The international language of ISO graphical symbols help us every day. Find out how!
About ISO

ISO is the International Organization for Standardization. It has a membership of 164 national standards bodies from countries large and small, industrialized, developing and in transition, in all regions of the world. ISO’s portfolio of more than 19 400 standards provides business, government and society with practical tools for economic, environmental and societal dimensions of sustainable development. ISO/COPOLCO has developed this leaflet to raise public awareness of ISO graphical symbols which transmit safety messages and other important information without creating language barriers.

About ISO/COPOLCO

The ISO Committee on consumer policy (ISO/COPOLCO) is ISO’s forum for promoting consumers’ interests in standardization. Its purpose is to focus input of consumers’ views into ISO’s policies, procedures, standards and services, and to help consumers around the world benefit from standardization.

For further reference, see “Shapes and colours” on page 27, and “References and useful Websites” on page 33.
The international language of
ISO graphical symbols

Graphical symbols are vital for giving information when written words are not adequate. International Standards developed by ISO (International Organization for Standardization) provide people all over the world with a coherent set of graphical symbols to help overcome language and other barriers.

A technical committee, ISO/TC 145, *Graphical symbols*, has defined internationally accepted requirements for designs, colours, content and shapes of graphical symbols. These symbols convey important messages about product features, directions and other aspects of daily life – whether at work, at home, or for leisure. Critical areas include health and safety-related warnings, prohibitions and mandatory actions.

We invite you to see first-hand how ISO graphical symbols help keep you safe and well-informed. **Join the Smith family as they discover just how useful ISO graphical symbols can be when they leave on holiday for the fictitious country of “Ambrosia”**.

After your tour is over, visit us at [www.iso.org](http://www.iso.org)
Parking or car parking

Never been to Ambrosia before... I just can't wait!

So glad to finally get away...

Mummy, are we there yet?

No, dear, this is the airport car park.
We have to remember to change some money.

Look! There's the currency exchange booth!
WHERE IS OUR GATE, PLEASE?

THROUGH THE DOORS AT THE END OF THE TERMINAL. FOLLOW THE DEPARTURES SIGN.
Glad to have the wheelchair back! But I can't get up the escalator!

There's the lift!
I'm hungry!

It's true - we should really eat something before we board the plane...

Glad to see the restaurant sign!
Oh no, Emily, not again! Well, I just saw where to change your nappy...
Watch your step on the way, dear!
No pacemakers allowed here. How will we manage with my mother-in-law?

Please proceed this way.

No access for persons with pacemakers
That flight went smoothly, didn’t it? But how do we get out of here? I don’t understand any of this...

Here we go – way out!
Now for the rental car I reserved...

...Looks like that must be there!
It’s good to be on our way at last, but pity about the bad weather! We might as well have stayed at home!

I just have to find where to adjust the beam... Aah! Here it is!

Low beam
风挡雨刷

It's really raining hard...

This car is very different from ours but the windscreen wiper symbol is the same – that helps!

Windscreen wiper
According to my directions, the hotel must be to the left, do you see anything?

Yes! I can see the hotel sign – that must be it!
Next day

What a lovely place, isn’t it? It’s warm and sunny today – very nice for a swim.

Looks like it’s shallow water.

No diving
Jack, watch out! You shouldn't jump in here!

Why not? Why can't we?

Look it's prohibited!

No jumping into water
OH NO, THE FIRE ALARM!

LET'S GET OUT EVERYONE!
Grandma, I think we have to go over there...

Well done, Jack!

Where's the exit?

No need to read it, Daddy! Look at the running man on the sign!
Where do we go now?

I think we have to gather over there.

Evacuation assembly point
Next day

Oh, I haven’t felt well since I took that drink from the tap...

Oh, Mother! Didn’t you see the “not drinking water” sign?

I need to go to the doctor.
Don't worry Grandma, I see the hospital sign!
I am so happy you're feeling better, Mother, shall we take Emily to the beach?

That would be lovely, dear, and I just saw the information sign!
Meanwhile, Dad and Jack decide to do something more adventurous...

*Why do we have to put these funny things on?*

*The sign there tells us that we must wear a life jacket because we are going in a speedboat.*

Wear personal flotation devices
Wait, darling, people are surfing here, so we have to go a little farther...

Go, water!
Oh, no...
No swimming here either?

Time to go to the pool.

No swimming
What a lovely vacation that was!

No need to speak Ambrosian to understand the graphical symbols!

Why?

Because they are the same in Ambrosia as at home!
Shapes and colours of international safety signs

The safety signs illustrated in this leaflet comply with design rules standardized and published by ISO.

The general public will encounter safety signs in a variety of situations, including in workplaces, public areas and on products. The standardized colours and basic shapes for safety signs are therefore important in helping to ensure that the different types of safety signs, and the safety messages they convey, are easily recognizable.

Several safety signs are included in the story of the Smith family’s holiday. In some cases, safety signs will be accompanied by additional signs or supplementary text to help make the safety message clear.

Further examples of types of safety signs are shown on the following pages.
Warning sign

How to recognize?
Yellow triangle with black border and black symbol.

What is the type of safety message?
Warns of hazards which could result in personal injury or threat to health.

This sign will be accompanied by text or additional signs to explain the reasons for the warning.
Prohibition sign

How to recognize?
Red ring and diagonal bar with black symbol on white background.

What is the type of safety message?
Specifies behaviour that is prohibited because it would result in an immediate or potential risk of personal injury or threat to health.

This sign will be accompanied by text or additional signs to explain the nature of the prohibition.

General prohibition sign

No smoking

Do not use lift in the event of fire
Mandatory action sign

How to recognize?
Blue circle with white symbol.

What is the type of safety message?
Specifies an action required to safeguard personal health and/or avoid risk of personal injury.

*This sign will be accompanied by text or additional signs to explain the nature of the required action.*
Safe condition sign

How to recognize?
Green square with white symbol.

What is the type of safety message?
Identifies evacuation routes and assembly points.
Indicates the location of first aid and emergency equipment
or a safety facility or a safety action.
Fire safety sign

How to recognize?
Red square with white symbol, and always including representation of flames in white.

What is the type of safety message?
Indicates the location of fire equipment.
Relevant International Standards

- The ISO 3864 series of standards which specify design requirements, including shapes and colours, for safety signs
- The ISO/IEC 80416 series of standards which specify basic principles for graphical symbols for use on equipment
- ISO 7000, Graphical symbols for use on equipment – Registered symbols
- ISO 7001, Graphical symbols – Public information symbols
- ISO 7010, Graphical symbols – Safety colours and safety signs – Registered safety signs
- ISO 17724, Graphical symbols – Vocabulary
- ISO 20712-1, Water safety signs and beach safety flags – Part 1: Specifications for water safety signs used in workplaces and public areas
- ISO 20712-2, Water safety signs and beach safety flags – Part 2: Specifications for beach safety flags – Colour, shape, meaning and performance
- ISO 20712-3, Water safety signs and beach safety flags – Part 3: Guidance for use
- ISO 22727, Graphical symbols – Creation and design of public information symbols – Requirements
- ISO/IEC Guide 74, Graphical symbols – Technical guidelines for the consideration of consumers’ needs