PD ISO/TS 9241-126:2019

BSI Standards Publication

Ergonomics of human-system interaction

Part 126: Guidance on the presentation of auditory information

bsi.

National foreword

This Published Document is the UK implementation of ISO/TS 9241-126:2019.

The UK participation in its preparation was entrusted to Technical Committee PH/9, Applied ergonomics.

A list of organizations represented on this committee can be obtained on request to its secretary.

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© The British Standards Institution 2019
Published by BSI Standards Limited 2019

ISBN 978 0 580 99800 3

ICS 13.180; 35.180

Compliance with a British Standard cannot confer immunity from legal obligations.

This Published Document was published under the authority of the Standards Policy and Strategy Committee on 31 December 2019.

Amendments/corrigenda issued since publication

Date	Text affected

PD ISO/TS 9241-126:2019

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

ISO/TS 9241-126

First edition
2019-12

Ergonomics of human-system interaction —

Part 126: Guidance on the presentation of auditory information

Reference number
ISO/TS 9241-126:2019(E)

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Published in Switzerland

Contents

Page

Foreword ... **vi**

Introduction ... **vii**

1 Scope ... **1**

2 Normative references ... **1**

3 Terms and definitions ... **1**

4 Application ... **3**
4.1 Accessibility ... 3
4.2 Applying the recommendations in this document ... 4

5 Appropriate usage ... **4**
5.1 Visual system unavailability ... 4
5.2 Inadequate or excessive light ... 4
5.3 Inability to maintain visual attention ... 4
5.4 Message brevity and simplicity ... 4
5.5 Event-based messages ... 5
5.6 Messages requiring immediate action ... 5
5.7 Messages requiring verbal response ... 5
5.8 Permanence of message relevance ... 5
5.9 Attention capture ... 5
5.10 Muting sound ... 5

6 Auditory presentation ... **5**
6.1 General ... 5
6.1.1 Auditory channel overload ... 5
6.1.2 Information conciseness ... 5
6.1.3 Avoid extreme dimensions ... 5
6.1.4 Monaural option ... 6
6.1.5 Ease of learning ... 6
6.1.6 Signal invariance ... 6
6.1.7 Signal similarity ... 6
6.1.8 Two-stage signal usage ... 6
6.1.9 Logical sequencing ... 6
6.1.10 Supporting short term memory ... 6
6.1.11 Cross-cultural sounds ... 7
6.1.12 Representative sounds ... 7
6.1.13 Representative sound usage ... 7
6.2 Detectability in noisy environments ... 7
6.2.1 Signal distinctiveness ... 7
6.2.2 Change signal frequency ... 7
6.2.3 Signal duration in noisy environments ... 7

7 Auditory dimensions ... **7**
7.1 Frequency ... 7
7.1.1 Absolute pitch identification ... 7
7.1.2 Temporal proximity for pitch comparison ... 7
7.1.3 Similarity for pitch comparison ... 7
7.1.4 Minimum difference for pitch comparison ... 8
7.1.5 Frequency range for pitch identification ... 8
7.1.6 Frequency range for most accurate pitch discrimination ... 8
7.1.7 Harmonicity for pitch identification ... 8
7.1.8 Harmonic tones for pitch discrimination tasks ... 8
7.1.9 Long-distance sound ... 8
7.1.10 Obstructed sound ... 8
7.2 Intensity ... 8
7.2.1 Avoid distortion ... 8

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7.2.2 Separate signal control 8
7.2.3 Loudness cues about the environment 9
7.2.4 Minimal signal intensity 9
7.2.5 Signal intensity for rapid response 9
7.2.6 Relative maximal signal intensity 9
7.2.7 Absolute maximal signal loudness 9
7.3 Timbre 9
7.3.1 Timbre discrimination 9
7.3.2 Musical instrument timbres 9
7.4 Localization 9
7.4.1 Guidance related to lateral sound localization 9
7.4.2 Minimum angle for position discrimination 10
7.4.3 Frequency selection for sound localization 10
7.4.4 Minimum distance for front/back position identification 10
7.4.5 Guidance related to distance judgment 10
7.4.6 Doppler effect 10
7.4.7 Guidance related to elevation angle judgment 10
7.5 Duration 11
7.5.1 Minimum signal duration 11
7.5.2 Adjustable signal duration 11
7.6 Rhythm and accent usage 11
7.7 Timing 11
7.7.1 Event-based sounds 11
7.7.2 Sounds to guide rhythmic movements 11
7.7.3 Concurrent auditory streams 11

8 Speech 11
8.1 Appropriate usage 11
8.1.1 Complex messages 11
8.1.2 Source identification 11
8.1.3 Untrained users 12
8.1.4 Stressful context of use 12
8.1.5 Rapid information exchange 12
8.2 General speech presentation 12
8.2.1 Eliminate non-relevant speech 12
8.2.2 Audio volume consistency 12
8.2.3 Monophonic speech presentation 12
8.2.4 Present messages serially 12
8.2.5 Information brevity 12
8.2.6 Message replay 12
8.2.7 Option phrase sequencing 12
8.2.8 Grouping information 13
8.3 Language 13
8.3.1 Language and dialect control 13
8.3.2 Avoid dialect-specific expressions 13
8.3.3 Vocabulary used in prompts 13
8.3.4 Consistency of terminology use 13
8.3.5 Unambiguous prompts 13
8.3.6 Simple linguistic forms 13
8.3.7 Minimum syllable count 13
8.3.8 Sentence usage 13
8.4 Voice 13
8.4.1 Use of synthetic speech 13
8.4.2 Source voice identification 14
8.4.3 Dialects and accents 14
8.4.4 Speech output rate 14
8.4.5 Intonation and prosody 14

