message to be conveyed.

c) Use of the minimum number of visual elements necessary for effective comprehension.

3) Under preparation.

6.1.4 Prioritization of messages

The relative importance of different messages should be conveyed using varied techniques, for example, different fonts, size, weight, colour, separation rules, or sequential placement. In some cases, separate signs for different information categories can be appropriate.

6.1.5 Use of languages

The use of the local languages may be sufficient when international travellers or clients are not a concern. For situations that require international understanding, English should be used in addition to the official local languages.

6.1.6 Use of jargon and abbreviations

Jargon should be avoided. Specialized terms and abbreviations should be used only where the intended users are known to be familiar with them.

NOTE In environments with multiple user groups, a sign provided for a specific audience is also read by others who could be confused by the use of unfamiliar or ambiguous terms and abbreviations.

6.1.7 Inclusivity (for all potential user groups)

The design of signs should optimize readability and legibility for all intended users, including those with reduced vision or cognitive impairments. The use of tactile elements (for example, relief and braille) should be considered where appropriate.

NOTE 1 Design requirements for partially sighted people are given in ISO 21542.

NOTE 2 In some countries, the requirements for signs to conform to the needs of those with disability are prescribed in statutes or regulations.

Colour combinations should take into account the needs of those with colour-vision deficiency (see also 6.2.4).

Where accessible routes are provided, these shall be indicated.

6.1.8 Environmental sensitivity

In many environments (for example, national parks and gardens, historic buildings and some modern buildings), it can be appropriate to use structures, materials, colours and fonts sympathetic to that environment (see Annex A).

The location of a facility can use a feature sign with distinctive architectural or design characteristics. This is less likely for a sequence of direction signs. In all cases, the design should not compromise the swift, accurate, and safe comprehension of the information.

6.2 Characteristics

6.2.1 Graphical symbols

Using graphical symbols can improve the understanding of a message expressed in text. If a language is used that is unknown to the reader of the message, adding graphical symbols can help to overcome the language barrier. When used alone, graphical symbols can allow a smaller sign size.

Graphical symbols should be taken from ISO 7001, ISO 7010 and ISO 20712-1. If a new graphical symbol is required, ISO 22727 should be used to guide the design process. Consideration should be given to

comprehension testing in accordance with ISO 9186-1, perceptual quality testing in accordance with ISO 9186-2 and to symbol referent association testing in accordance with ISO 9186-3.

NOTE 1 Graphical symbols in ISO 7001 and ISO 7010 are included in the ISO online browsing platform (www.iso.org/obp).

NOTE 2 Information on procedures, criteria of acceptability and templates for public information symbols is given on the website of ISO/TC 145/SC1 and ISO/TC 145/SC2 as http://www.iso.org/tc145/sc1 and http://www.iso.org/tc145/sc2.

Images, icons and branding symbols can be used when

— they can be perceived, read and understood at the relevant viewing distances and conditions,

— they are likely to be readily recognizable by the intended users, and

— their use is not likely to compromise the effectiveness of the sign or the balance and priority of all messages on the sign.

6.2.2 Arrows

Arrows in direction signs should be used in conjunction with symbols or text (or both) to indicate the direction of movement a person should take to reach the indicated destination. The representation of the arrow should be as defined in ISO 7001 and shown in Figure 1. Arrows should be organized on the sign or the sign positioned so that the arrows unambiguously convey the intended route. The meanings of different arrow orientations are shown in Table 1.

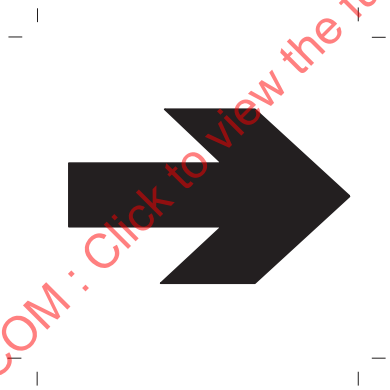


Figure 1 — Direction arrow (ISO 7001, PI PF 030)

Table 1 — Use of direction arrows

Arrow	Meaning
	Progress to the right
	Progress to the left
	Progress forward from here Progress forward and through from here Progress forward and up from here
	Progress up to the right Progress forward and across to the right
	Progress down to the right
	Progress up to the left Progress forward and across to the left
	Progress down to the left
	Progress down from here

6.2.3 Text and numerals

Text may be used

a) to support graphical symbols when the information conveyed by the graphical symbols requires qualification or expansion,

b) when no graphical symbol is available,

c) when the use of a graphical symbol is inappropriate, or

d) to ensure visual balance in signs with multiple messages or a sequence of signs.

