BARCODE GLOSSARY

Retail Barcodes

The data encoded is a number which can be used to uniquely identify an item.
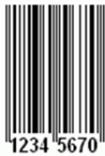
UPC-A
uses 12 digits, and is the most commonly used barcode in the United States.

UPC-E
Condensed version of UPC-A. Half the size of A, it is used on Products with small packaging.

EAN 13 (GTIN 13)
A superset of UPC-A, it uses 13 digits instead of 12. Used internationally.

EAN 8 (GTIN 8)
Condensed version of EAN 13.

RSS-14
Encodes 14-digit EAN in in a smaller space by stacking the linear code. Is omnidirectionally scanned.

Some retailers use their own proprietary barcode types, which are usually based on either EAN or UPC barcodes.

Barcodes for Non-Retail Labels

There are many different symbologies used for representing alphanumeric codes. Among the most popular are:

Code 25 (Interleaved 2 of 5)
used for digits only. Industrial use.

Code 39
Used for digits, letters, and some other characters.

Codabar
used for digits, plus a few other characters. Often used for medicine in the past.

Code 128
For large amounts of data used for full ASCII character set.

Code 93
Compressed form of Code 39 Used for full ASCII character set.

Telepen
used for the full ASCII character set. Used in libraries, motor industry, and others.

UCC/EAN-128
Uses Code 128 symbology. Uses 2-digit Application Identifiers to specify the data that follows. Primarily used for shipping and product info. Used worldwide.

US Postal Zip (PostNet)
Encodes data in the height of bars. Can encode a five-digit zip code, zip +4 code, or a full 11-point delivery point coe. Each requires a mod-10 check digit.

Barcodes for Encoding a Web-Site Address (URL)

Quick Response (QR)
a two-dimensional barcode that can be scanned by a mobile phone. Often seen on printed advertisements, promotional material and product packaging. They can be used to encode a website URL, or an e-mail address, phone number, SMS service, or plain text.

Coupon Barcodes

EAN-13 (99)
Special form of EAN-13 which just starts with 99.

UPC Coupon
UPC coupons codes begin with 5. Uses combination of UPC-A and GS1 128, which allows for extra information to be encoded.

GS1 DataBar Coupon
a new structure, which uses DataBar Expanded, and encodes even more information than the UPC

Packaging Barcodes

Barcodes typically found on shipping boxes that contain several, or many, items.

ITF-14
Code used to make cartons
and palettes that are including
goods with an EAN-13 code.

GS1 128 (formerly EAN 128):
Capable of supplying more detail
about product such as dates, batch
numbers, weight, quantity, and dimensions.

GS1 DataBar Expanded (formerly RSS Expanded)
Can encode the same information
as GS1 128, but can be cut and
stacked to reduce space.

GS1 DataMatrix
Can encode the same information
as GS1 128, but in less space.

There are many other barcodes in circulation around the world that are not listed here. Before you choose any barcode, make sure that it conforms to how you will be using it.

Caution

It is not recommended to circumvent GS1 in acquiring a UPC or other barcode used for retail. There are many firms that exist called UPC Resellers, or Barcode Resellers, that promise to resell retail or wholesale barcodes for much less. In fact, many of these companies that claim to sell UPC codes that have originated with GS1, or are "authentic," prey on the lack of understanding by many smaller businesses.

These re-sold codes can provide serious limitations, and potentially damage the relationship with your retail partners. Before you take that chance, we encourage you to become more educated on the requirements and process to properly label your product. Please visit http://www.gs1us.org/ for more information.