BSI Standards Publication

Instructions for use of products by consumers

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National foreword

This Published Document is the UK implementation of ISO/IEC Guide 37:2012.

The UK participation in its preparation was entrusted to Technical Committee W/-, Consumer Products and Services Sector Policy and Strategy Committee.

A list of organizations represented on this committee can be obtained on request to its secretary.

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

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Amendments issued since publication

Date	Text affected

Instructions for use of products by consumers

Instructions d'emploi des produits par les consommateurs

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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.

Draft Guides adopted by the responsible Committee or Group are circulated to the member bodies for voting. Publication as a Guide 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/IEC Guide 37 was prepared by the ISO Committee for consumer policy (ISO/COPOLCO).

This third edition cancels and replaces the second edition (ISO/IEC Guide 37:1995), which has been technically revised.

Introduction

Instructions for use are the means of conveying information to the user on how to use products and product-related services in a correct and safe manner. The following are used as means of communication, either separately or in combination:

— texts;

— words;

— graphical symbols;

— diagrams;

— illustrations;

— audible, visible or tactile information.

The instructions for use can be on the product itself or its packaging, or in accompanying materials, e.g. leaflets, manuals, media and computerized information such as the product supplier's website.

While much of the advice in this Guide is equally relevant to instructions for consumer services, it is not intended to cover all aspects of services. See ISO/IEC Guide 76 for further information.

This Guide is not intended to provide comprehensive information covering each case. It offers guidance to all interested parties in the form of general principles and detailed recommendations on the design and formulation of all types of instructions necessary or helpful to the final user of consumer products. Practical recommendations for the assessment of such instructions are included in the informative Annexes A and B.

This Guide can be used in conjunction with the requirements of specific product standards or, where no such standards exist, with the relevant requirements of standards for similar products.

Since the previous edition of this Guide was published, the developments listed below have occurred.

a) An International Standard for writing instructions (IEC 82079-1) has been published, which provides the possibility for normative references to be made in product standards. However, contrary to physical safety requirements, in practice the effectiveness of the information supplied with a product has hardly ever been subjected to independent verification or certification.

b) There has been a substantial increase in cross-border movement of both fully-packaged products and of consumers, through migration, tourism, relocation of manufacturing and the opportunities for personal imports provided by the Internet. It can now no longer be assumed by a manufacturer that every consumer can read the official language of the country from which a product was retailed.

c) It has become recognized that for many products there will be a proportion of older consumers and consumers with disabilities who can use the product safely and independently when given adequate information, but who are unable to gain access to this information in the usual medium in which it is supplied with the product — most often because the size of print that can be accommodated on the product is too small.

This edition of this Guide has been thoroughly revised to take into account both the developments listed above and the many research studies into the effectiveness of product instructions and warning labels, which vary a great deal in the degree to which consumers read, notice and comply with them.

The effectiveness of instructions in preventing harm can never be assumed to be as high as supervised training or designing the product to be fail-safe (when this is possible). The aim of this Guide is to help convey necessary knowledge to the end users of consumer products, and to facilitate understanding and use of instructions.

If reliance is placed on just one medium, one phrase or one graphic to communicate a crucial safety message, then some proportion of consumers will not receive that message and another proportion will fail to recall it at the crucial moment.

Instructions for use of products by consumers

1   Scope

This Guide establishes principles and gives recommendations on the design and formulation of instructions for use of products by consumers.

This Guide is intended to be used by the following:

— committees preparing standards for consumer products;

— product designers, manufacturers, technical writers or other people engaged in the work of conceiving and drafting such instructions;

— importers, regulators, inspection bodies and researchers.

The principles and detailed recommendations in this Guide are intended to be applied in combination with the specific requirements on instructions for use specified in standards for particular products or groups of products. Some model formats and wordings are suggested for inclusion in standards.

This Guide contains some practical recommendations and a proposed methodology for assessment in order to help establish common criteria for the assessment of the quality of instructions for use.

Annexes A and B provide checklists to help principal target groups using this Guide.

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/IEC Guide 14, *Purchase information on goods and services intended for consumers*

3   Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO/IEC Guide 14 apply.

4   General principles

IMPORTANT — Instructions for use cannot and should not compensate for design deficiencies (see ISO/IEC Guide 51)

4.1   Instructions for use are an integral part of the delivery of the product. Their purpose is to reduce

— the danger of injury or ill health to people or animals, and

— the risks to the product (or other property) of damage, malfunction or inefficient operation.

4.2   Instructions for use should be integrated and the information should be consistent with all other material about the same product issued by the manufacturer/producer (such as advertising, packaging, any warranty and Internet-based information). There should be consistency in all instructional and promotional materials, including markings, labels and shipping containers.

4.3   Instructions for use should: