
**Information and documentation —
International Standard Recording
Code (ISRC)**

*Information et documentation — Code international normalisé des
enregistrements (ISRC)*

STANDARDSISO.COM : Click to view the full PDF of ISO 3901:2019



STANDARDSISO.COM : Click to view the full PDF of ISO 3901:2019



COPYRIGHT PROTECTED DOCUMENT

© ISO 2019

All rights reserved. Unless otherwise specified, or required in the context of its implementation, no part of this publication may be reproduced or utilized otherwise in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, or posting on the internet or an intranet, without prior written permission. Permission can be requested from either ISO at the address below or ISO's member body in the country of the requester.

ISO copyright office
CP 401 • Ch. de Blandonnet 8
CH-1214 Vernier, Geneva
Phone: +41 22 749 01 11
Fax: +41 22 749 09 47
Email: copyright@iso.org
Website: www.iso.org

Published in Switzerland

Contents

	Page
Foreword	iv
Introduction	v
1 Scope	1
2 Normative references	1
3 Terms and definitions	1
4 Structure and format of the ISRC	2
4.1 General.....	2
4.2 Prefix code.....	2
4.3 Year of reference element.....	3
4.3.1 Year of reference — Normal.....	3
4.3.2 Year of reference — Other.....	3
4.4 Designation code.....	3
4.5 Visual presentation.....	3
5 Assignment of an ISRC	3
5.1 Assignment — General.....	3
5.2 Registrants with legacy allocations.....	3
5.3 Registrants requiring the allocation of prefix code and designation code range.....	3
5.4 Assignment of ISRCs by registrants.....	4
5.5 Automated assignment.....	4
6 Administration	5
Annex A (normative) Principles for the application of ISRC	6
Annex B (normative) Administration of the ISRC System	8
Annex C (informative) Visual presentation of ISRC	10
Bibliography	12

Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

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).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see www.iso.org/patents).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation on the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 46, *Information and documentation*, Subcommittee SC 9, *Identification and description*.

This third edition cancels and replaces the second edition (ISO 3901:2001), which has been technically revised.

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

The International Standard Recording Code (ISRC) is a standard identifying code that can be used to identify sound recordings and music video recordings so that each such recording can be referred to uniquely and unambiguously.

An ISRC identifies a recording through its entire life and is assigned by the producer of the recording or an authorized representative. Once assigned, the ISRC is used by (among others) the producer of the recording as well as by other producers, contributors to the recording, users and licensees of it, collective management organizations representing the owners of the different rights in the recording, broadcasting organizations, media libraries and archives, musicologists, teachers, and application-software developers.

The use of ISRC instead of relying on text matching enables more efficient and accurate identification when information about recordings needs to be stored and retrieved, or exchanged between parties. This is especially true when recordings have similar names but are different, or when variations in spelling, language, or character set make text matching unreliable.

This document sets out the format of ISRC, the mechanisms to ensure uniqueness of codes, and the ways in which ISRC is to be assigned to recordings.

STANDARDSISO.COM : Click to view the full PDF of ISO 3901:2019

[STANDARDSISO.COM](https://standardsiso.com) : Click to view the full PDF of ISO 3901:2019

Information and documentation — International Standard Recording Code (ISRC)

1 Scope

This document specifies the International Standard Recording Code (ISRC) for the unique identification of recordings.

The ISRC is applicable to the identification of audio recordings and music video recordings whether they are in analogue or digital form.

The ISRC is not applicable to the numbering of audio or audiovisual products or carriers. Neither is it applicable to the numbering of packages of audio recordings or music video recordings with other media items.

The ISRC is applicable to music video recordings even if they have been assigned an International Standard Audiovisual Number (ISAN) in accordance with ISO 15706 (all parts), or a Digital Object Identifier (DOI) in accordance with ISO 26324, but it is not applicable to other forms of audiovisual recording.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>

3.1

audio recording
fixation of sounds

3.2

music video recording
fixation of sounds synchronized with pictures or moving pictures where (a) the fixed sounds are wholly or substantially a musical performance or (b) the *recording* (3.3) is intended for viewing in association with a recording of a musical performance

Note 1 to entry: This definition includes music videos and concert recordings, together with music-related interviews and documentaries, but does not extend to general audiovisual material, even if it includes music.

3.3

recording
audio recording (3.1) or *music video recording* (3.2)

Note 1 to entry: A recording can be composed of parts that are themselves recordings (see A.1.9).

Note 2 to entry: A recording is distinct from the carrier in which it is embodied for release, even if no other recordings are included.

**3.4
registrant**

entity wishing to assign an ISRC to an applicable *recording* (3.3)

**3.5
digit**

decimal numeral from the range 0 to 9, as represented by decimal codes 48 to 57 of ISO/IEC 8859-1

Note 1 to entry: There is no requirement to use this encoding of these digits when an ISRC is stored or transmitted.

