

Copy preparation and proof correction —

Part 1: Design and layout of documents

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Foreword

This part of BS 5261 has been prepared under the direction of the Information and Documentation Assembly, IDT/-. It supersedes BS 5261-1:1975, which is withdrawn.

BS 5261 comprises three parts under the generic title *Copy preparation and proof correction*:

- *Part 1: Design and layout of documents;*
- *Part 2: Specification for typographical requirements, marks for copy preparation and proof correction, proofing procedure;*
- *Part 3: Specification for marks for mathematical copy preparation and mathematical proof correction and their uses.*

This part gives guidance on the preparation of primarily textual documents.

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Summary of pages

This document comprises a front cover, an inside front cover, pages i and ii, pages 1 to 22, an inside back cover and a back cover.

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1 Scope

This part of BS 5261 gives guidance on the preparation of primarily textual documents, both for those producing the version that will be disseminated and for those producing text that will be printed by professionals.

Two approaches to document design will be referred to as direct production and indirect production.

Application of the standard will assist in the setting up of an appropriate house style, minimize the amount of additional work before production and result in documents which communicate effectively.

NOTE Many of these principles apply to documents retained and disseminated in an electronic medium, but such documents may require the addition of principles not covered in this standard.

2 Normative references

The following normative documents contain provisions which, through reference in this text, constitute provisions of this British Standard. For dated references, subsequent amendments to, or revisions of, any of these publications do not apply. For undated references, the latest edition of the publication referred to applies.

BS 1629:1989, *Recommendations for references to published materials*.

BS 2979:1958, *Transliteration of Cyrillic and Greek characters*.

BS 4000-1:1990, *Sizes of paper and board — Part 1: Specification for A and B series of trimmed sizes of paper and certain classes of printed matters*.

BS 4148:1985, *Specification for abbreviation of title words and titles of publications*.

BS 4280:1968, *Transliteration of Arabic characters*.

BS 4812:1972, *Specification for the romanization of Japanese*.

BS 5261C:1976, *Marks for copy preparation and proof correction (extracted from BS 5261-2:1976)*.

BS 5555:1993, *Specification for SI units and recommendations for the use of their multiples and of certain other units*.

BS 5605:1990, *Recommendations for citing and referencing published material*.

BS 5775 (all parts), *Specification for quantities, units and symbols*.

BS 5848:1980, *Numbering of divisions and subdivisions in written documents (point-numbering)*.

BS ISO 690-2:1998, *Bibliographic references — Part 2: Electronic documents or parts thereof*.

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this part of BS 5261, the following terms and definitions apply.

3.1

copy

version of text from which a professional keyboard operator works

3.2

direct production

document production in which the person who keys in the material implements almost all the design decisions that affect the final visual appearance of the document

NOTE This includes such office communications as correspondence, notices for wall display, newsletters, pamphlets and reports.

3.3

folio

one sheet of manuscript, typescript or printed copy supplied to the keyboard operator for setting

NOTE 1 Folio sheets are usually used on one side only.

NOTE 2 Folios are numbered consecutively from 1, but these numbers may differ from the numbers on the printed pages, and in this connection it is important to distinguish folio numbers from page numbers.

3.4

house style

set of standard practices governing design and composition associated with particular printing or publishing houses; more widely, distinctive uniform styles of design in documents

3.5

indirect production

document production in which the copy is passed to one or more persons with editorial and/or printing expertise who then largely determine the visual appearance of the document

3.6

typescript

original text, for which the author is responsible

NOTE This may be hard copy or electronic form, and sometimes both.

4 Introduction to direct and indirect production

Clauses 5 to 14 of this standard concern the direct production of a document, where the person who keys in the material makes the design decisions that determine the final appearance of the document. Clauses 15 to 24 concern indirect production of documents, in which copy specifying the content is passed to other people who determine the visual appearance of the document. The principles of good design are the same for both forms of production but the methods of achieving them can differ.

5 Management of directly produced documents

5.1 General

The use of computers has increased the document management responsibilities of those producing documentation. They now extend beyond content to presentation.



Documents

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5.2 Audience and context

Careful consideration of the message, the audience, and the circumstances in which the document will be used should determine the content and presentation. These are also influenced by the way in which the document will be produced.

