



International  
Standard

**ISO/IEC 14651**

**Information technology —  
International string ordering  
and comparison — Method for  
comparing character strings and  
description of the common template  
tailorable ordering**

*Technologies de l'information — Classement international  
et comparaison de chaînes de caractères — Méthode de  
comparaison de chaînes de caractères et description du modèle  
commun et adaptable d'ordre de classement*

**Seventh edition  
2025-07**



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Published in Switzerland

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## Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) and IEC (the International Electrotechnical Commission) form the specialized system for worldwide standardization. National bodies that are members of ISO or IEC participate in the development of International Standards through technical committees established by the respective organization to deal with particular fields of technical activity. ISO and IEC technical committees collaborate in fields of mutual interest. Other international organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO and IEC, also take part in the work.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of document should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see [www.iso.org/directives](http://www.iso.org/directives) or [www.iec.ch/members\\_experts/refdocs](http://www.iec.ch/members_experts/refdocs)).

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This document was prepared by Joint Technical Committee ISO/IEC JTC 1, *Information technology*, Subcommittee SC 2, *Coded character sets*.

This seventh edition cancels and replaces the sixth edition (ISO/IEC 14651:2020), which has been technically revised.

The main changes are as follows:

- the Common Template Tables are now referenced externally, removing the need for frequent update to this document.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at [www.iso.org/members.html](http://www.iso.org/members.html) and [www.iec.ch/national-committees](http://www.iec.ch/national-committees).

## Introduction

This document provides a method, applicable around the world, for ordering text data, and references Common Template Tables which, when tailored, can meet a given language's ordering requirements while retaining reasonable ordering for other scripts.

Common Template Tables require some tailoring in different local environments. Conformance to this document requires that all deviations from these templates, called "deltas", be declared to document resultant discrepancies.

This document describes a method to order text data independently of context.

ISO/IEC 30112 has specifications for ordering that informatively complement the specifications in this document and indicates where additional information can be sought on ordering keywords defined in this document.



# Information technology — International string ordering and comparison — Method for comparing character strings and description of the common template tailorable ordering

## 1 Scope

This document defines a reference comparison method. This method is applicable to two or more character strings to determine their collating order in a sorted list. The method can be applied to strings containing characters from the full repertoire of ISO/IEC 10646. This method is also applicable to subsets of that repertoire to produce ordering results valid (after tailoring) for a given set of languages for each script. This method uses collation tables derived either from the Common Template Tables (CTT) referenced by this document or from one of their tailoring. The format of the Common Template Table is described using the Backus-Naur Form (BNF). The format is used normatively within this document.

This document also defines syntax elements to tailor these Common Template Tables used by the reference comparison method. Furthermore, it defines requirements for a declaration of the differences (delta) between a collation table and a given Common Template Table including the tailoring elements.

These Common Template Tables describe an order for all characters encoded in the current and past ISO/IEC 10646 editions, including amendments. They allow for a specification of a fully deterministic ordering. These tables enable the specification of a string ordering adapted to local ordering rules, without requiring an implementer to have knowledge of all the different scripts already encoded in the Universal Coded Character Set (UCS).

All these Common Template Tables have reference names which are related to a particular stage of development of the ISO/IEC 10646 Universal coded character set or a particular version of the Unicode Standard. These names and their relationship with ISO/IEC 10646 or the Unicode Standard repertoire are specified by an externally referenced document: Unicode Technical Standard, UTS #10, Unicode Collation Algorithm.

This document does not:

- mandate a specific comparison method; any equivalent method giving the same results is acceptable;
- mandate a specific format for describing or tailoring tables in a given implementation;
- mandate specific symbols to be used by implementations;
- mandate any specific internal format for intermediate keys used when comparing, nor for the table used. The use of numeric keys is not mandated either;
- mandate a context-dependent ordering;
- mandate any particular preparation of character strings prior to comparison.

NOTE 1 It is typical to do preparation of character strings prior to comparison even if it is not prescribed by this document (see [Annex C](#)).

NOTE 2 [Annex D](#) describes problems that gave way to this document with their anticipated solutions.