

## Frequently Asked Questions about ISBN

### **Note**

Due to the high volume of ISBN requests being received staff of the Legislative Library have created this FAQ. Links to further information on ISBN are included in these answers. Should you have any further questions, please contact us at [ISN@ontla.ola.org](mailto:ISN@ontla.ola.org).

### **Introduction**

An ISBN (International Standard Book Number) is a unique international identifier for publications. The ISBN program is international in scope and is directed in Canada by Library and Archives Canada (LAC). The Legislative Library assigns ISBNs to Ontario government documents on behalf of LAC. ISBNs are used to quickly and efficiently identify, order, distribute and retrieve publications.

### **ISBN in General**

#### **How do I obtain an ISBN?**

- Complete the [ISBN Request form](#) following the instructions.
- Submit the form as an attachment and send it to [ISN@ontla.ola.org](mailto:ISN@ontla.ola.org)
- Include **the date that the ISBN is needed** in the **subject line** of your email.
- Submit the request only once.

#### **How long does it take to get an ISBN?**

We will respond to your request within 10 working days.

#### **Why do I need an ISBN?**

ISBNs are used to uniquely identify publications. Staff of the Legislative Library give Ontario government publishers these numbers to put on their publications on behalf of [Library and Archives Canada](#)

#### **Do I need an ISBN or an ISSN?**

If you are publishing the document only one time, you require an ISBN. If you plan to publish your document on a regular basis, such as an annual report, you require an ISSN

#### **Can an ISBN be re-used?**

No. Once an ISBN is assigned to a publication it can not be reused for another publication even if the original ISBN was assigned in error.

#### **I only have a working title. Can I still apply for an ISBN?**

Yes. You can obtain an ISBN using the working title. However, you should inform us about the final title.

#### **Sometimes there is an X at the end of the ISBN. Is that correct?**

Yes. The Roman numeral X is used instead of the number 10. For more information on the structure and meaning of the ISBN see the [ISBN user's manual](#)

#### **With the ISBN assigned, is the document copyright protected?**

No. There is no connection between the ISBN and copyright.

#### **We are producing a limited number of copies of our document. Do I still need to obtain an ISBN?**

Yes. The number of copies produced is not relevant to the ISBN assignment.

## **Publications that Require ISBN**

### **What types of publications are assigned an ISBN?**

Examples include:

- Printed books and pamphlets
- Internet publications (PDF, TXT, HTML)
- CD-ROMs
- DVDs
- Multi-volume sets
- Maps
- Bilingual publications
- Braille publications
- Educational kits and software

### **What types of publications are not assigned an ISBN?**

Examples include:

- Ephemeral material such as recipes
- Software that is not educational or instructional
- Websites

### **Are both free and priced publications assigned ISBNs?**

Yes.

### **Are short publications, such as fact sheets, assigned an ISBN?**

Yes. The size of the publication is not relevant for the ISBN assignment.

### **Does a reprint edition require a new ISBN?**

No. If the text has not changed, a new ISBN is not required.

### **Does a revised edition require a new ISBN?**

Yes. A new ISBN is assigned if there has been a change to any part of the publication. However, minor changes to a publication, such as a new cover design, change in price or typo corrections do not require a new ISBN.

### **Does a publication issued in different formats require an ISBN for each format?**

Yes. For example, a publication issued in print, pdf and html requires three ISBNs.

### **Does a publication issued in different languages require an ISBN for each language edition?**

Yes. For example, a publication issued in separate English and French editions require two ISBNs.

### **Does a loose-leaf publication require an ISBN?**

It depends. If the loose-leaf publication will not be updated, it is assigned an ISBN. If the loose-leaf publication will be updated, it is assigned an ISSN.

### **Does a multi-volume set require an ISBN?**

Yes. An ISBN is assigned to the entire set and a different ISBN is assigned to each volume within the set.

### **Does each publication in a series require an ISBN?**

Yes.

### **Do annual reports require an ISBN?**

No, but an ISBN may be assigned each year to identify the specific year of the report. However, the publication must firstly be assigned an ISSN.

### **Using the ISBN in Your Publication**

#### **Where should the ISBN appear on a publication?**

##### **Print publications**

Put the ISBN on the verso of the title page (copyright page) or foot of the title page, and on the lower section of the outside back cover.

**Bilingual publications** (French and English bound together)

Put the same ISBN on the verso of both the English and French title pages.

##### **Multi-volume sets**

The ISBN for the set as a whole should be put together with the ISBN for the particular volume.

Example for Vol. 1:

ISBN 978-1-4249-6171-9 (set)

ISBN 978-1-4249-6172-6 (v.1)

Example for Vol. 2:

ISBN 978-1-4249-6171-9 (set)

ISBN 978-1-4249-6173-7 (v.2)

##### **PDF publications**

Put the ISBN on the first page of the item.

##### **HTML publications**

Put the ISBN on the first screen of the item.

##### **CD-ROMs and DVDs**

Put the ISBN on the disk label and the container and also on the initial screen when the content is first accessed.

##### **Educational kits**

Put the ISBN on the packaging label of a kit that includes a variety of formats.

##### **Publications issued in more than one format**

Put all assigned ISBNs on each format and qualify the ISBN to indicate the format.

Example:

ISBN 978-1-4249-8500-5 (Print)

ISBN 978-1-4249-8501-2 (HTML)

ISBN 978-1-4249-8502-9 (PDF)

### **What if Our Publication Plans Change?**

#### **If there is a delay in publishing, can I still use the ISBN I was assigned?**

Yes. There is no expiry date for an ISBN. However, if your ISBN was assigned prior to January 1, 2007, you must contact [ISN@ontla.ola.org](mailto:ISN@ontla.ola.org) to get it converted to a 13-digit format.

#### **I obtained an ISBN for a publication, but in the meanwhile the title changed. Can I still use the same ISBN?**

Yes. You should inform us of the title change so that we can update the records.

#### **I obtained an ISBN for a PDF publication. It is now being put on a CD-ROM. Can I use the same ISBN?**

No. The CD-ROM is a new format and requires its own ISBN.

**How do I cancel an ISBN?**

If you are not going to publish, notify us at [ISN@ontla.ola.org](mailto:ISN@ontla.ola.org)