

Graphical symbols and signs — Creation and design of public information symbols — Requirements

ICS 01.080.10

Confirmed October 2008

Committees responsible for this British Standard

The preparation of this British Standard was entrusted by Technical Committee PH/8 Graphical symbols, to Subcommittee PH/8/2, Public information graphical symbols and signs, upon which the following bodies were represented:

- ARTSLINE Disability Access Information Service
- British Hospitality Association
- British Standards Society
- British Waterways Board
- Chartered Society of Designers
- Consumer Policy Committee of BSI
- County Surveyors Society
- Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions — Central Transport Group
- Forestry Commission
- Institute of Sport and Recreation Management
- London Transport
- Manchester Metropolitan University
- Network Rail
- Ordnance Survey
- Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation
- Royal Institute of British Architects
- Royal Lifesaving Society UK
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
- Sport England
- Coopted members

This British Standard, was published under the authority of the Standards Policy and Strategy Committee on 20 November 2003

© BSI 20 November 2003

The following BSI references relate to the work on this British Standard:
Committee reference PH/8/2
Draft for comment 03/106508 DC

ISBN 0 580 42812 5

Amendments issued since publication

Amd. No.	Date	Comments

Contents

	Page
Committees responsible	Inside front cover
National foreword	ii
Introduction	1
1 Scope	1
2 Normative references	1
3 Terms and definitions	1
4 Creation procedure	2
5 Assignment of meaning, function and image content to the public information symbol	3
6 Design of the graphical symbol	4
7 Layout of templates	11
Annex A (informative) Colour and file format	13
Annex B (informative) Additional design guidelines	13
Annex C (informative) Representation of the human figure	19
Annex D (informative) Representation of a body of water	23
Annex E (informative) Checklist for designers	26
Bibliography	28
Index	29
Figure 1 — Example of assignment of meaning, function and image content to a public information symbol	3
Figure 2 — Example of the use of line thickness and line spacing in a graphical symbol and example of size reduction of a graphical symbol to 25 %	5
Figure 3 — Example of critical details	6
Figure 4 — Example of a combination of graphical symbols to form a new graphical symbol	7
Figure 5 — Example of the use of standardized representations	8
Figure 6 — Example of the use of a negation bar	9
Figure 7 — Example of the use of a negation cross	10
Figure 8 — Template for public information symbols without negation bar	11
Figure 9 — Template for public information symbols with negation bar	12
Figure B.1 — Examples of use of filled areas and outlining	13
Figure B.2 — Example of a symmetrical graphical symbol	14
Figure B.3 — Use of the direction arrow with the relevant symbol to indicate ladies' toilet to the right	15
Figure B.4 — Example of countryside waymarking arrow	16
Figure B.5 — Example of countryside waymarking arrow including another graphical symbol element	18
Figure B.6 — Example of the use of other arrows	18
Figure C.1 — Front and back views of human figure	19
Figure C.2 — Side views of human figure	19
Figure C.3 — Examples of the adaptation of the human figure to convey particular activities	20
Figure C.4 — Example of graphical representation of a human body element	22
Figure C.5 — Examples of dynamic movement	22
Figure D.1 — Examples of public information symbols depicting activities or objects on the water surface or above it	24
Figure D.2 — Example of a public information symbol depicting an activity beneath the water surface	26

Foreword

This British Standard has been prepared by Subcommittee PH/8/2.

This British Standard specifies requirements for the creation and design of public information symbols.

It is intended for use in conjunction with BS 8501.

This publication does not purport to include all the necessary provisions of a contract. Users are responsible for its correct application.

Compliance with a British Standard does not of itself confer immunity from legal obligations.

Summary of pages

This document comprises a front cover, an inside front cover, pages i and ii, pages 1 to 29 and a back cover.

The BSI copyright notice displayed in this document indicates when the document was last issued.

Introduction

A graphical symbol is defined as a visually perceptible figure used to transmit information independently of language. Public information symbols are used to convey specific messages, the understanding of which is independent of specialist or occupational training. Consistency in the design of such symbols for use in a particular situation or in similar situations is important, as is comprehensibility. Thus, there is a need to standardize the principles for creating and designing public information symbols to ensure visual clarity, to maintain consistency and thereby to improve recognition.