**3.6
legacy country code**

code consisting of two *letters* (3.8) notified to a *registrant* (3.4) under previous editions of this document

**3.7
legacy registrant code**

code consisting of three *alphanumeric characters* (3.9) allocated to a *registrant* (3.4) under previous editions of this document

**3.8
letter**

upper case character of the Roman alphabet from the range A to Z, as represented by decimal codes 65 to 90 of ISO/IEC 8859-1

Note 1 to entry: There is no requirement to use this encoding of these letters when an ISRC is stored or transmitted.

**3.9
alphanumeric character**

digit (3.5) or *letter* (3.8)

4 Structure and format of the ISRC

4.1 General

An ISRC consists of 12 alphanumeric characters. It is divided into three elements in the following order:

- a) prefix code (see 4.2);
- b) year of reference element (see 4.3);
- c) designation code (see 4.4).

4.2 Prefix code

The prefix code element shall comprise two letters followed by three alphanumeric characters.

EXAMPLE AA6Q7.

NOTE In previous editions of this document, this element was divided into two elements: two letters representing the country of assignment and three alphanumeric characters allocated to the registrant. The prefix code element follows this syntax for compatibility but is now allocated in accordance with the procedures in [Clause 5](#).

4.3 Year of reference element

4.3.1 Year of reference — Normal

The year of reference element identifies the year in which the ISRC is assigned to the recording (see [A.1](#)). The year of reference element shall consist of two digits representing the last two digits of the year in which the ISRC is assigned.

EXAMPLES Year = 1998: Year of reference element = 98; Year = 2015: Year of reference element = 15.

4.3.2 Year of reference — Other

The ISRC Registration Authority may authorize and publish other schemes for the specification of the year of reference element. It shall ensure that these schemes provide for the unique assignment of ISRCs to recordings.

4.4 Designation code

The designation code shall consist of five digits. The code shall be left-packed with zero digits.

EXAMPLE 00047.

4.5 Visual presentation

Informative recommendations on how an ISRC should be treated when it is used in practical applications are included in [Annex C](#).

5 Assignment of an ISRC

5.1 Assignment — General

An ISRC shall be assigned under either [5.4](#) or [5.5](#).

ISRCs shall be assigned in a manner consistent with the principles for the application of ISRC specified in [Annex A](#).

5.2 Registrants with legacy allocations

Where a registrant has been allocated a legacy registrant code and notified of a legacy country code under a previous edition of this document, the prefix code shall be constructed by combining

- a) that legacy country code, and
- b) that legacy registrant code.

In these circumstances, the designation codes shall be taken from the full range from 00000 to 99999.

5.3 Registrants requiring the allocation of prefix code and designation code range

On the request of a registrant, the ISRC Registration Authority shall allocate them

- a) a prefix code, and
- b) a range of designation codes.

The ISRC Registration Authority shall ensure that such allocations are unique. It shall ensure that allocations do not cause collisions with

- a) other allocations made under [5.3](#),

- b) ISRC assignments made under [5.5](#),
- c) legacy allocations and ISRC assignments made under previous editions of this document, and
- d) as far as possible, code assignments known to have been made, even if these were not fully compliant with this document or its previous editions.

The ISRC Registration Authority shall not normally allocate a further prefix code and range of designation codes to a registrant which has already been allocated either (a) a legacy registrant code under a previous edition of this document or (b) a prefix code and range of designations codes under this document. The ISRC Registration Authority may, however, allocate a further prefix code and range of designation codes to such a registrant if it determines that this is justified by operational circumstances. The ISRC Registration Authority shall provide detailed guidance in the ISRC Handbook.

5.4 Assignment of ISRCs by registrants

Where a registrant has constructed a prefix code under [5.2](#) or been allocated a prefix code under [5.3](#), an ISRC shall be assigned to a recording by combining

- a) the prefix code,
- b) the year of reference using the last two digits of the year in which the code was assigned, and
- c) a designation code from the range allocated.

Within the range of designation codes allocated for use with a prefix code, a designation code shall be assigned only once in any particular year, and hence, each assigned ISRC shall be unique.

Each ISRC assigned under [5.4](#) shall be associated with certain information about the recording to which it has been assigned. The ISRC Registration Authority shall publish a specification of this information.

5.5 Automated assignment

The ISRC Registration Authority may authorize the automated assignment of ISRCs to recordings. For each country, territory, or group of countries or territories where automated assignment is authorized, the ISRC Registration Authority shall specify and publish technical and administrative information stating how such an ISRC may be assigned.

The ISRC Registration Authority shall specify and publish the descriptive information about such recordings that shall be submitted to allow an ISRC to be assigned under [5.5](#).

An ISRC shall not be assigned to a recording under [5.5](#) if an ISRC has previously been assigned to that recording.

