



How to Get an ISBN for a Book

The ISBN is a number issued to each book by the publisher and embedded in the bar code on the back of the book. The number comes from R. R. Bowker, the official agency responsible for creating the ISBN system. The system they designed makes it easier for everyone to order books.

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Although not a legal requirement, in order to sell through bookstores, distributors, wholesalers, and major retailers, each book must have a unique 13-digit ISBN. Although R.R. Bowker is the creator, they license an official ISBN agency in various countries to assign ISBNs to publishers.

Getting the Publisher Prefix and Block of Numbers

Your first step will be to get registered as a new publisher and to buy the first set of ISBN, or asked to get additional ISBNs for an existing account. It is important to note that when an author decides to self-publish, he or she becomes not only an author but also a publisher. One of the things that establishes a publisher is a set of ISBNs, with a unique three digit prefix, as shown in bold below:

978-1-59852-001-9

Every publisher must assign an ISBN to each new book and each new edition of the book including ebooks. The publisher always owns the ISBN for a book. ISBNs can be purchased as a single (very expensive) or in blocks of 10, 100 or 10,000. The cost per book goes way down with the more numbers ordered. There is a publisher's registration fee of \$30 if you order 10 or \$65 if you order 100. The cost for the numbers depends on how quickly you need to receive them in the mail.

1. In the U.S., to apply online, go to <http://www.isbn.org>. Under "Order ISBNs," click on "English Language" forms.
2. On the next screen, you will see several options, depending on how many ISBNs you want to purchase. We recommend you select the second option, "Are you a new publisher who wishes to

apply for a block of ISBNs?" Click to continue the application process.

3. On the next screen, you will see the application form. Fill in your email, your credit card information, and select the number you want to purchase. Here is the pricing, including the publisher's registration fee (\$30 for 10, \$65 for 100).

You will receive a link to an online log where you can enter the title of the book assigned to each ISBN. You do not have to enter your titles online – you can keep your own records off-line. However, the advantage of entering the title to the assigned number online is that the title will automatically become part of Books in Print, something you might otherwise need to do separately. You can also download the logbook for your own records.

Getting Additional ISBNs for the Same Publisher

If you order a block of 10 numbers and then use them up, you must apply for a new block and you will be assigned a new 3-digit prefix. The web site explains that it is not mathematically possible for them to add new ISBNs to a prefix.

Return to <http://www.ISBN.org>. Under "Order ISBNs" click on "English Language" forms. On the next screen, select "Are you a publisher who already has ISBNs and needs more?" You must print and fax the application.

Renewing the ISBN Logbook

When you purchase a block of numbers, that payment includes a one year subscription to your ISBN logbook which allows you to maintain your log online and add titles that are automatically made part of Books

in Print. To keep access to the logbook, there is a \$25 annual renewal fee.

When You Need a New ISBN

You need a newly-assigned ISBN:

1. For each new edition.
2. For each separate information product (such as an eBook, audio version or DVD).
3. If the title changes.

You Do NOT Need a New ISBN:

1. When you reprint the book even if you make minor changes.
2. If you change the price of the book.

Conversion from ISBN 10 to 13

If you have a block of ISBNs with 10 digits, then you must convert these to the new ISBN 13 system. It is not as simple as adding 3 digits to the beginning of the numbers, even though it looks like it is – one additional digit changes. You can make that conversion on line at: www.isbn.org/converterpub.asp.

Get the Book Listed in Books in Print

If the book wasn't listed in Books in Print through the ISBN logbook, you will want to do that separately after the book is printed.

Books In Print is a free listing service provided by R.R. Bowker. This is the place for people to look for books in print at any one time and it is used by many librarians and others.

1. To be listed, go to www.bowkerlink.com and click on Books in Print
2. On the next screen, click on "New User? Please Register"
3. On the next screen there is an explanation of the service. Scroll to the bottom and click on "Yes-I Agree."
4. On the next screen, enter your publishing company name. It will try to find your publishing company from its own ISBN records. Click on the right name when you find it.
5. On the next screen, fill in the rest of the contact information. Once you submitted the information, they will email you a password. It may take up to 3 business days to activate that password.

6. Once your password is active, you can log back in and add each new title. Make note of your username and password below:

Username_____

Password_____

7. To add a new title or update information, log in and click "Add Title" on the top bar.
8. Fill in the ISBN, title, subtitle, number of pages, binding type, up to two subjects, price and more.
9. Additional screens allow you to add more information, such as a 250 word description and to upload the front cover.
10. Click on "Finish and Save".

ISBN International

There are many ISBN agencies responsible for assigning ISBNs and determining the cost to publishers. To find the ISBN agency web site for your country, do a Google search on ISBN agency, your country.

Take a look at the specific requirements for your country. For some countries the ISBNs are free (such as Canada, India and New Zealand):

US - www.isbn.org

UK - www.isbn.nielsenbook.co.uk

CA - www.lac-bac.gc.ca/isn/index.html

AU - www.thorpe.com.au/isbn/index.htm

NZ - www.natlib.govt.nz/publishers

IR - www.isbn.nielsenbookdata.co.uk

IN - www.education.nic.in/isbn/isbnbrief.asp