5.3 Permission and acknowledgements

Written permission should be obtained from copyright holders for the reproduction of any copyright material. The author should consult the publisher before asking for permission and should give the publisher full details of original sources and present copyright holders, if known. Acknowledgements are usually required as a condition of the use of such material, and should be either:

- a) incorporated into the acknowledgements or the list of illustrations; or
- b) given under the illustration or extract itself.

Sometimes acknowledgements have to be made in both places.

The author is normally responsible for ensuring that all acknowledgements have been incorporated appropriately.

5.4 House style

Where there is a need for consistency in the presentation styles of different authors, a house style should be established to provide a set of rules and guidance to assist an organization in producing correspondence, documents and publications in a predetermined manner. Such guidance normally deals with preferred layout styles, typefaces, spelling, abbreviations and many other related issues covered in this standard.

Good house styles can bring benefits, save time and resources, and help reduce the amount of rekeying and reworking. However, there may be circumstances where the needs of the content or audience are better served by adapting the house style.

5.5 Templates, default settings

Other time savers include templates, which are a further extension of house style whereby new documents can be styled electronically using preformatted designs. Similarly, default settings (e.g. word processing styles) can be predefined in most word processing software. These defaults can include “keep together” assignments (e.g. for text and illustrations), widow and orphan control and forced page breaks. Although beneficial to writing, the need to modify defaults to better meet readers’ needs should always be borne in mind.

5.6 File identifiers

It is important to ensure that the electronic file of the document is saved under an appropriate descriptive file name for easy retrieval. The characters differentiating files should occur early in the file name, as truncation of file names may occur in some systems. It is helpful to use a short working title during the draft stages of a book-length text. For shorter texts and correspondence a file identifier is more likely to use a mixture of alphanumerics. Some organizations use a coding system to enable efficient retrieval of stored files. If large numbers of documents are being handled it is useful if the file identifier appears on the document. Identifiers included for the benefit of authors or document managers should be clearly distinguished from identifiers that are part of the navigation support needed by readers, e.g. document management information as footers ranged left and reader information as headers ranged right.

5.7 Version control

The status of the document should be clearly indicated by date and, if appropriate, draft number, originator and keyboard operator. Draft stages should be signed off by the originator.

5.8 Backing up, storage and archiving

Responsibilities for making and safely archiving backups should be clearly delineated. A three file rotation system is widely used in which the current file is stored by overwriting not the previous version but the version before that. This system has the advantage that if there should be a serious fault with the current file such that it will no longer open, in either original or backed up form, then the next most recent version is still available.

5.9 Cross platform transfer

If the document is to be updated electronically and passed to another system then the procedure should be tested at the earliest stage. Not all electronic formats for text and graphics are transferable from one system to another. Similarly, not all electronic tagging is automatically transferable, and again, this should be tested as early as possible. The use of a mark-up language e.g. the Standard Generalized Mark-up Language (SGML) does not guarantee the appearance of a document on another platform, although it will preserve the logical structure.

NOTE More information on SGML is given in BS 6868.

5.10 Use of keyboard

It is increasingly important that the key, or combination of keys, to obtain a needed character is correctly and consistently used. Some characters such as zero and capital “o” are difficult to distinguish in some fonts, but are not interchangeable because the difference may become obvious if the font is changed. Similarly, spaces and tabs are not interchangeable.

5.11 Checking and proof reading

There should be agreement as to who is responsible for checking the final document. On long or difficult texts an independent check is recommended. The checker/proof reader should ensure that spelling is correct, particularly unfamiliar words, and that numbers have been correctly transcribed. The originator should be consulted regarding queries about points that need attention, e.g. accents. Proof correction marks should be used to show where a typescript needs correcting and should conform to BS 5261C.

5.12 Output and production

When the final version of a document is to be output on a device other than that used during development, care should be taken to check typeface availability and the colour adequacy, especially where tints are being used under text. It is important to note that resizing a document, e.g. turning a memo into a poster, is not good practice.

6 Presentation and visual appearance

6.1 General

Numerous texts exist giving advice on document presentation. Clause 6 focuses on the key issues.

6.2 The user/reader

When designing the presentation of a document, the user's needs should be addressed and users should be consulted wherever possible. Where consultation is not possible, existing publications should be assessed from a user's standpoint. User convenience should take precedence over ease of production.

6.3 Ergonomics

The way in which a document is designed and presented should be greatly influenced by the way it will be used. Special circumstances should be considered e.g. poor light or visual impairment.

If a document will need to be printed or replicated, thought should be given to the ways in which the method of printing will affect the design. For instance, what quality (resolution) will be expected, how will the document be bound, is there a restricted range of colours?

