



# THE SMART PUBLISHERS GUIDE TO PRODUCING SUCCESSFUL BAR CODES...

...That work first time every time

(Updated November 2010)

There are a number of 'best practices' for bar coding magazines to ensure they contain correct information and scan successfully.

## DO's

- **Do** keep all people who will be using the bar code informed of the issue numbering/add-on codes that are planned for future use. For example, an annual schedule, a regular product data file
- **Do** ensure that the correct bar code is printed on the right issue. For example, use of a checklist
- **Do** ensure your printer is aware of bar coding requirements by making sure he has a copy of these guidelines. Request that the finished bar code is verified at the production stage for legibility and accuracy
- **Do** follow one method of establishing a bar code consistently from year to year
- **Do** check the bar code is readable on all copies of your magazine
- **Do** contact PPA if you require any guidance on issue numbering or any other bar code enquiry
- **Do** refer to the:  
**PPA/ANMW Best Practice for Bar Coding and Issue Numbering of Magazines, Partworks and Collectibles** [www.ppa.co.uk](http://www.ppa.co.uk) and <http://www.anmw.co.uk/anmw/jsp/industryData.jsp>  
**GS1 Bar Code General Specifications**, available free of charge via the GS1 UK Website [www.gs1uk.org](http://www.gs1uk.org)

## DON'Ts

- **Don't** use the same add-on code for more than one issue within a calendar year period
- **Don't** make frequent changes to the issue numbering rules on which the bar code is determined
- **Don't** assume that users of the bar code will automatically know the add-on code that will be on your magazine
- **Don't** have more than one bar code on a magazine; i.e. don't use cover-mounts or poly-bagged copies that have their own visible bar codes
- **Don't** include bar codes on magazines advertised on the back cover of a publication
- **Don't** print on or near any folds or creases
- **Don't** box in bar code symbols
- **Don't** cover the bar code with a band, 'polybag' or cover mounts
- **Don't** use a bar code in any form as part of the design artwork on the cover of a magazine.

**NOTE: Don't obscure or omit the normal printed cover price in preference to the bar code. At retailers it is still essential that the traditional cover price is fully visible to the seller and the buyer.**

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## PRODUCING SUCCESSFUL BAR CODES... ...That work first time every time



- **Components of the barcode**  
Magazine issue bar codes are represented in EAN 13 format with a 2-digit add-on code. The bar code is constructed in the following way:
- **GS1 Prefix** (digits 1-3): 977 for magazines with an ISSN
- **ISSN Component** (digits 4-10): The first 7 digits of the 8 digits ISSN (the last digit, which is a check digit, is deleted as it is redundant when included within the EAN-13 which has its own check digit). The UK Centre at the British Library assigns the ISSN.
- **Sequence Variant** (digits 11-12): Used on magazines to indicate price changes. For a new magazine start with 00 and move up by 01 for each price change either up or down. Actual prices are not represented anywhere in the bar code. For “one-off” special priced issues an initial sequence variant of 99 should be used and thereafter decreasing the value to 98, 97, 96, etc.
- **Check Digit** (digit 13): Derived from a calculation, based on the first 12 digits, used to check that the code is correct if manually entered into a system. The Film Master Supplier or your dedicated bar code software would normally calculate the check digit. Please see GS1 UK website for an example of the check digit calculation <http://www.gs1uk.org/> - then select ‘Check Digit Calculator’ from the Quick Links menu.
- **Add-on** (digits 14-15): The 2-digit code used to identify each issue. The add-on changes for every issue therefore a new bar code symbol is required for each issue. The section below defines the guidelines for numbering different types and frequencies of magazines.
  - **Weekly Publications** - The issue number is week number of the cover date. The International Standards Organisation (ISO) week number is used; where week 01 is the first week of the year, containing 4 or more days of the New Year. Weeks are numbered sequentially (from 1 to 52 or 53) and the cover date will relate to this number. Note weeks start on a Monday.
  - **Fortnightly, Three-Weekly and Four-Weekly Publications** - Use the same numbering method as for weeklies with the issue number being the week number of the cover date.
  - **Monthly Publications** - The issue number is based on the month shown on the cover., using the month number 01-12 (January = 01)
  - **Special Monthly Publications** - When an additional issue is published during the year, 20 should be added to the month number. For example. Summer special issue, cover dated June, would be numbered 26 and a Christmas special would be numbered 32.
  - **Monthly publications showing no month date on the cover** use the rules for Serial Publications below.
  - **Bi-Monthly Publications** - Use the number of the first month as shown on the cover date. For example. June/July would be 06.
  - **Quarterly Seasonal and Special Publications** - Use guidelines as for monthly or serial publications.
  - **Serial Publications (For example Partworks)** - There are several forms of numbering used for these publications depending on the circumstances:
    - \* **Volume numbered** - use the last 2 digits of the issue number.  
For example, Vol X No 8 = 08 and Vol X No 123 = 23.
    - \* **Issue numbered** - use the last 2 digits. For example: issue 82 = 82. For part numbers over 100 continue to use the last 2 digits. For example: issue 109 = 09.
- **Light Margin Indicator (chevron)**: This appears in the right-hand margin of the symbol. It ensures there is sufficient margin for the bar code reader to realise it has finished the bar code.