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# Australian Standard 2342, Part 1—1980

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## THE DESIGN AND USE OF GRAPHIC SYMBOLS AND PUBLIC INFORMATION SYMBOL SIGNS

### Part 1—GENERAL PRINCIPLES

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**STANDARDS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA**

*Incorporated by Royal Charter*



THE FOLLOWING SCIENTIFIC, INDUSTRIAL, CONSUMER AND GOVERNMENTAL organizations and departments were officially represented on the committee entrusted with the preparation of this standard:

Australian Council of Trade Unions  
Australian Road Research Board  
Australian Tourist Commission  
Confederation of Australian Industry  
Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs  
Department of Productivity, Melbourne  
Ethnic Affairs Commission, N.S.W.  
Electricity Commission of New South Wales  
Flinders University of South Australia  
Industrial Design Institute of Australia, N.S.W. Chapter  
Institute of Technology, Western Australia  
Monash University  
National Association of Australian State Road Authorities  
Railways of Australia Committee  
Royal Australian Institute of Architects  
Sydney College of the Arts  
University of New South Wales  
University of Sydney  
Victorian College of Optometry, University of Melbourne  
Victorian Ministry of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs

In addition a Social Worker and a Safety Superintendent of two industrial organizations were coopted to the committee.

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This standard, prepared by Committee MS/3, Public Information Symbols, was approved on behalf of the Council of the Standards Association of Australia on 4 February 1980 and was published on 1 April 1980.

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*This standard was issued in draft form for public review as DR 78141.*

**AUSTRALIAN STANDARD**

**THE DESIGN AND USE OF GRAPHIC  
SYMBOLS AND PUBLIC INFORMATION  
SYMBOL SIGNS**

**Part 1  
GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

**AS 2342, Part 1—1980**

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## PREFACE

This standard was prepared by the Association's Committee on Public Information Symbols as the first in a comprehensive series of standards intended for use in the development and implementation of standard graphic symbols and graphic symbol signs for general information.

The aim of this standard is standardization of the principles to be followed—

- (a) in the designing of graphic symbols;
- (b) in the presenting of them in single sheet form for indexing; and
- (c) in the designing of public information and regulatory signs incorporating graphic symbols.

Graphic symbols convey the intended message with the aid of a symbolic colour and/or shape. The standard therefore specifies the colour and shape to be used for the various classes of sign, e.g. a purely informative symbol indicating the location of a facility is white and mounted on a dark blue square background, a symbol indicating a hazard is black and mounted on a yellow diamond-shaped background with a black enclosure.

The work of ISO Committee TC/145, Graphic Symbols, and TC/80, Safety Colours and Signs, has been taken into consideration in the development of the complete series, which is as follows:

Part 1—General Principles

Part 2—Method for Determining the Need for a Symbol and for Establishing the Design Criteria

Part 3—Test Procedures for Evaluating Graphic Symbols and Symbol Signs

Part 4—Principles for the Design of Graphic Symbols

Part 5—Design of Signs Incorporating Symbols

Part 6—Implementation of Symbol Signs

Part 7—Index and Presentation of Standard Graphic Symbols and Symbol Signs in Single Sheet Form

Part 8—Guide for the Development of Teaching Programs

Reference to the foregoing may be necessary in the application of this standard.

To assist in consideration of the colours and shapes for symbol signs, a survey was undertaken of research work into the effectiveness of colour and shape combinations used in Australia and overseas. The colours and shapes specified in this standard are those that were proved to be the most effective. Further research is being carried out to establish the most efficient colour and shape combination for mandatory and restriction signs, and the final specifications for these classes of sign will be based on the results of that research.

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# STANDARDS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

## Australian Standard

for

# THE DESIGN AND USE OF GRAPHIC SYMBOLS AND PUBLIC INFORMATION SYMBOL SIGNS

## PART 1—GENERAL PRINCIPLES

### FOREWORD

In the last thirty years Australia has welcomed many thousands of new citizens from every corner of the globe and it is not uncommon to find that in some workplaces up to thirty different languages are spoken.

As a result of this multi-language situation, graphic symbols are being considered seriously as a universal and basic means of overcoming language barriers. However, if they are to provide an alternative language—one that is not dependent upon words—not only the symbols but also the syntax in which they are used must be standardized.

The aim of this standard therefore is first to reduce the proliferation of symbols by standardizing the symbol and its meaning, and secondly to produce an effective symbol language by standardizing the design of symbol signs.

A symbol language like any other must be learnt, and consistency in the use of colours and shapes which are used to identify, qualify, instruct, command, warn or indicate will simplify the learning process. Once the meanings of the colours and shapes are learnt the users need only to increase their 'symbol vocabulary'.

A great deal of research has been and is still being done in the development of an effective Australian road signs standard (AS 1742, Manual of Uniform

Traffic Control Devices). Signs complying with that standard have been in use for many years and are familiar to drivers and most road users.

It was therefore decided that the yellow diamond used in AS 1742 should be adopted for all warning signs. Although the use of a yellow triangle for industrial safety warning signs is allowed, such use beyond that application is not encouraged, first because it has been proved to be less efficient from the point of view of design, legibility and economics, and secondly because the use of an alternative shape introduces an unnecessary inconsistency in the symbol language. Such inconsistencies should be avoided.

AS 2342, Part 2 (Method for Determining the Need for a Symbol and for Establishing the Design Criteria) and AS 2342, Part 3 (Test Procedures for Evaluating Graphic Symbols and Symbol Signs) were originally intended as guidelines for SAA committees to follow in developing standard symbols. It was considered that their inclusion in the standard would both draw attention to the rigorous empirical method involved in developing a standardized graphic symbol and discourage organizations or individuals from devising their own, and it was finally decided therefore that inclusion of these very necessary procedures should highlight the need for a standardized graphic symbol language.

### SPECIFICATION

**1 SCOPE.** This standard establishes principles and procedures to be followed in the development and use of graphic symbols and public information signs incorporating these symbols.

The standard also specifies the way in which the standard symbol shall be presented in single sheet form for inclusion in the Index of Standardized Symbols (AS 2342, Part 7).

**2 APPLICATION.** This standard applies to graphic symbols which may be—

- (a) placed on equipment or parts of equipment of any kind in order to instruct the persons handling the equipment as to its use and operation;
- (b) used in places and on ways where people may work, assemble or move, giving them information and/or instructions, such as prohibitions, warnings, rules or limits, regarding their behaviour; or

- (c) used in pictorial reproductions, such as plans, drawings, layouts, guidelines and similar documents.

**NOTE:** The standardization of letters, numerals, punctuation marks, mathematical signs and symbols, and symbols for quantities and units is excluded although these may be used as a component of a graphic symbol.

**3 DEFINITIONS.** For the purpose of this standard, the following definitions apply:

#### 3.1 Graphic Symbols.

**3.1.1 Graphic symbol**—a visual form used to transmit a message by designating a function or concept in an understandable manner without words.

**3.1.2 Image content**—the elements of the symbol and their configuration.

**3.1.3 Referent**—a precise statement of what the symbol stands for.

**3.1.4 Function**—details of the purpose of the symbol.