

Normative and Informative

Normative elements are defined in [International Organization for Standardization Directives Part 2](#) as "elements that describe the scope of the document, and which set out provisions". Provisions include "requirements", "recommendations" and "statements". "Statements" include permissions, possibilities and capabilities. A "requirement" is an "expression in the content of a document conveying criteria to be fulfilled if compliance with the document is to be claimed and from which no deviation is permitted." It is not necessary to comply with recommendations and statements in order to comply with the standard, it is necessary to comply only with the requirements (that are denoted by the verbal form "shall"). There is much confusion between "normative" and "requirement", however the ISO terminology is supported by national standards bodies worldwide and is the legitimate description of these terms in the context of standards documents.

In [standards](#) terminology still used by some organisations, "normative" means "considered to be a [prescriptive](#) part of the standard". It characterises that part of the standard which describes what ought (see [philosophy](#) above) to be done within the application of that standard. It is implicit that application of that standard will result in a valuable outcome (*ibid.*). For example, many standards have an introduction, preface, or summary that is considered non-normative, as well as a main body that is considered normative. "Compliance" is defined as "complies with the normative sections of the standard"; an object that complies with the normative sections but not the non-normative sections of a standard is still considered to be in compliance.

- Normative = prescriptive = how to comply
- Informative = descriptive = help with conceptual understanding

Typically, normative is contrasted with informative (referring to the standard's descriptive, explanatory or [positive](#) content). Informative data is supplemental information such as additional guidance, supplemental recommendations, tutorials, commentary as well as background, history, development, and relationship with other elements. Informative data is not a requirement and doesn't compel compliance.

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