When appropriate to the language used, an upper and lower case format for text is recommended.

Arabic numerals should be used. Numerals may also be provided in the local script but should normally be supported by Arabic numerals.

6.2.4 Colour

Colour may be used to distinguish a sign from its background or the sign message from the sign face or for both reasons. Colour may be used for message elements or for the sign background to differentiate types of messages or component parts of the message.

In all cases, the selection of colours should ensure good contrast. Care should be exercised to avoid excessive visual complexity. The selection of colours should also consider the need of users with colour vision deficiency.

NOTE The perception of colour can be affected by ambient light sources and conditions (for example, street lighting).

Colour-coded design features used within a location plan should be considered as an element within the signage system. For example, if a colour is used to identify zones, facilities or points of interest, this should be reflected within the wayfinding strategy to promote user familiarity.

The combination of safety colours and shapes specified in ISO 3864-1 and ISO 3864-3 should be avoided to ensure no confusion with safety signs. Similarly, the combination of green and white for arrows should be avoided to ensure no confusion with the safe condition direction arrows used for evacuation routes.

6.2.5 Containing shape

A message can be contained within an integral sign face or applied directly to an existing surface.

Although any containing shape can be used, the most practical form to accommodate a typical message involving symbols, arrows, and text, either alone or in combination, is a horizontal rectangle. This is especially the case when a sequence of signs with differing messages is required (see Annex A).

When only a single symbol is used, a containing shape with equal sides, normally a square, can be preferable.

If an unusual shape is chosen, care should be taken to ensure that this shape does not detract from the functional effectiveness of the sign and that this shape can be applied consistently through a given sequence of signs.

NOTE In designing an integrated sign strategy, a coordinated approach to the size and shape of component signs can be considered, because too many variations can be confusing to users.

The standard sizes and shapes can be determined by

a) the font sizes required for legibility at the anticipated viewing distances,

b) the chosen font,

c) the dimensions of the information messages displayed,

d) the dimensions and characteristics of the environment within which the signs are to be displayed, and

e) additional requirements including statutory and regulatory restraints, for example, historical sites.

6.3 Layout

6.3.1 General

The design principles for location signs and direction signs are similar, except that direction signs normally require arrows to indicate the movement of a person.

6.3.2 Relationship of symbols, arrows and text

6.3.2.1 Zoning

Graphical elements should be within discrete zones on the sign face, clearly associated with, but distinct from each other.

Graphical symbols should be given visual prominence equal to or greater than the adjacent supporting text (see Figures 2 and 3).

Figure 2 — Example of direction sign showing zoning of arrow, symbols and text and size relationship of symbol and associated text

Figure 3 — Example of location sign showing use of local language Chinese and English

6.3.2.2 Prioritization

Size or colour may be used to emphasize the relative importance or priority of messages.

Messages with a functional relationship should normally be grouped together.

Different graphic techniques can be used so that the priority of messages is maintained (see Figures 4 and 5).

NOTE 1 Care could be taken in symbol sizing to ensure the requirements defined by the viewing distance of the sign are not compromised.

NOTE 2 General requirements regarding prioritization are given in 6.1.4.

