

BSI Education



Information for Schools and Colleges

So you want to...

Know about BSI



Why do we have Standards?

What would life be like if...

- credit cards were different sizes?
- light bulbs didn't fit into lamps?
- railway lines were different widths?
- Microwave ovens emitted large amounts of harmful radiation?
- washed clothes no longer fitted because there were no care labels or warnings?

Standards affect our daily lives in many ways, making life easier, safer and healthier.

Here are a few examples:

- Ensuring electrical wiring is safe in the equipment we use in homes and offices
- Rationalising clothes sizes across different countries
- Assisting businesses to improve the environment with environmental management systems
- Advising on safety of sunglasses to protect our eyes
- Guidance on Data Protection to protect us from inaccurate information being held on us by companies and employers
- Helping to make buildings more accessible to disabled users.

So what does BSI do?

BSI is the oldest national Standards making body in the world. Independent of government, industry and trade associations BSI is a non-profit distributing organisation *. BSI is globally recognised as an independent and impartial body serving both the private and public sectors, working with manufacturing and service industries, businesses and governments to facilitate the production of British, European and International Standards.

* A non-profit distributing organisation is defined as an organisation in which profits are not distributed to its directors, shareholders, employees, or any one else; they are reinvested into the services provided.

As well as facilitating the writing of British Standards, BSI is one of the world's leading Standards authorities representing UK interests across all of the European and international Standards committees.

What is a Standard?

A Standard is a published specification that establishes a common language, and contains a technical specification or other precise criteria and is designed to be used consistently, as a rule, as a guideline, or as a definition. Standards are applied to many materials, products, methods and services. They help to make life simpler, and increase the reliability and the effectiveness of many goods and services we use.

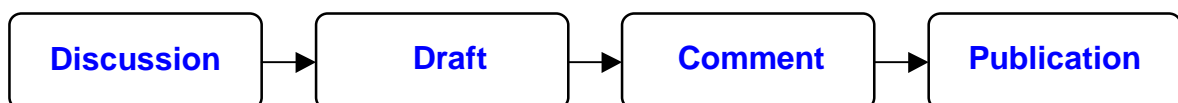
Standards are designed for voluntary use and do not impose any regulations. However, laws and regulations may refer to certain standards, making compliance with them compulsory.

For example, the Standard for the format of credit cards is **BS EN ISO/IEC* 7810:1996**. It defines their dimensions. Adhering to this standard means that the cards can be used worldwide.

How is a standard produced?

A British Standard is created by appropriately qualified and experienced people who are brought together by BSI. They discuss and agree on the details that will form the new British Standard.

A draft is released, and anyone with an interest can comment on its content. Finally, after all comments have been reviewed, it is published as a British Standard.

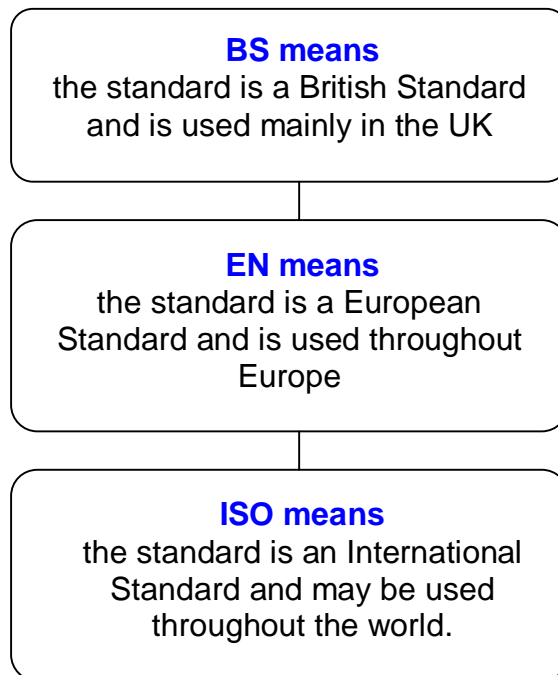


* International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) is the global organization that prepares and publishes international standards for all electrical, electronic and related technologies.

Standards for international trade

As international trade, travel and communications increase, international standards are used to enable products to be traded across Europe and worldwide.

Standards are prepared through discussions in European and International committees. They are then adopted in the countries that wish to use them. In Great Britain they are adopted as British Standards.



So who pays for BSI's work?

Each part of the BSI Group generates income through its Business Operations e.g. product testing, certification and systems assessment. As part of the BSI group, British Standards/ Business Information (the "National Standards Body" part of the group), derives its income through sales of products and services along with subscribing membership . A small amount of income is received from Government for activities in the public interest. The income from standards products and services and supporting information is "ringfenced" for standards activities.

A Brief History

In 1901 the Institutions of Civil Engineers, Mechanical Engineers, Naval Architects and the Iron and Steel Institute decided to standardize iron and steel sections for bridges, railways and shipping. The committees' successes included cutting the production of different tram rails from 75 to 5. This saved about £1 million a year.

By 1929 the committee became the British Engineering Standards Association and was granted a royal charter that defined the Association's objectives. A year later the Association became the British Standards Institution (BSI).

Today, more than 100 years after the British Engineering Standards Association first met, BSI has 4,900 employees worldwide, operations in over 110 countries and more than 20,000 current British Standards.



What is the Kitemark?

When you see a product with a Kitemark on it, this means BSI has independently tested and confirmed that the product complies with the relevant standard. The manufacturer pays for this service and their product is tested and assessed at regular intervals.



The Kitemark is the symbol that gives consumers the assurance that the product they have bought really does conform to the appropriate British Standard and should therefore be safe and reliable.

For example any cushion or pillow can be put in a pram to prop up a baby. However, one produced to Kitemark specified BS 1877 should ensure that if the baby manages to wriggle itself into a position where it is face down on the pillow, it will not suffocate.

This is because the pillow has not only been designed, but also independently tested, to ensure that there is an adequate airflow.

Products are not legally required to carry a Kitemark, but many everyday appliances such as fridges, electrical plugs and crash helmets have them.

What is CE Marking?

Many products such as toys must meet legal requirements before they can be sold within the European Community, and must carry CE marking. CE marking is designed to remove European trade barriers. It indicates that the product complies with the European Directive. It is **not** a European safety or quality mark.



Some products carry both a Kitemark and CE marking. This indicates that BSI has independently tested them against the appropriate standard.

This is just a brief summary on the work of BSI. For further information look at our web site detailed below.

Finally, should you wish to read any standards in full, most libraries and universities hold complete sets. An on-line list can be found through the education web site.

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