
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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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.

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.

In consequence, the available image area on forms designed on the basis of the layout key is 183 mm × 280 mm, or in the case of A5L, 131 mm × 183 mm L.

As the paper size 216 mm × 279 mm is commonly used for trade documents in some countries, particularly in the United States, it should be taken into account that the common image area for forms of that size and those of A4 size is limited to 183 mm × 262 mm.

Alignment of the image areas is achieved by maintaining the above left-hand and top margins, which places the layout in the same relative positions *vis-à-vis* the left-hand and top paper edges.

5 Design principles

The boundary lines of the fields shall correspond to lines in the forms design sheet of ISO 3535.

The main principle in designing a document on the basis of this layout key is that information required in the document and appearing in the layout key should be placed in a corresponding position. Information required in the document, but not specified in the layout key, shall be placed in the “free disposal” area.

If such information is to be filled in subsequent to the original document preparation, it can alternatively be placed in spaces corresponding to areas of the layout key intended for information irrelevant for the document to be designed.

6 Layout key items

6.1 General

The following headings appear in the layout key. The remarks explain the nature of the data to be entered in the corresponding fields.

The type of document, for example INVOICE, shall appear, usually preprinted, on the right-hand side of the top margin and in the position where LAYOUT KEY FOR TRADE DOCUMENTS is printed in Figure 1.

6.2 Consignor (Exporter)

This field is intended to show the name and address of the sender of goods or the originator of the document, as the case may be.

6.3 Consignee

The field for the name and address of the consignee has been located in conformity with international postal specifications so as to allow for the use of window envelopes.

NOTE This layout key can accommodate a maximum of five lines when a line spacing of 4,233 mm (1/6 inch) is used. It is however possible to accommodate six lines when a line spacing of 3,175 mm (1/8 inch) is used.

6.4 Notify or delivery address

If in maritime transport, the goods are consigned “to order”, a notifying address may be required. If not, this space can be used for specifying the address where the goods are to be delivered, if it differs from the (mail) address of the consignee.

6.5 Transport details

This field is reserved for a description of the transport, including places involved in the chain of transport, modes and means of transport.

6.6 Date and reference number

If not otherwise specified, “date” means the date of issue of the document in which it appears. The reference number is a number or designation, preferably common throughout each set of documents. It can be the same as order number, invoice number, etc. In this field, other dates and numbers may be entered, either at the time of the completion of document, or later in the procedure by parties to whom the documents are handed over. The sequence of these items may be modified.

6.7 Buyer (if other than consignee) or other address

Often goods are sent to one address and documents to another. In such cases, the consignee field is used for the goods address required, *inter alia*, in transport documents, whereas the alternative address field is used for the address to which documents, such as invoices, are sent (buyer’s address).

This layout key accommodates 35 characters per line with a width spacing of 2,54 mm (10 characters per inch). Because of limitations in visual length in window envelopes due to the play between envelope and insert, it is recommended to use a maximum of 32 characters, left adjusted. If a width spacing of 2,12 mm (12 characters per inch) is used, 35 characters can easily be accommodated.

6.8 Country details

Information on country of origin, country whence consigned (country of provenance) and country of destination may be required for statistical and other purposes. If any of these items are not required, the space left may be used for other purposes, for example indication of licence number; it can also, in such cases, be added to the field for terms of delivery and payment.

6.9 Terms of delivery and payment

This space may be freely used for the purpose indicated, normally specifying time of delivery, terms of delivery, terms of payment, insurance details, etc.

6.10 Shipping marks and container numbers

This field is intended for the particulars needed to identify goods (and freight containers) and to relate them to the documents, preferably in accordance with the UN/ECE/FAL Recommendation No. 15. If goods are marked with the consignee address, this should be indicated by an expression such as “Addressed to consignee”, or, preferably, by entering the full address as shown on the goods.

6.11 Number and kind of packages

No particular column width has been reserved for these data elements, as it would have to be wide enough to accommodate a maximum number of packages which would only rarely appear and would thus, in most cases, unnecessarily reduce the space for description of goods. It is recommended that a typing layout be used that clearly separates this information from the goods description.

6.12 Description of goods

This field is intended for a description of the goods in common trade terms, if possible using terminology of the applicable customs or freight tariffs. For detailed specifications of articles, the “free disposal” area should be used.

6.13 Commodity number

When appropriate the applicable number of the relevant statistical commodity list or customs tariff should be given, since at least the first digits of these numbers are in most cases used globally.

6.14 Gross weight (mass)

The gross weight (mass) is intended for transport and other cargo-handling purposes. It is shown in the same column as net quantity, but can be separated by using a “tier” layout or otherwise by placing it on another level.

6.15 Cube

This field is intended for indicating the cubic space required for the goods under transport. It should be located beside the gross weight.

6.16 Net quantity

This column shows net weight and supplementary quantities required, *inter alia*, for statistical purposes as specified in the relevant commodity list or customs tariff.

6.17 Value

This indication of value is intended mainly for statistical purposes. In most countries export statistics are based on Free On Board (FOB) value and import statistics on Cost, Insurance, Freight (CIF) value.

6.18 Free disposal

This area can be used as required for such additional information as cannot be accommodated within the specified fields. Individual space requirements determine the exact location of the dividing dotted line.

6.19 Authentication (signature)

Besides signature or other proof authentication, information may be entered in this field regarding the place where the document is signed or otherwise authenticated, date of authentication, etc.



LAYOUT KEY FOR TRADE DOCUMENTS

Consignor (Exporter)		Date, reference no., etc.		
Consignee		Buyer (if other than consignee) or other address		
Notify or delivery address		Country whence consigned		
		Country of origin	Country of destination	
Transport details		Terms of delivery and payment		
Shipping marks, container no.	Number and kind of packages, goods description	Commodity no.	Gross weight	Cube
			Net quantity	Value
Free disposal				
Place and date of issue, authentication				

Figure 1 — Example for layout key

Bibliography

- [1] UN/ECE/FAL Recommendation No. 15, *Simpler Shipping Marks*¹⁾
- [2] ECE/TRADE/137, *United Nations layout key for trade documents*. United Nations publication, Sales no.: E.81.II.E.19¹⁾

1) Available from: United Nations, Sales Section, Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10 or United Nations, Sales Section, New York, NY 10017.

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