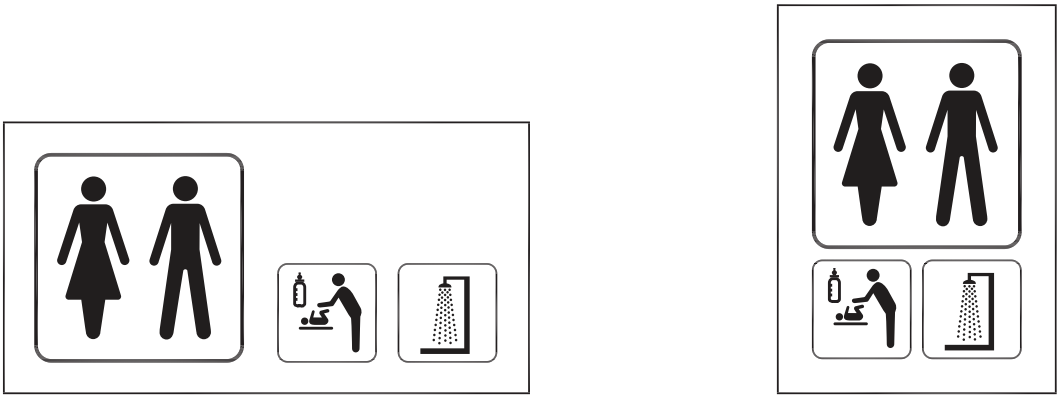


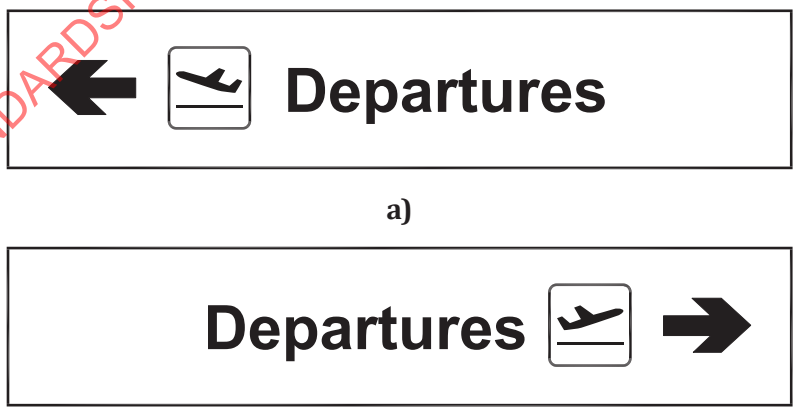
Figure 4 — Examples of location signs showing the prioritization of functionally related symbols with different graphical symbol size

Figure 5 — Examples of location signs showing the prioritization of functionally related symbols with different graphical symbol sizes and text size

6.3.2.3 Sequencing

For a typical message in a direction sign, the arrow should "lead" rather than "follow" the symbol and text. Similarly, the symbol should "lead" rather than "follow" any supporting text.

In some cases, a different orientation of the graphical element of the symbol can be used to align with the direction of travel implied by the arrow (see Figure 6).



a)

b)

Figure 6 — Example of positioning of graphical symbol with arrow and text, according to direction of travel and orientation of graphical element of symbol with direction of arrow

When a single direction arrow is combined with two or more graphical symbols (and no text), consideration should be given to the ordering of the symbols in relation to the arrow, for example, by the sequence in which the destinations are reached or by the relative importance of the destinations.

6.3.2.4 Presentation of text

Text should usually be arranged horizontally on the sign face. Vertical arrangements (either stacked letters, or message turned through 90°) are generally to be avoided because

a) the text can be difficult to read,

b) part of the text can be easily obscured,

c) the method usually cannot accommodate multiple or complex messages, and

d) the method is usually more difficult to accommodate within interior environments.

With alphabets where words are comprised of individual letters, the setting and layout of text should take into account the use of ascenders and descenders, even if a particular message does not contain them (see Figure 7).

For languages using characters, careful consideration should be given to ensure that the physical arrangement of the elements does not compromise comprehension.

Key

1 ascender

2 descender

3 leading (space between text lines)

Figure 7 — Example of layout showing the relationship between ascenders and descenders

6.3.2.5 Organizing multiple messages with arrows, symbols and text

When a direction sign conveys multiple messages, these should be grouped according to the respective arrows because this serves as additional cognitive emphasis of the route to be followed.

Generally, messages involving direction of travel towards the left should be ranged on the left-hand side of the sign and messages involving direction of travel towards the right should be ranged on the right-hand side of the sign. Messages involving direction of travel straight ahead should be ranged either right or left, depending upon which is most informative to the user (see 6.2.2 and Figure 8).

