

Numbering Systems, Codes and Databases used in the Record Industry

A Guide for Beginners

Numbering systems in the record industry are vitally important. They ensure that retailers can order your releases, sales are collected for chart purposes and that royalty payments to record companies and artists are made. When releasing recorded music, on either physical (such as CD or vinyl) or digital (download) formats, ensure that your recordings have the correct catalogue numbers, ISRC codes and barcodes.

Catalogue Numbers

Assigning a label name and catalogue number

One of the first tasks should be to ensure that your chosen label name and, the catalogue numbers that you allocate to releases on that label have not been previously used by another company. If they have this could lead to confusion once your product reaches the marketplace.

It is advisable to first contact the Mechanical Copyright & Protection Society (MCPS), where either the Audio Product Team (020 8378 7744) or Martin Combeer (020 8769 4400, ext 7584 or martin.combeer@mcps.co.uk) will be able to assist you in checking whether your chosen catalogue numbers have been previously used. Millward Brown (contact details below) may also be able to help.

Barcode Numbers

Why do I need a barcode?

Barcodes help track sales and ensure transactions are accounted for correctly; this helps retailers and distributors to maintain stocking levels and ensures the accuracy of the UK chart. They are necessary in nearly all cases, perhaps excepting releases that are self distributed and not sold through usual retail channels.

How do I get one?

Both Physical and Digital releases should be assigned a barcode; in both cases, your distributor / aggregator or manufacturer may be able to help with this.

If you are self-distributing your releases, contact GS1 (020 7655 9000 or info@gs1uk.org) for further information about obtaining barcodes. GS1 UK is a UK business association, which specialises in supply chain standards from bar coding to electronic business communications.

There is also an information sheet available for download from the BPI ([BPI Guidelines on Bar Coding](#)) which gives a more comprehensive overview and also explains how to differentiate between different formats. If you are acquiring your own barcode you will need to assign a format code – details for physical releases are included in the BPI PDF, but subsequent developments in the download market have seen labels acting to apply a similar system to digital releases with no physical equivalent. Many allocate the number 5, regardless of the release's status as either a single or album bundle.

ISRC Codes

What is it?

The International Standard Recording Code. It is the international identification system for sound recordings and music videos. Each 12 digit code is unique and is a permanent identifier for a specific recording. It can be encoded into a sound recording as a 'digital fingerprint'. The International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) recommends that all recordings are allocated an ISRC code. It is important to note that it identifies sound and video recordings only – it does not identify physical products or carriers such as CDs, so there is no conflict with catalogue numbering or barcode systems.

What does it do?

The number can provide the means to automatically identify recordings for royalty payments and it is used to identify the recording forever, regardless of changes in ownership or subsequent releases. The code will ensure that details of your track are held on the industry database Catco and that sales of your track are captured for chart data purposes

How do I get one?

The ISRC number is allocated to the recording by the record company releasing the track. The helpdesk at PPL (Phonographic Performance LTD) on 020 7534 1122 (or via email from member.info@ppluk.com) can issue your First Registrant Code. You can then allocate ISRCs to your recordings and have them mastered onto your release.

Further information

www.ifpi.org/isrc/isrc_faq.html (FAQs from the IFPI website)

www.ppluk.com (see ISRC section on the toolbar)

www.catcouk.com Catco need to be informed of all your digital release's details in order for your sales to be tracked – contact them for more information on the process

For further information on getting your music online, [download the BPI/Music Week guide](#).

Global Release Identifier (GRid)

What is it?

Grid is a new identifier that will identify electronically distributed music, whether single tracks, bundles or multi-media packages. Grid is not a replacement for ISRC codes but will further the use of ISRCs because in order to allocate a Grid to a release, ISRCs will need to have been issued to the sound and video recordings contained in the release.

A useful Grid FAQ sheet is available from

<http://87.84.226.196/grid/grid-faq.html>

A comprehensive guide to the system is also available

www.ifpi.org/content/library/GRid_Standard_v2_1.pdf

www.ifpi.org/content/library/GRid_Handbook_V2_0_final.pdf

How do I get one?

Users need to apply for an Issuer Code from the Grid Registration Agency

www.ifpi.org/grid

Other resources

If you want to ensure that your release is eligible for the UK charts, then

download **The Official UK Chart Company's** rules on eligibility from

www.theofficialcharts.com.

Charts compiler **Millward Brown**, require two copies of your physical releases along with release information at least two weeks in advance to ensure they are identifiable when sales occur at chart-registered retailers.

Contact:

Chart Unit
Millward Brown
Tachbrook Park
Olympus Avenue
Warwick
CV34 6RJ

Tel: 01926 826610 for further information.

Millward Brown will then forward your recordings to the **British Library Sound Archive** for public reference. The BLSA is the national repository for sound recordings and provides a much-utilised resource for researchers and companies working in radio, film and TV. If you want to ensure your releases are held there then they also accept submissions direct to the address below.

Email: popmusic@bl.uk

Andy Linehan
British Library Sound Archive
96 Euston Road
London NW1 2DB

You should also consider joining **PPL**. It is free and, among other things, PPL collect public performance and broadcast royalties on behalf of record companies and performers. **Catco** is a PPL funded initiative and you will be able to supply track data to them which will ensure that income due to you from PPL is paid efficiently.

www.ppluk.com/
email – info@catcouk.com
tel: 020 7534 1000

www.catcouk.com/ppl/catco.nsf/catcohome
email – info@catcouk.com
tel: 020 7534 1333

There are also a number of services that provide resources regarding releases to retailers (both high street and online), libraries and so forth. Submitting your titles for inclusion on their databases is free.

Muze and **All Media Guide** both provide a wealth of information and content to their clients, including audio clips, cover art and reviews and also metadata pertaining to each release. As well as giving retailers a valuable bank of knowledge to refer to, the information is also used by many leading internet retail (such as Amazon) and download services (such as Napster, iTunes and eMusic) to complement and enhance a product's profile.

www.redmuze.co.uk/recordlabels.html
email: hrichardson@muzeurope.com

www.allmusic.com/cg/amg.dll?p=amg&sql=32:amg/info_pages/a_product_submission.html

It is also free to submit details of your release to **Gracenote**, the CD recognition service that is perhaps most widely used when a disc is inserted into a computer running iTunes.

www.gracenote.com/company_info/FAQ/FAQs/

Nielsen Music Control monitor airplay internationally and produce official airplay charts and a host of other related reports for the music industry

including clients such as Music Week in the UK. The identification and tracking of titles being played is based on a bespoke song recognition technology – if you want to ensure your releases are on their database then they accept submissions free of charge (on CD or DVD format only) at the address below.

Any queries to: info-uk@nielsenmusiccontrol.com

Nielsen Music Control
5th Floor
Endeavour House
189 Shaftesbury Avenue
London
WC2H 8TJ

Shazam are another company utilising song recognition technology. They provide an immensely popular service for mobile phone users who are hearing a song and want to identify it as it plays. Labels wishing to have their music included on their database are able to post individual tracks to the email address below (which is also the address for further information) and larger catalogues can be submitted on hard drive by post.

Email: musicteam@shazamteam.com

Shazam Entertainment Limited
Charles House 4th Floor
375 Kensington High Street
London
W14 8QH