These questions should be asked at the beginning of the process, to help to develop a design that will be well received by the user.

6.4 Uses of colour

Colour can be used to attract, to emphasize and to convey special meaning.

Colour should be used carefully. A proportion of the population have a colour deficiency, mostly between the red and green part of the spectrum.

If colour is used to differentiate text or lines in a chart, the difference should also be indicated in an additional way, e.g. by the use of bold type, or dotted lines. This will help people with a colour deficiency and has the advantage of retaining the differentiation if the document is subsequently copied in black and white.

If a document is to appear on paper, dark colours on a light coloured background should be used for greatest legibility.

6.5 Page layout

6.5.1 Page size

The A series of paper sizes specified in BS 4000-1 should be used. The sizes most commonly used are:

- A3: 420 mm × 297 mm;
- A4: 297 mm × 210 mm;
- A5: 210 mm × 148 mm;
- A6: 148 mm × 105 mm.

Additional sizes can be obtained by folding a sheet.

The choice of paper size and the orientation of the text on the page (i.e. with either the short or the long side of the page horizontal) should be appropriate to the content and purpose of the document.

6.5.2 Margins

The purpose and use of the document will influence the size of margins. Documents that are going to be fastened on one side will need a wider margin on that side. The depth of top and bottom margins will be influenced by the information provided in headers and footers. Margins of 25 mm are commonly used on A4 pages, to provide tolerance if the document undergoes further reprographic processes.

6.6 Legibility

6.6.1 General

The way in which a document is to be used or viewed should be borne in mind. It should remain easily legible even when being read in less than ideal circumstances, e.g. in poor light, in moving vehicles such as trains or by people with visual impairments.

Text is most legible when the characters are square on the page. Words presented obliquely or curved are more difficult to read.

The major factors determining legibility are: contrast, typeface, type size, line length and spacing of characters, words and lines.



6.6.2 Typeface

Many word processing systems provide easy access to a range of typefaces and styles. The basic principle should be that the style chosen for the document should be adhered to except when there is a clear need to signal, or draw attention to, something. If there are too many signals on the page, readers may fail to grasp what is being signalled. Throughout a document, the signals should be given in a consistent way.

Because it makes reading easier, the chosen typefaces should have different widths for different letters. Reading is slowed if there is not enough space between letters.

Typefaces are read more easily if they are similar to conventional and familiar fonts (such as Times) rather than being squarer or thinner fonts. They will also enable the document to be processed more easily by electronic character recognition systems. Exaggerated or fancy typefaces should not be used merely for decorative effect.

The need for special symbols and accented characters, may influence the selection of typeface. It helps readers if the typeface clearly distinguishes l, L and I, O and 0.

6.6.3 Font style

Variation in font style can offer useful ways of distinguishing categories of information, but should be used sparingly and for a clear purpose. Extended passages of text in styles such as italic are read more slowly. Underlining tends to slow readers, particularly if it obscures the descender portions of characters, e.g. the tail below the line on p and y. Therefore, other styles for distinguishing text should be used, e.g. bold.

6.6.4 Type size

The character size used in the main text should be such that, in its final form, the height of the capitals is not less than 2.75 mm and the x-height (height of lower case x) not less than 2.0 mm. If smaller characters are used, e.g. for notes (see 8.2), care should be taken not to reduce legibility significantly.

When text is reversed out of a black background,

e.g. **Reversed** the type size or weight should be increased in order to maintain the same legibility; so too should the kerning, the space between characters.

6.6.5 Line length and line spacing

The recommended length is between 35 characters and 72 characters per line, including spaces. If the length is too long, the eye may have difficulty in returning to the start of the next line. To reduce this risk the inter-line spacing should be increased for longer lines. If the length of line is too short, the number of hyphenated words increases and this too slows readers. So if a relatively small typeface is chosen for an A4 portrait page, it is necessary to substantially increase the width of the margins or display the material in two or more columns.

6.6.6 Alignment

One aspect of alignment refers to the shape of a block of text relative to the margins. The common ways of aligning text are flush left, centred, flush right and justified.

- a) Flush left (sometimes referred to as range left or ragged right).

The lines of text are aligned at the left edge or margin which allows even spacing between the words and is conducive to faster reading.

- b) Centred.

Each line is centred. A centre style is often used for headings and other display text.

- c) Flush right (sometimes referred to as range right or ragged left).

