
Layout key for trade documents —

**Part 1:
Paper-based documents**

Formule-cadre pour les documents commerciaux —

Partie 1: Documents sur papier



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Published in Switzerland

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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.

International Standards are drafted in accordance with the rules given in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2.

The main task of technical committees is to prepare International Standards. 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.

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.

ISO 6422-1 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 154, *Processes, data elements and documents in commerce, industry and administration*.

This first edition of ISO 6422-1, together with ISO 6422-2, cancels and replaces ISO 6422:1985, the Introduction, Normative references and Bibliography of which have been revised, especially to align with the current standards template. In addition explanations are amended for the acronyms used in 6.17 "Value".

ISO 6422 consists of the following parts, under the general title *Layout key for trade documents*:

— *Part 1: Paper-based documents*

Electronic documents is to form the subject of a Part 2.

Introduction

International agreement on the layout of documents used in international trade was reached in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) in 1963 with the adoption of the ECE Layout Key. Since then, forms for maritime, rail, road and postal transport have been aligned on the ECE Layout Key by recommendations or provisions in relevant conventions, as well as forms under various international customs conventions, preferential arrangements and commodity agreements.

In 1969, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations took note of an ECE Recommendation to use the layout key whenever documents are designed for international trade transactions. This paved the way for international trade acceptance of the layout key by international organizations and regional bodies, such as the United Nations regional economic commissions for Africa (ECA) and Asia and Pacific (ESCAP).

In 1975, it was noted that documents aligned on the ECE Layout Key had already been introduced in many countries outside the ECE region, including countries with broad interest in world trade such as Australia, Japan, and New Zealand, and that the introduction of urgently needed common national systems had been facilitated by the availability of an International Standard.

In 1978, the ECE Committee on the Development of Trade noted “with satisfaction that the layout key for trade documents agreed by ECE experts in 1963, and formally recommended by the Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures in 1973, had reached a level of world-wide acceptance that made it feasible to refer to it as the United Nations Layout Key for Trade Documents”.

This part of ISO 6422 is based on the aforementioned layout key, amended according to the new version, published by the United Nations in 1982.

National standards organizations and national trade facilitation organs, in both developed and developing countries, have issued standards or recommended national layout keys aligned with the ECE Recommendation and also series of aligned documents for the use of their nationals in foreign trade transactions. Some regional groupings such as the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) and the Commission of the European Communities (CEE) have aligned many forms for basic documents needed in interregional trade.

Progress in the field of automatic data processing (ADP) and data transmission has been rapid and concern has been expressed that the development of documentation procedures to match new techniques could result in incompatibility between highly and less sophisticated systems applied in various areas in the world, and also that the United Nations Layout Key for Trade Documents might not be suitable for ADP applications. On the basis of experience in several countries and organizations, it has been confirmed, however, that the United Nations Layout Key system is suitable for these applications as well as for traditional methods, and it is felt that it is justified and appropriate to recommend it as a common basis for the presentation of documents for international trade, whether these documents be processed by automated or traditional, non-automated methods.

NOTE It is possible that trade documents based on the United Nations Layout Key, if sent in a window envelope, do not always comply with all the criteria of standardized postal items as defined by the Universal Postal Union. As a result, articles of this type, when sent through the post, could possibly not be able to benefit from the preferential rates and handling granted by the postal administration of certain countries of posting.

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Layout key for trade documents —

Part 1: Paper-based documents

1 Scope

This part of ISO 6422 specifies a key for the layout of documents relating to administrative, commercial, productive and distributive activities constituting trade, irrespective of whether these documents are completed in handwriting, by mechanical or automatic equipment or by reproduction. It is intended particularly for the designing of aligned series of forms employing a reproducible master in a one-run method of document preparation. Documents prepared in this way are regarded as originals and copies in the same manner as documents prepared by other methods.

2 Normative references

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 216, *Writing paper and certain classes of printed matter — Trimmed sizes — A and B series, and indication of machine direction*

ISO 3535, *Forms design sheet and layout chart*

3 Layout key

The layout key, as shown in Figure 1, specifies the basic principles for the design of the image area on documents for use in international trade. Generally, the design of the layout key is based on the “box design” principle. Recipient addresses are in an area acceptable to postal authorities for use with window envelopes. The location of the other items appearing in the layout key takes into account technical, legal, commercial, administrative and practical considerations. An area for “free disposal” at the lower part of the form is intended to cater for more particular needs in individual applications.

4 Paper size and image area

The paper size of the layout key is the A4 size (210 mm × 297 mm) as specified in ISO 216, with provision also for size A5L (148 mm × 210 mm L). In conformity with Annex A of ISO 3535, the following margin widths apply:

- left-hand (filing) margin 20 ± 0,5 mm;
- top (gripper) margin 10 ± 0,5 mm.