A recording to which an ISRC is to be assigned under [5.5](#) shall be associated with the required descriptive information and this information shall be submitted using the specified interface. Provided no prior assignment of an ISRC to the recording has been made under [5.5](#) or (as far as the ISRC Registration Authority can reasonably determine) otherwise, an ISRC shall be assigned. If a prior assignment has been made, the registrant shall be informed of this assignment.

The ISRC Registration Authority shall ensure that ISRCs assigned under this clause are unique and do not collide with assignments made under [5.4](#), under previous editions of this document, and as far as possible with other ISRC assignments known to have been made, even if these were not compliant with this document.

All assignments made under [5.5](#) shall be entered into a single registry. Access to this registry shall be provided to users of the ISRC system.

The ISRC Registration Authority may authorize and publish schemes for the inclusion of other assignments of ISRCs into the registry.

6 Administration

The ISRC system shall be administered by the Registration Authority for this document (i.e. ISO 3901), hereafter referred to as the ISRC Registration Authority, as specified in [Annex B](#).

The name and contact information of the Registration Authority for this document can be found at <http://www.iso.org/mara>.

STANDARDSISO.COM : Click to view the full PDF of ISO 3901:2019

Annex A (normative)

Principles for the application of ISRC

A.1 General principles to be followed when an ISRC is to be assigned

A.1.1 Each recording shall have its own unique ISRC.

A.1.2 Any new recording shall be provided with an ISRC.

A.1.3 Any recording that has undergone a material change (see [A.2](#)) shall be provided with a newly assigned ISRC. The original recording shall retain its existing ISRC.

A.1.4 An ISRC shall not be assigned to a recording if an ISRC has been assigned to it under any edition of this document. The ISRC Registration Authority may publish derogations under [B.2.1.10](#) that allow assignment of a new ISRC where this allows recovery from error and in similar circumstances.

A.1.5 An ISRC should be assigned at the point at which the decision to release a recording is taken and before the full mastering process for the recording is completed. The ISRC Registration Authority shall provide detailed guidance in the ISRC Handbook.

A.1.6 An ISRC may be validly assigned to a recording under [5.4](#) by the owner or exclusive licensee of the recording, or by an entity authorized by the ISRC Registration Authority to carry out such acts on behalf of such owners or exclusive licensees.

A.1.7 The ISRC Registration Authority may accept requests under [5.5](#) from the owner or exclusive licensee of the recording, or from an entity authorized by the ISRC Registration Authority to carry out such acts on behalf of such owners or exclusive licensees.

A.1.8 If the original registrant sells or licenses the recording in unchanged form after it is released, no new ISRC shall be assigned and the ISRC for the recording shall remain the same.

A.1.9 Each recording that can be exploited separately should be assigned its own ISRC. A recording whose parts can be exploited separately may be assigned an ISRC as a whole and its components may also be assigned an ISRC. The ISRC Registration Authority shall provide detailed guidance in the ISRC Handbook.

EXAMPLE

Whole symphony:

XYZ Orchestra – Beethoven: Symphony No. 2 in D Major

ISRC QM-
A7C-15-00213

Individual movements:

XYZ Orchestra – Beethoven: Symphony No. 2 in D Major: I. Adagio molto – Allegro con brio

ISRC QM-
A7C-15-00214

XYZ Orchestra – Beethoven: Symphony No. 2 in D Major: II. Larghetto	ISRC QM-A7C-15-00215
XYZ Orchestra – Beethoven: Symphony No. 2 in D Major: III. Scherzo. Allegro – Trio	ISRC QM-A7C-15-00216
XYZ Orchestra – Beethoven: Symphony No. 2 in D Major: IV. Allegro molto	ISRC QM-A7C-15-00217

A.1.10 Re-use of an ISRC that has already been assigned to another recording is not permitted.

A.1.11 Designation codes should normally be assigned sequentially. However, ISRCs may be assigned using other schemes that utilize the allocated range of designation codes provided there is no possibility that this will lead to duplicate ISRCs being created.

A.1.12 The ISRC should be included in all relevant documentation concerning a recording. Where possible, this inclusion should be made secure and robust. The ISRC Registration Authority shall provide relevant guidance.

A.1.13 The assignment of an ISRC shall in no way be related to the process of copyright registration.

A.1.14 If a registrant or subsequent user sells or licenses a recording, a new ISRC shall not be assigned to the recording. The ISRC of the recording shall be notified to the new owner or licensee.

A.2 Material change

A.2.1 A recording shall be regarded, for the purpose of ISRC assignment, as having undergone material change if it is necessary to distinguish it from the recording from which it was derived in order to exploit the recording or manage the rights in it.

A.2.2 The ISRC Registration Authority shall publish detailed guidance in the ISRC Handbook on the circumstances in which a material change occurs.