The lines of text are aligned at the right hand edge or margin and uneven on the left.

This alignment is not recommended for body text but can be useful in tables and forms.

- d) Justified (sometimes referred to as fully justified).

Type that is flush, or even, at both the right and left margins. The normal space between letters and words is altered in order to justify the text, hence justification usually results in uneven word spacing and can lead to “rivers” of white space running through the type which distract the reader.

6.6.7 Column width

Columns of text are often used for directories and listings or where information is presented in short sections. This layout can help the reader to scan and locate the required information quickly, and enables the information to be presented more economically. Care should be taken to ensure that the type size remains legible and is appropriate for the line length. Conversely, many documents that require continuous reading usually appear in a single column.

6.6.8 Paragraph identification

New paragraphs should be clearly indicated to the reader, for example, by indenting the first word of a new paragraph, or by separating paragraphs with line spaces. Whichever method is adopted it should be consistently applied throughout a document.

6.6.9 Positioning of illustrations

In this context, illustrations may be photographs, drawings, diagrams or charts. If an illustration is used to convey or heighten the reader's understanding of the text it should appear as close as possible to its textual reference. If an illustration spans a number of columns, the reader should be able to quickly identify the correct reading sequence for the body text. If this is not done there is a danger that the reader could overlook part of the text. A common treatment should be adopted throughout the document.

Normally illustrations should be separated clearly from the surrounding text. Care should be taken where text is superimposed on illustrations, as this can impair legibility.

6.7 Heading

6.7.1 General

Headings help readers find their way around a document. Sometimes more graphic signposts are needed, in addition to headings (see 6.8.3).

A suitable treatment for each level of heading should be decided upon and used consistently throughout the document or series; this clarifies the relationship of one piece of text to another.

6.7.2 Hierarchy

The hierarchy of headings should be kept to a minimum as too many levels of headings may cause confusion. Three levels is the desirable maximum.

6.7.3 Treatment

Each level of heading should be easily recognizable. The treatment of the heading depends on its place in the hierarchy.

When deciding upon a suitable treatment for a heading, the use of capitals, bold, a change in typeface or type size, spacing or colour should be considered. Headings in the margin or typographically distinguished at the beginning of a paragraph may also be suitable.

6.7.4 Length

Headings should be as short as possible, e.g. *departs* rather than *time of departure*. This is particularly important for column headings in tables.

6.7.5 Capitalization

Capital letters should be used consistently throughout a document. In headings, capital letters should be kept to a minimum and lower case only should be used for short linking words, e.g. *Results of the Customer Survey* rather than *Results Of The Customer Survey*.

6.7.6 Punctuation

Headings should not end with punctuation marks except when a question mark or exclamation mark is required.

6.8 Emphasis

6.8.1 General

Emphasis is used to attract attention, to differentiate categories of information, or to help the reader navigate a document. All of these needs can be required simultaneously in any one document.

There are two main ways of creating emphasis. The first is through typographic changes such as type size, typeface and font style etc. The second consists of graphic devices such as tints, rules, lines, colour, space and positioning. These two methods can be used in combination permitting a great variety of treatments. However, if too much emphasis is used within a document, the emphasizing features cease to be distinctive. Some of the main uses of emphasis are listed below.

6.8.2 Typographic emphasis

There are four main means of typographic emphasis: capitals, italic, bold and underlining.

a) Capitals.

Because most continuous text is in lower case the use of a word in CAPITALS (as here) can be a forceful means of emphasis. Generally over-use of capitals reduces their impact and capitals in large blocks of text are difficult to read. The use of SMALL CAPITALS (as here), if available, can be a more harmonious treatment.

b) Italic.

This can be used to differentiate words or short passages of text. It is also used in specific instances for foreign words and titles.

c) Bold.

Bold type is used for emphasis and there are no prescribed conventions for its use.

d) Underlining.

This method of emphasis may be used when other features are not available. Care should be taken where the underline crosses through letters with descenders such as g, j, p, q, y as this can impede legibility. Normally the underline should not extend beyond the affected word or words.

Consideration should also be given to typeface, style and size (see 6.6.2, 6.6.3, and 6.6.4).

6.8.3 Graphic devices

Graphic devices available on most word processing and personal computer systems provide a diversity of methods of emphasis. These include boxes, panels, tints and rules (lines), the use of symbols, such as dingbats, and more conventional devices such as bullet points. Use of colour is dealt with in 6.4.