9 Earcons 14

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9.1 Meaningful earcons 14
9.2 Sound organization 14
9.3 Earcon usage 14
9.4 Earcon construction 14
9.5 Earcon duration 15
9.6 Consistency across earcons 15
9.7 Reversing earcons 15

10 Coding 15
10.1 General 15
10.1.1 Meaningfulness of codes 15
10.1.2 Access to meaning of code 15
10.1.3 Rules of code construction 15
10.1.4 Distinctiveness of codes 15
10.1.5 Consistent coding 15
10.1.6 Coding relative values 15
10.1.7 Ordered coding 16
10.1.8 Change of state 16
10.1.9 Combination codes 16
10.1.10 User training in codes 16
10.1.11 Counting simultaneous tones 16
10.2 Dimension-specific coding 16
10.2.1 Number of frequencies for pitch coding 16
10.2.2 Frequency selection for pitch coding 16
10.2.3 Need for redundant coding when coding based on frequency 16
10.2.4 Coding based on timbre 17
10.2.5 Coding based on intensity 17
10.2.6 Number of levels for loudness coding 17
10.2.7 Intensity spacing for loudness coding 17
10.2.8 Number of levels for pitch and loudness coding 17
10.2.9 Coding by position and distance 17
10.2.10 Coding position and distance with rhythm 17
10.2.11 Number of levels for duration coding 17

Bibliography 18

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Foreword

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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 ISO documents 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).

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For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 159, *Ergonomics*, Subcommittee SC 4, *Ergonomics of human-system interaction*.

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.

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Introduction

Interactive systems have used auditory information as primary sources and, more commonly, to enhance interactions in primarily visual systems since about the time the digital computer was invented. Even before that, one can consider telephone conversations to be a type of interactive system where information is presented aurally. The way participants in a telephone conversation present information to one another is largely based on learned and subconscious conventions. In the digital realm, sound has been used in increasingly symbolic ways, straying out of necessity from the realistic representations of objects and actions in the physical world.

Unlike visual displays, the information conveyed through sound is typically sparse, and it seems more difficult to intuitively understand what makes a sound scheme usable, whether in its design or its presentation. Since the main communication medium of modern interactive software is the visual display, it is not surprising that a need was first identified for guidelines relating to presentation of visual information. However, designers developing for both visual and auditory information would benefit from guidelines rooted in scientific discovery, that lead to clear and usable communication of information, while not inhibiting the creative process.

This document focuses on guidelines for presentation of information in the auditory modality.

The success of this document will depend on its positive impact on usability of future systems presenting auditory information using these guidelines. However, this document is not necessarily designed to be used by the direct beneficiaries of this desired usability increase. Instead, it serves the following types of users:

a) the user interface designer, who will apply these guidelines during the development process;

b) the buyer, who will reference this document during the product procurement process, and whose end users will gain from the potential benefits provided by the guidelines;

c) those responsible for ensuring products meet the recommendations in this document;

d) designers of auditory interface development tools to be used by auditory interface designers;

e) writers of software industry standard guides to be used by auditory interface designers.

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TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION **ISO/TS 9241-126:2019(E)**

Ergonomics of human-system interaction —

Part 126: Guidance on the presentation of auditory information

1 Scope

This document provides guidance for the auditory presentation of information controlled by software, irrespective of the device. It includes specific properties such as the syntactic or semantic aspects of information, e.g. coding techniques, and gives provisions for the organization of information taking account of human perception and memory capabilities.

This document does not address the hardware issues of the transmission and the production of auditory information.

NOTE 1 Volume is dependent on hardware and thus cannot always be absolutely controlled by software. Environmental conditions can also affect the ability for sounds to be perceived, which can be beyond the ability of the software to take into account.

This document does not apply to auditory alarms, warnings or other safety-related uses of auditory information.

NOTE 2 Safety-related uses of auditory presentation of information are covered in various domain specific standards, such as ISO 7731:2003 which deals with auditory danger signals for public and work areas, and IEC 60601-1-8:2006 which provides very specific requirements for auditory alarms for medical devices.

While this document applies to the presentation of all non-safety-related information, it does not include application domain specific guidance (e.g., audio instructions for consumer products).

This document can be utilized throughout the design process (e.g. as specification and guidance for designers during design or as a basis for heuristic evaluation). Its provisions for the presentation of information depend on the auditory design approach, the task, the user, the environment and the single or multiple technologies that can be used for presenting the information. Consequently, this document cannot be applied without knowledge of the context of use. It is not intended to be used as a prescriptive set of rules to be applied in its entirety but rather assumes that the designer has proper information available concerning task and user requirements and understands the use of available technology.

This document does not address visual or tactile/haptic presentation of information or modality shifting for the presentation of auditory information in other modalities.

NOTE 3 ISO 9241-112 provides high-level ergonomic guidance that applies to all modalities.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 9241-171, *Ergonomics of human-system interaction — Part 171: Guidance on software accessibility*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

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