A.3 Application of ISRC

A.3.1 The ISRC of a recording should, where possible, be associated technically with the recording. The ISRC Registration Authority shall provide guidance on the use of watermarking, fingerprinting, digital tags, bar codes, and other techniques to implement this association.

A.3.2 The ISRC of a registered recording should be provided when the use of that recording is being reported.

Annex B (normative)

Administration of the ISRC System

B.1 General

The ISRC system shall be administered by the ISRC Registration Authority in accordance with the specifications outlined in [B.2](#).

B.2 ISRC Registration Authority responsibilities

B.2.1 The ISRC Registration Authority shall perform the following functions.

B.2.1.1 Promote, coordinate, and supervise the ISRC system in compliance with the specifications of this document.

B.2.1.2 Develop, maintain, and make available documentation for users of the ISRC system, including the provision of an ISRC Handbook.

B.2.1.3 Allocate unique prefix codes and ranges of designation codes to registrants on request, notify them to registrants and maintain an accurate register of them.

B.2.1.4 Maintain a database of all prefix codes and ranges of designation codes allocated under this document (taking input where appropriate from entities to which relevant responsibilities have been delegated under [B.3](#)) and, so far as is possible, of all legacy registrant codes allocated under previous editions.

B.2.1.5 Where automated assignment of ISRC to recordings is authorized, publish relevant specifications.

B.2.1.6 Facilitate the translation of the ISRC Handbook and other ISRC material into languages for worldwide consumption and ensure that appropriate levels of support are provided in these languages.

B.2.1.7 Implement policies and procedures governing the processes for ISRC assignment.

B.2.1.8 Promote and encourage the application of ISRC in electronic messaging systems.

B.2.1.9 Promote and encourage interoperability with other identifier systems (and in particular, identification systems published by ISO) by seeking to use common data definitions and publishing metadata mappings.

B.2.1.10 In exceptional circumstances and after consulting with affected parties, publish specific derogations from the provisions of this document. Such derogations may apply to some or all ISRC system users and shall permit defined acts that would otherwise be non-compliant to be regarded for limited periods as compliant with this document. They shall be accompanied by a justification and a risk assessment.

EXAMPLE If a user inadvertently uses an unallocated prefix that has not been allocated to them, they may (if the risk assessment indicates that other users will not be affected) be permitted to continue to use it and to have prior assignments accepted as valid ISRCs.

NOTE This will ensure that users can remain formally compliant with this document even if they deviate from it in ways that do not affect the integrity of the system as a whole.

B.2.1.11 Publish formats for presentation of the ISRC in conjunction with a check digit in order to protect against human errors in transcription.

B.2.1.12 Encourage user groups and government bodies to promote the adoption of ISRC.

B.2.1.13 Mediate in disputes involving ISRCs (though not in disputes relating to the ownership of the identified recordings).

B.2.1.14 Report annually to ISO on the adoption and operation of the ISRC system and recommend any changes that are needed to this document.

B.3 Delegation to ISRC Registration Agencies

The ISRC Registration Authority may delegate certain tasks and services listed in [B.2](#) to Registration Agencies. Potential registrants are advised to consult the website of the Registration Authority¹⁾ to find information concerning the most appropriate Registration Agency to contact and the tasks and services it has been delegated with.

1) The name and contact information of the Registration Authority for this document can be found at <http://www.iso.org/mara>.

Annex C (informative)

Visual presentation of ISRC

C.1 General

The normative form of an ISRC is the sequence of 12 characters defined in [Clause 4](#). This annex contains recommendations on how an ISRC should be treated when it is used in practical applications.

C.2 Printing and display

When an ISRC is written, printed, or otherwise visually presented to human users, it should be preceded by the letters “ISRC” as a code identifier and three hyphens should be inserted as follows:

- after the second letter of the prefix element;
- between the prefix code element and the year of reference element;
- between the year of reference element and the designation code element.

The letters ISRC and the hyphens do not form part of the ISRC.

NOTE This arrangement ensures compatibility with ISRCs assigned under previous editions of this document and presented in accordance with the recommendations in those editions.

EXAMPLE ISRC QM-A7C-15-00212

- Code identifier: ISRC
- Prefix code: QMA7C
- Year of reference: 15 (representing the year of reference 2015)
- Designation code: 00212

C.3 Data input

When a computer application using a data entry terminal or a web page requests an ISRC from a user, it is recommended that it is input in four separate fields comprising

- the first two letters of the prefix element,
- the final three characters of the prefix element,
- the year of reference element, and
- the designation code element.

It is recommended that the application rejects or ignores the hyphens used in accordance with [C.2](#), or uses them to advance to the next field.

It is recommended that the application validate that the fields in the ISRC have been constructed in accordance with the syntax of the elements specified in [Clause 4](#).