



## Fact Sheet

### ISBNs and Bar Codes

#### UNRAVELING THE MYSTERY OF BAR CODES AND ISBNs

##### What is an ISBN?

The ISBN (International Standard Book Number) is a unique identifier assigned to every published book. It provides a standard way to identify books in global trade. On January 1, 2007 the book industry transitioned to 13-digit ISBNs, phasing out the use of 10-digit numbers. An ISBN contains 12 digits that identify the specific book and one digit that serves as a “check digit” which mathematically checks that the whole number is correct.

##### What is a bar code?

A bar code is a pattern of bars and spaces which represent numbers, letters, or symbols, and is read by a scanner. The “bars” in the bar code must be a solid color and should be printed on a white background. This minimizes the possibility of a scanning error. Bar code elements include:

1. Quiet zone: clear area before and after the bars and spaces that allow the scanner to establish values for the white space.
2. Human-readables: the numbers, letters, or symbols in the bar code which are shown above or below the code so that a human can read them without the help of a scanner.
3. Bars and spaces: the actual bar code, the combination of bars and spaces creates a code that represents specific numbers, letters, and symbols.
4. Check digit: the number that is used to verify that the data has been read correctly. This number does not have to appear as part of the human readables, but it will always be part of the bar code.
5. Add-ons: additional part of the bar code made up of 2 or 5 digits. Examples: a 2-digit add-on could be used to denote volume number or series and a 5-digit add-on could be a price (starts with 5) or the owner’s internal code (starts with a 9).



##### Malloy can help.

We can create a bar code for you and verify that it can be read by a scanner. If you have more questions about ISBNs or barcodes, please contact your Sales or Customer Service Representative.

##### Resources:

- U.S. ISBN agency website (R.R. Bowker): [www.isbn.org](http://www.isbn.org)
- ISBN Transition information: [www.bisg.org](http://www.bisg.org)
- Convert a 10-digit ISBN to a 13-digit ISBN: [www.isbn.org/converterpub.asp](http://www.isbn.org/converterpub.asp)