Figure 8 — Example of direction sign showing ranging of messages according to arrow direction and vertical stacking of messages

Depending on the possible size and shape of the sign face, which can be determined by the environment in which it is to be placed, messages can be either stacked vertically (as in Figure 8), or organized horizontally (see Figure 9) to ensure clear separation between left and right directional messages. Alternatively, separate sign faces should be considered (see Figure 10).

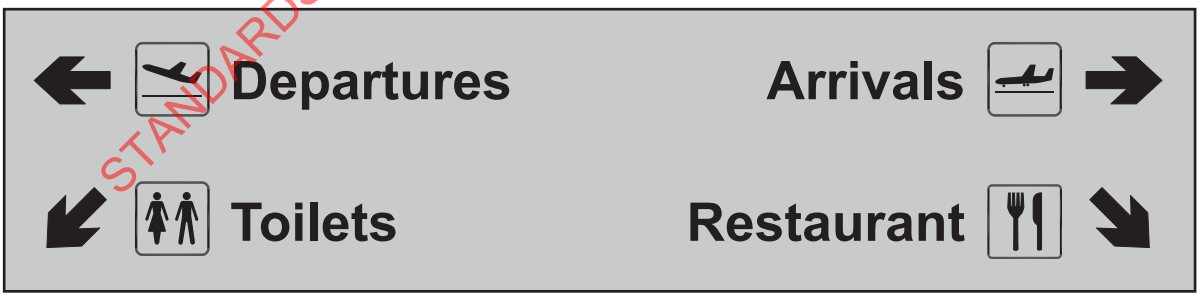


Figure 9 — Example of direction sign showing horizontal arrangement of messages according to arrow direction

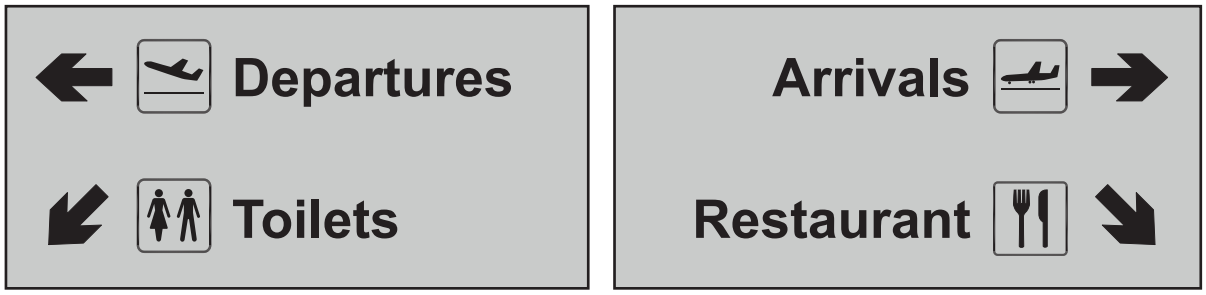


Figure 10 — Example of direction signs using different sign faces according to arrow direction

7 Sign carrier

7.1 Materials

Various factors can determine the choice of materials. Examples of potentially relevant factors include the following:

a) the expected environment;

b) exposure to sunlight;

c) exposure to weather;

d) expected service life;

e) safety requirements;

f) geographic location;

g) requirements for illumination;

h) ease and frequency of cleaning, repairing and updating.

Consideration should also be given to the design style and visual identity requirements of the client.

NOTE Guidance on performance and durability is included in ISO 17398.

7.2 Glare and reflections

Illumination techniques and materials should be selected to avoid or counteract glare and reflection, which make viewing of the sign difficult.

Assessments should be undertaken at different times of day and with different levels of prevailing natural and, if appropriate, artificial light.

7.3 Illumination

Unless signs are to be read only in natural daylight, they should be designed with appropriate artificial illumination, whether by integrated, directed or ambient lighting.

7.4 Sustainability

Manufacturing signs from sustainable resources should be considered.

8 Inspection and updating

Regular inspections should be conducted to ensure that signs remain legible, conspicuous, comprehensible, accurate, safe and correctly located.