1 Scope

This British Standard specifies requirements for the creation and design of graphical symbols to be used for public information. It specifies requirements for the design of graphical symbols suitable for use in public information symbols for submission for registration as approved public information symbols, including line thickness, the use of graphical symbol elements and how to indicate negation. It also specifies templates to be used in the design of public information symbols.

It is intended for use by all those involved in the commissioning and the creation and design of public information symbols.

This standard is not applicable to safety signs, including fire safety signs, or to traffic signs for use on the public highway which are governed by the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 1994 [1] or specially authorized by the Secretary of State under Section 64 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 [2].

Examples are given for illustrative purposes only and do not constitute requirements for particular public information symbols.

NOTE 1 Safety signs, including fire safety signs, are covered by BS 5499. Water safety signs are covered by BS 5499-11.

NOTE 2 Existing public information symbols are specified in BS 8501.

NOTE 3 The illustrations in this standard are as accurate as possible within the limitations of the printing process.

NOTE 4 Recommendations on colour and file format are given in Annex A, additional design guidelines are given in Annex B, Annex C and Annex D, and a checklist for designers is given in Annex E.

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.

BS 8501, *Graphical symbols and signs — Public information symbols*.

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this British Standard the following terms and definitions apply.

3.1

graphical symbol

visually perceptible figure with a particular meaning used to transmit information independently of language

3.2

public information symbol

graphical symbol, intended to give information to the general public, the understanding of which is independent of specialist or occupational training

3.3

safety sign

sign that gives a general safety message, by means of a safety colour and a geometric shape and which, by the addition of a graphical symbol, gives a particular safety meaning

3.4

negation

indication of the absence or opposite of something actual or positive

3.5

graphical symbol element

part of a graphical symbol with a particular meaning

3.6

negation element

element of a graphical symbol intended to negate the original intended message given by the symbol

3.7

critical detail

element of a graphical symbol without which the graphical symbol cannot be understood

3.8

meaning

message that a public information symbol is intended to convey

3.9

function

written description of the purpose of the information to be conveyed by a graphical symbol

3.10

image content

written description of the elements of a graphical symbol

NOTE The image content can also include a description of the relevant disposition of the elements of the graphical symbol.

3.11

public information symbol original

finished version of a public information symbol used for reference, standardization or reproduction purposes

4 Creation procedure

4.1 Before design of a new public information symbol is undertaken the following procedure shall be carried out:

- a) verification that what is required is a public information symbol and not a safety sign (see **3.2** and **3.3**);
- b) identification of the required meaning of the public information symbol;
- c) identification of the need for a new public information symbol by determination of whether a public information symbol with the required meaning is given in BS 8501;
- d) assignment of a meaning and a function to the public information symbol in accordance with Clause **5**.

4.2 During the design of a new public information symbol the following procedure shall be carried out:

- a) consideration of existing graphical symbol elements with similar meanings which might be used, adapted or combined to form the graphical symbol for the new public information symbol;

NOTE 1 An analysis should also be carried out of the expected characteristics of the target audience of the new public information symbol and the context in which it is expected to be used. (Factors to be considered are given in Annex E.)

- b) design of the new graphical symbol in accordance with Clause **6** using the relevant template specified in Clause **7**.

NOTE 2 After design of the new graphical symbol, it is strongly recommended that an evaluation be carried out of the comprehensibility of the public information symbol original in the context in which it is to be used, in accordance with BS ISO 9186. The public information symbol original should then be modified if necessary. This is particularly important if it is intended to submit the public information symbol to BSI Technical Committee PH/8 for registration as an approved public information symbol¹⁾.

NOTE 3 The registration procedure for a public information symbol requires a drawing submitted in the relevant template (see Clause **7**) together with a size reduction to 25 %.

¹⁾ Details of the registration procedure and an application form, which gives required file formats, can be obtained from The Secretary, Technical Committee PH/8, BSI, 389 Chiswick High Road, London W4 4AL.

