

# INTERNATIONAL STANDARD

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**9**

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## **Information and documentation — Transliteration of Cyrillic characters into Latin characters — Slavic and non-Slavic languages**

*Information et documentation — Translittération des caractères cyrilliques en  
caractères latins — Langues slaves et non slaves*



Reference number  
ISO 9:1995(E)

## 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.

Draft International Standards adopted by the technical committees are circulated to the member bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the member bodies casting a vote.

International Standard ISO 9 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 46, *Information and documentation*, Subcommittee SC 2, *Conversion of written languages*.

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO 9:1986), of which it constitutes a technical revision.

Annexes A to D of this International Standard are for information only.

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## Introduction

This International Standard is one of a series of International Standards, dealing with the conversion of systems of writing. The aim of this International Standard and others in the series is to provide a means for international communication of written messages in a form which permits the automatic transmission and reconstitution of these by men or machines. The system of conversion, in this case, must be univocal and entirely reversible.

This means that no consideration should be given to phonetic and aesthetic matters nor to certain national customs: all these considerations are, indeed, ignored by the machine performing the function.

The adoption of this International Standard for international communication leaves every country free to adopt for its own use a national standard which may be different, on condition that it be compatible with the International Standard. The system proposed herein should make this possible, and be acceptable for international use if the graphisms it creates are such that they may be converted automatically into the graphisms used in any national system, so long as it is strict.

This International Standard may be used by anyone who has a clear understanding of the system and is certain that it can be applied without ambiguity. The result obtained will not give a correct pronunciation of the original text in a person's own language; but it will serve as a means of finding automatically the original graphism and thus allow anyone who has a knowledge of the original language to pronounce it correctly. Similarly, one can only pronounce correctly a text written in, for example, English or Polish, if one has a knowledge of English or Polish.

The adoption of national standards compatible with this International Standard will permit the representation, in an international publication, of the morphemes of each language according to the customs of the country where it is spoken. It will be possible to simplify this representation in order to take into account the extent of the character sets available on different kinds of machine.

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# Information and documentation — Transliteration of Cyrillic characters into Latin characters — Slavic and non-Slavic languages

## 1 Scope

This International Standard establishes a system for the transliteration into Latin characters of Cyrillic characters constituting the alphabets of Slavic and non-Slavic languages, in accordance with the principles of stringent conversion in order to permit international information exchange, particularly by electronic means. For the transliteration of Slavic Cyrillic characters, tables 1 and 2 reproduce the tables published in the first edition of ISO 9:1986; for the transliteration of Cyrillic characters constituting the alphabets of non-Slavic languages, table 3 adopts the transliteration of tables 1 and 2 for all characters similar to those of Slavic languages and gives equivalents for all supplementary characters introduced in the alphabets of non-Slavic languages.

Table 3 includes in a single sequence, listed in the Cyrillic alphabetic order, the 118 single or diacritic-carrying characters that appear in one or another of the considered alphabets. The list of the languages written in these alphabets is given in annex C.

## 2 General principles of conversion of writing systems

**2.1** The words in a language, which are written according to a given script (the converted system), sometimes have to be rendered according to a different system (the conversion system) normally used for a different language. The procedure is often used for historical or geographical texts, cartographical documents and in particular bibliographical work where characters must be converted from different writing systems into a single alphabet to allow for alphabetical intercalation in bibliographies, catalogues, indexes, toponymic lists, etc.

It is indispensable in that it permits the univocal transmission of a written message between two countries using different writing systems, or exchanging a message the writing of which is different from their own. It thereby permits transmission by manual, mechanical as well as electronic means.

The two basic methods of conversion of a system of writing are transliteration and transcription.

**2.2 Transliteration** is the process which consists of representing the characters<sup>1)</sup> of an alphabetical or syllabic writing by the characters of a conversion alphabet.

In principle, the conversion should be made character by character: each character of the converted graphical system is rendered by only one character of the conversion alphabet, this being the easiest way to ensure the complete and unambiguous reversibility of the conversion alphabet in the converted system.

When the number of characters used in the conversion system is smaller than the number of characters of the converted system, it is necessary to use digraphs or diacritical marks. In this case, arbitrary choices and the use of purely conventional marks shall be avoided as far as possible, and a certain phonetic logic shall be maintained in order to give the system a wide acceptance.

However, it must be accepted that the graphism obtained cannot always be correctly pronounced according to the phonetic habits of the language (or of all the languages) which usually use(s) the conversion alphabet. On the other hand this graphism shall be such that the reader who has a knowledge of the converted language may mentally restore unequivocally the original graphism and thus pronounce it.

1) A character is an element of an alphabetical or other type of writing system that graphically represents a phoneme, a syllable, a word or even a prosodical characteristic of a given language. It is used either alone (e.g. a letter, a syllabic sign, an ideographical character, a digit, a punctuation mark) or in combination (e.g. an accent, a diacritical mark). A letter having an accent or a diacritical mark, for example â, è, ö, is therefore a character in the same way as a basic letter.