Signs should be reviewed and, if necessary, revised to align with any relevant changes within the area covered.

NOTE An inaccurate sign can be more confusing to users, and therefore potentially unsafe, than having no sign at all.

9 Testing

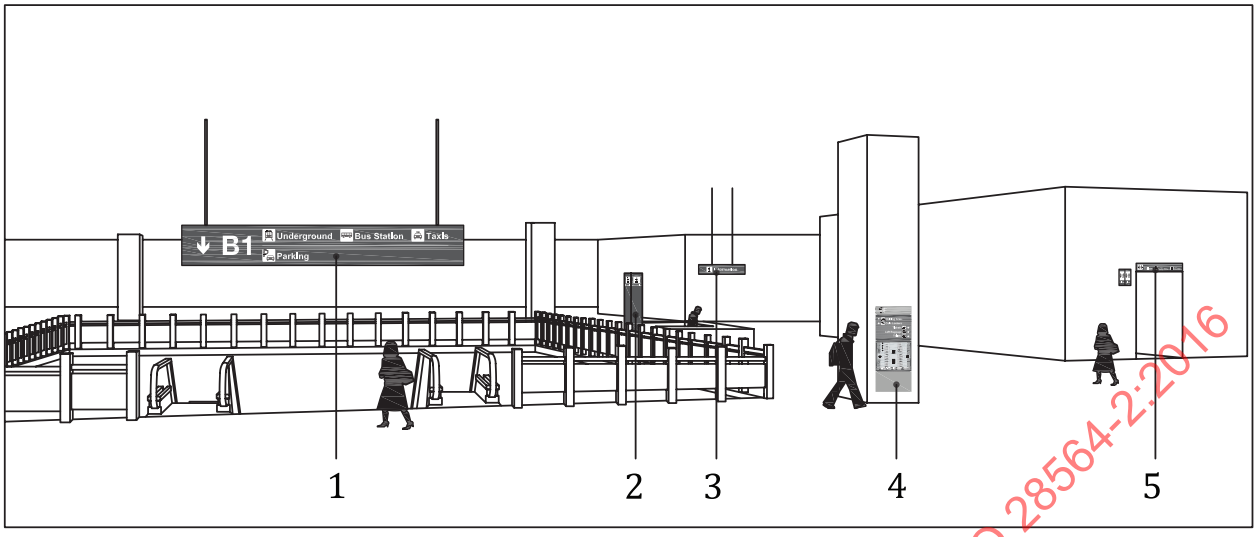
Location signs and direction signs should be tested to determine their legibility, conspicuity, comprehensibility and accuracy. A test method is given in Annex B.

Annex A
(informative)

Examples of location signs and direction signs in typical environments

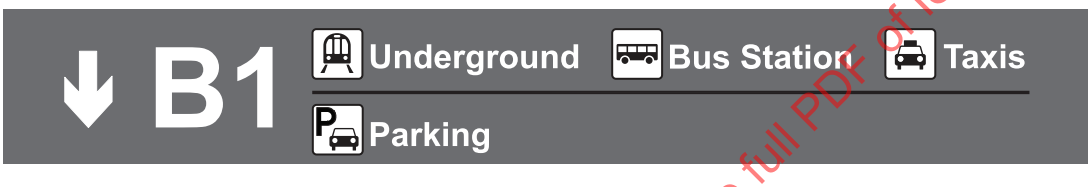
The four examples in this Annex are provided to illustrate various design considerations and are indicative only. They are given as an aid to designers in creating actual location signs and direction signs and should not be presumed to be exhaustive.

The colours, texts, shapes and structures used are similarly only illustrative, although the graphical symbols shown are all taken from ISO 7001.



