

# Barcoding

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Barcodes are just another way of writing—they simply replace manual or key entered data. Barcodes encode numbers and letters by using a combination of bars and spaces of varying widths.

A barcode is only a reference number that is stored in a database, and does not contain any details about the item. For example, when the cashier scans out a music CD, the bar code does not contain the CD name, artist, or price. The 12-digit UPC bar code number is scanned and transmitted to the store's computer and database. The computer then looks up and relates the scanned bar code number to its corresponding stored record (which contains the description, artist, price, etc.) then displays the price at the register.

Bar codes are used in every industry and offer numerous benefits: elimination of manual data, more effective use of human resources, real-time collection of data, increased accuracy, faster processing, and increased efficiency.

In a retail environment, barcodes allow for quick and accurate checkouts, and real-time monitoring of inventory levels. Government agencies use barcodes to track the location of assets. Office managers use barcodes to track status and locations of file folders. In manufacturing, barcodes are scanned throughout a process to alert managers as to the status and location of particular jobs-in-process. The most common use for barcodes, found across all industries, is for inventory tracking. With the aid of portable data terminals, a person can enter the transaction type (check in, restock, move, check out, take out), scan the item(s), and enter the quantity. This collected data is sent to the main inventory database, where the status and on-hand quantities are updated.



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