

Barcode Colour & Printing Guide

How do I position the barcode on my product?



Barcode orientation depends on the packaging.

If the barcode is going on a flat surface (e.g. a cardboard box), the preferred orientation of the barcode is “picket fence” (where the barcode bars are like a fence, and the barcode number is at the bottom).

If the barcode is going on a curved surface (e.g. a bottle) the preferred orientation of the barcode is “ladder” (where the barcode is rotated so that the bars are like a ladder).

When a barcode is printed onto a curved surface sometimes the edges of the barcode can't be read by a barcode scanner because of the curve. Reduce the curve by printing the barcode *along* the products so it looks like a ladder.

Please note that barcode orientation can be determined by the printing process. Depending on the printing process you use, you may find that you get a much higher printing quality if the bars of the barcode run in the direction of the print (“web direction”) – in this situation, it is best to print the barcode in the direction of the print if possible.

Make sure the barcode is placed on a smooth surface, so that no part of the barcode is on a crease or edge in the packaging.

The barcode should not wrap around a corner. No staples should go through the barcode. Don't print on perforations, seams, folds, or absorbent paper.

Make sure there is sufficient space around the barcode symbol, and that other symbols or text don't encroach on it. A retail (EAN-13 or UPC-A) barcode has a 2mm-3mm “quiet zone” (blank margin) on both the left and right sides. Make sure that these quiet zones are left intact. If the quiet zone is cropped off or text is overlapped in the white space, the barcode won't scan.

If you need to, you can reduce your EAN-13 (or UPC-A) barcode down to 80% of standard size – approximately 30mm wide x 20mm high. We do not recommend reducing your barcode size any smaller than this.

Avoid printing too close to the edge of a product. This is where the checkout operator may hold the item and so block the barcode. 8mm from the edge is the official recommendation, and no closer than 5mm from the edge.

Book ISBN barcodes should be printed on the lower right of the book's back cover.

Magazine and newspaper ISSN barcodes should be printed on the front cover at the bottom.

Can I remove the > symbol?

You can remove the > symbol however you must maintain the white space on the right-hand side of the barcode. If you crop this white space the barcode will not scan.

Can my barcode have a coloured background?

You can print your barcode with a coloured background – but use a light colour so that there is still a lot of contrast between the black bars and the background colour.

Do not print onto black as the scanner cannot see the left and right white 'quiet zones'.



This barcode will not scan. This is due to being printed on black packaging so the left and right white quiet zones cannot be seen.

Black bars on a white background is the best combination, however some other colour combinations will also work. Some colour combinations are not suitable.

White and warm colours (yellow and red) are invisible to barcode scanners therefore these colours are appropriate for the barcode background.

Black and cold colours (blue, purple, green, and dark brown) are visible to the barcode scanner therefore these colours are suitable for the vertical barcode bars.

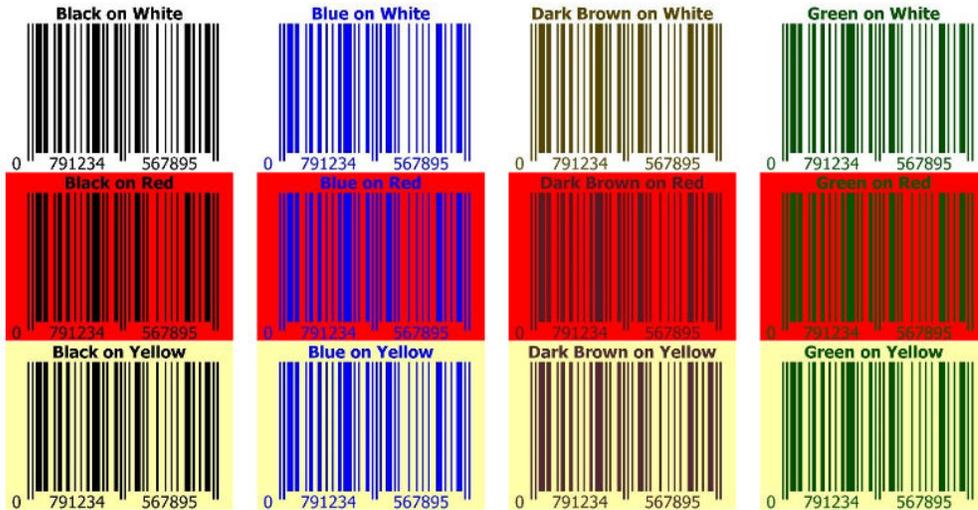
Contrast is important. The vertical bars should be printed in a darker colour than the background.

We recommend that you test your printed barcode label with a few different barcode scanners to make sure that its easily readable (because different scanners can have slightly different colour calibrations).

Metallic inks are unsuitable for printed barcodes because they reflect light away from the scanner.

Barcode Colour Guide

Acceptable barcode colour combinations



Unacceptable barcode colour combinations