Key

1



3

2

4

5

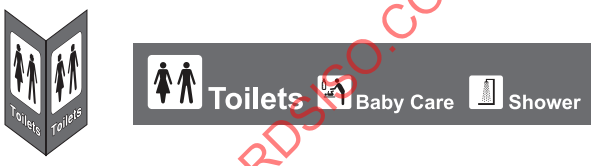
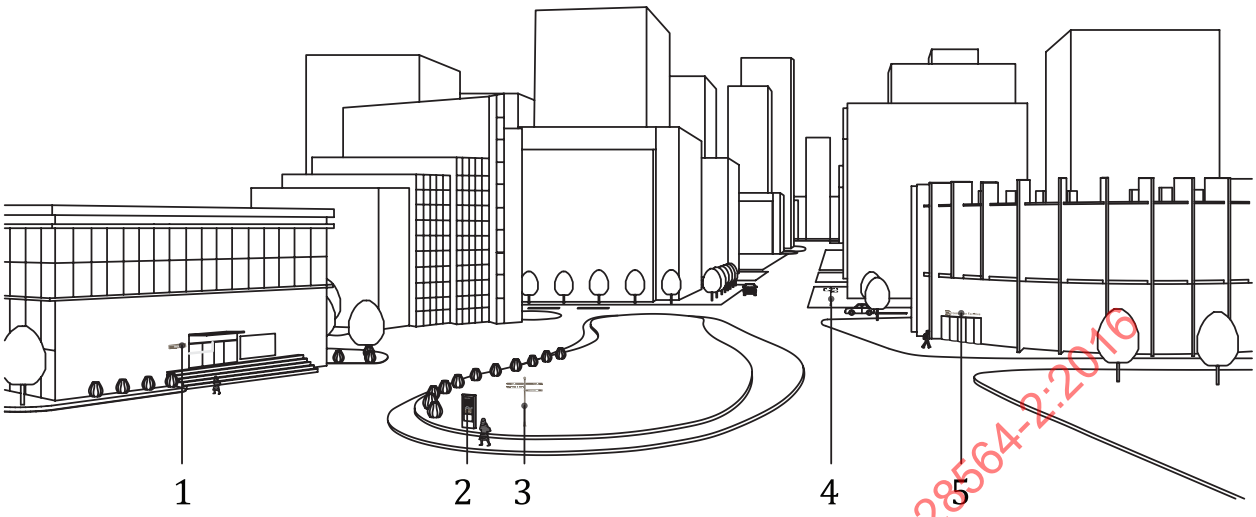
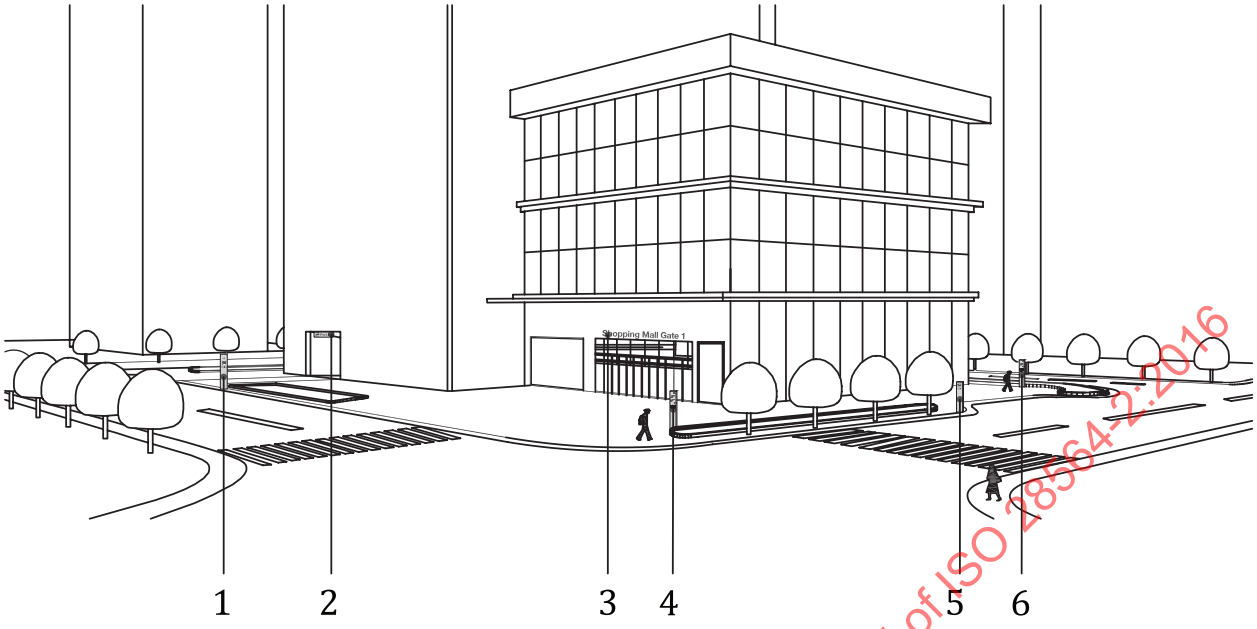