5 Assignment of meaning, function and image content to the public information symbol

NOTE 1 Consideration should be given to the category to which the public information symbol belongs, in accordance with BS 8501 (see Note 3), as follows:

- a) general access;
- b) countryside access;
- c) hygiene;
- d) general information;
- e) transport, travel and movement;
- f) entertainment, tourism and heritage attractions.

NOTE 2 Each public information symbol should normally be used to convey only one public information message, and should normally be placed in one category only.

NOTE 3 For the convenience of users, the public information symbols in BS 8501 have been grouped according to the areas where they are normally expected to be used. However, these groupings are not intended to be exclusive and the use of the public information symbols in other areas, where this is considered appropriate, is not precluded.

The new public information symbol shall be assigned a meaning and a function. Once the public information symbol original is complete the image content shall be identified, including the critical details (see Figure 1).

NOTE 4 The assigned meaning and function should be unambiguous.



[Symbol reference number: BS 8501.4115]

Meaning: Assistance dogs allowed.

Function: To signify that access for assistance dogs is allowed.

Image content: Dog shown in profile with harness. Critical details are dog, and harness with handle.

Figure 1 — Example of assignment of meaning, function and image content to a public information symbol

6 Design of the graphical symbol

6.1 General

The graphical symbol shall be designed in accordance with **6.2** to **6.8**.

NOTE 1 The design of a graphical symbol should:

- a) be simple in order to facilitate comprehension and reproduction;
- b) be readily associated with its intended meaning;
- c) be based on objects, concepts, activities etc., or a combination of these, which are reliably identifiable by the target audience;
- d) be easily distinguishable from other graphical symbols;
- e) contain only those details that contribute to understanding;
- f) retain these characteristics when reduced to 25 % of the template size (see Figure 2).

NOTE 2 When designing a graphical symbol the possibility of negation should be born in mind (see **6.8**).

NOTE 3 The additional design guidelines given in Annex B, Annex C and Annex D should also be followed, as applicable.

6.2 Use of template

The graphical symbol shall be designed within the relevant template given in Clause 7.

NOTE The graphical symbol preferably should not extend into the margins within the template, as indicated on the template, but should make full use of the area within the margins of the template.

6.3 Line thickness

Lines used in a graphical symbol shall be a minimum of 2 mm thick within the relevant template given in Clause 7 (see Figure 2).

NOTE The spacing between lines should take into account visual clarity (see Figure 2).



[Symbol reference number: BS 8501.7017]

Meaning: Chair lift.

Function: To indicate the location of a chair lift.

Image content: Chair on supporting cable, with seated person. Critical details are supporting cable, chair and profile of seated person.

Figure 2 — Example of the use of line thickness and line spacing in a graphical symbol and example of size reduction of a graphical symbol to 25 %

6.4 Critical details

Critical details in the graphical symbol shall have minimum dimensions of 2.5 mm × 2 mm within the relevant template given in Clause 7 (see Figure 3).



[Symbol reference number: BS 8501.5011]

Meaning: Drinking water.

Function: To indicate that water is suitable for drinking.

Image content: Tap above glass with downward-flowing droplets of water. Critical details are glass, tap and representation of droplets of water.

Figure 3 — Example of critical details

6.5 Combination of graphical symbols or graphical symbol elements

If two or more graphical symbols or graphical symbol elements are combined to form a new graphical symbol, the meaning assigned to the new graphical symbol shall be consistent with the meanings of the individual graphical symbols or graphical symbol elements used (see Figure 4).

NOTE 1 The new graphical symbol should consist of as few components as possible, while maintaining comprehensibility.

NOTE 2 The possibility of negation should be born in mind (see 6.8).

Public information symbols in which two or more graphical symbols or graphical symbol elements have been combined to produce a new graphical symbol shall be considered as new public information symbols.



[Symbol reference number: BS 8501.8066]

Meaning: Restaurant accessible to wheelchair users.

Function: To indicate a restaurant which is accessible to wheelchair users.

Image content: Seated person in wheelchair, and knife and fork. Critical details are profile of seated person and wheel, and knife and fork.

Figure 4 — Example of a combination of graphical symbols to form a new graphical symbol