



The New 14-Digit GTIN Bar Code: *NOT!*

Summary: Beginning on January 1, 2005 many industries and trading partners will require the use of GTIN (Global Trade Item Number). There is some misunderstanding about what GTIN is and isn't, and what its impact will be. Ideally GTIN usage will be near-universal with benefits both large and small. Meanwhile we all need to learn more about GTIN and how it will impact us (if at all).

Global Trade Identification Numbers are an international standard. GTINs (pronounced "gee tin") are 14-digit numbers that define a common way to share data. "If you agree to use GTINs I will too. From now on, we'll both anticipate 14-digit strings whenever we communicate." GTINs are a lingua franca for electronic commerce. GTINs are building blocks for data synchronization. You agree to send me GTINs, not part numbers, catalog numbers, or anything else.

You can think of GTINs as a data bucket. GTINs are not bar codes. There is no such thing as a GTIN bar code or a 14-digit bar code. True most of the time most of us will use bar codes to represent GTINs. But sometimes they can be stored and transmitted using RFID chips or OCR or even scribbled on a matchbook. What's important is the structure and format of the data, not how it's represented.

When a GTIN is used to make a bar code it can be one of several formats:

UCC-12 a.k.a. UPC version A

EAN/UCC-13 a.k.a. EAN-13

EAN/UCC-8 a.k.a. EAN-8 & UPC version E

EAN/UCC-14 a.k.a. UCC/EAN-128 (Code 128)

Beginning in 2005, cash registers and other point of sale devices are expected to accept EAN-13 and EAN-8 bar codes in addition to the UPC symbols used to date. 1.1.2005 is sometimes referred to as "2005 Sunrise". If you are already putting valid UPC bar codes on your products you don't have to do anything differently.

Azalea Software's UPCTools font package is already GTIN compliant. If you've been using UPC or EAN bar codes on your product's package there's no need to re-bar code anything. There is no such thing as a GTIN bar code or a 14 digit bar code. The key is to use unique GTINs for every product or service. Hopefully you're already doing that.

GTIN numbers are padded with leading digits to make them 14-digits in length. If you're using a GTIN as your starting point when making a UPC bar code in UPCTools, use the right-most 12 digits as your input. For example, our company prefix is **692771** and we have a product whose item reference number is **02005**. The corresponding GTIN number is **0069277102005** and I would input **69277102005** in UPCTools to make a UPC version A bar code.

Company prefixes are of variable length, between 6 and 9 digits long. Do not attempt to parse a GTIN and retrieve portions of it. Treat it as a whole.

Store GTINs as 14-digits saved as *text*. If GTINs are stored as numbers you run the risk of having leading zeros stripped. For example, "0012345678912" may be stored as "12345678912" which is incorrect.

For more information contact the Uniform Code Council - www.uc-council.org