Figure A.1 — Location signs and direction signs setting in a transport hub



Key

Figure A.2 — Location signs and direction signs setting in a resort hotel



Key

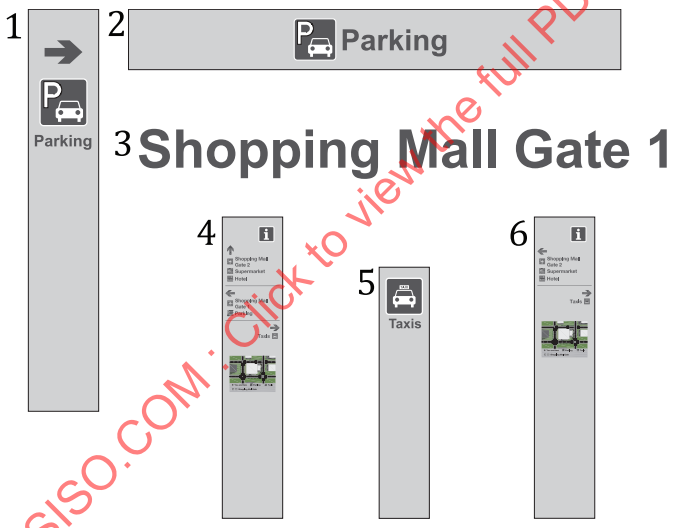
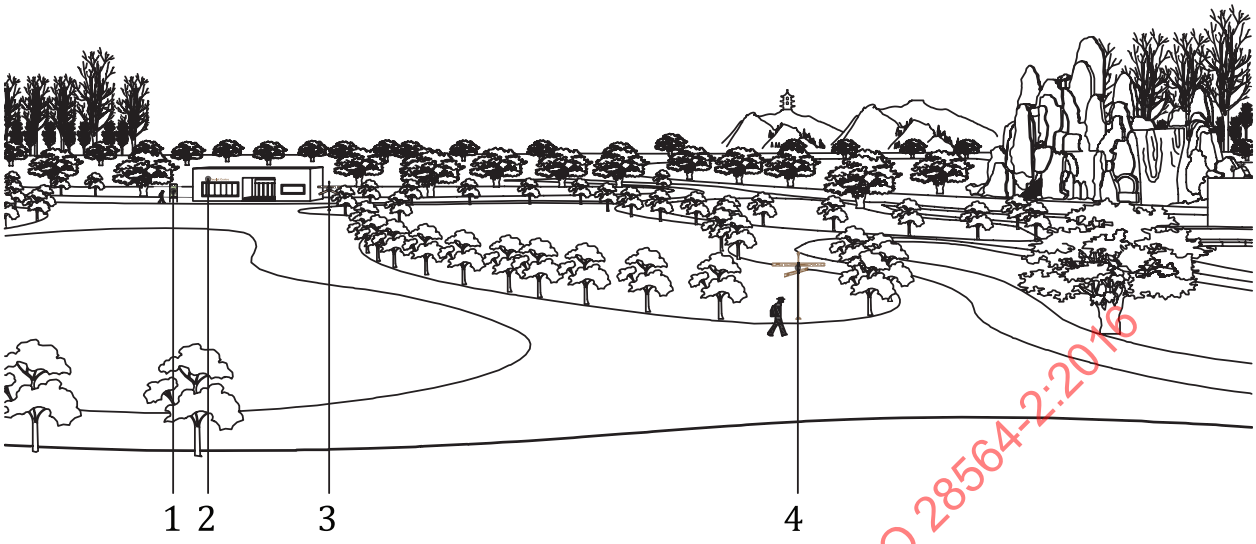


Figure A.3 — Location signs and direction signs setting in a downtown area



Key

Figure A.4 — Location signs and direction signs setting in a tourist area

Annex B
(informative)

Performance tests for a way finding system of location signs and direction signs

B.1 General

Field and laboratory tests are outlined in B.2 and B.3. Interviews can also be used to obtain information about both the design and use of location signs and direction signs. Two procedures for carrying out interviews are suggested in B.4 and B.5. These cover

a) interviews conducted at a site with a new or modified system of location signs and direction signs to determine users' perception of their positioning and design, and

b) interviews conducted elsewhere, especially at the point of exit from the site, to determine whether people had observed a system of location signs and direction signs, understood those signs, acted upon the signs, found the signs useful or otherwise, and can suggest alternatives.

B.2 Field test

The following are the steps required for carrying out a simplified field test of a system of location signs and direction signs. The test is designed to determine whether users of the system can follow the direction signs to reach a destination and use the location signs to recognize when they have reached the intended destination.

a) Prepare prototypes of the direction signs and location signs. Position the prototypes in their intended final locations.

b) List a number of common destinations within the site. Choose three or more of these destinations to use in the testing. The chosen destinations should be ones that are often used but possibly difficult to find.

c) List a number of starting points within or at the edge of the site. Choose three or more of these starting points to use in the testing. The number chosen depends on the time available with each participant.

d) Create a list of four starting points to destination combinations to use in the testing for any one participant by selecting at random from the complete set of starting point to destination combinations.

e) Choose at least six people who are unfamiliar with the site but are representative of its potential users. Include at least one person with mobility or other disabilities.

f) Take each participant in turn to one of the starting points and say, "You need to get from this starting point to <here state the specific destination for that starting point to destination combination>. The site has signs to show you which direction to move to get to the destination."

g) Follow and observe the participant from the starting point to the destination. Note any hesitation, comments, confusion, or other difficulties as the journey progresses.

h) Repeat the procedure for each of the chosen starting point to destination combinations.

i) On completion of the testing, the notes and observations should be used to inform revisions to the content or positioning of the signs.

B.3 Simulation performance test

When a simulation of people moving around the site is available, for example, by using a computer generated display, the following are steps for carrying out a simplified laboratory test of a system of location signs and direction signs to help determine whether participants can use it to find popular destinations swiftly and accurately.

a) Prepare a visual presentation of the site, including the location signs and direction signs. Arrange for the viewer to have a realistic view of the image of the site. The display should be dynamic, such as a computer simulation, such that the display changes to correspond to the virtual movement of the viewer as indicated by the movement of an appropriate control device.

b) List a number of common destinations within the site. Choose three or more of these destinations to use in the testing. The chosen destinations should be ones that are often used but possibly difficult to find.

c) List a number of starting points within or at the edge of the site. Choose three or more of these starting points to use in the testing.

d) Create a list of four starting point to destination combinations to use in the testing for any one participant by selecting at random from the complete set of starting point to destination combinations.

e) Obtain the cooperation of at least six people who are unfamiliar with the site but are representative of its potential users. Include at least one person with mobility or other disabilities.

f) Seat each participant in turn in front of the blank screen of the display and say, “I am going to show you a display of the site as you would see it from a particular starting point. Your aim is to go from that starting point to the destination <here state the specific destination for that trial of the test>. The site display has signs to show you which direction to move to get to the destination. You can move through the displayed site by using the control device <include the appropriate option and which action on the control means “go forward”, which means “turn left”, etc.>.”

g) As the participant moves from the starting point, note any hesitation, comments, confusions, or other difficulties as the journey to the destination is made.

h) Repeat the procedure for each the chosen starting point to destination combinations.

On completion of the testing, the notes and observations should be used to inform revisions to the content or positioning of the signs.

B.4 Interview near a system of location signs and direction signs

The following are suggested questions for a professional to incorporate into a questionnaire for use at the point of contact with a system of location signs and direction signs.

The question wording, question order and question layout should be adjusted for local circumstances. More or less lined space should be required for open-ended questions and scoring codes should be inserted where needed.