



ISO 9001:2026

ISO 9001 made simple: Separating myths from facts





Contents

What is ISO 9001?	4
Is it very complicated?	5
Isn't it only for big business?	6
Isn't quality management designed for the way businesses worked in the 1990s?	7
Does ISO 9001:2026 change everything?	7
Is ISO 9001 becoming a climate or sustainability standard?	8
Does ISO 9001 require artificial intelligence or digital tools?	8
Will ISO 9001 help me increase my profits?	9
Is ISO 9001 very expensive?	10
Isn't ISO 9001 just for manufacturers?	11
Is certification mandatory?	12
What benefits will it bring to my business or organization?	13

What is ISO 9001?

→ ISO 9001 is a standard that sets out the requirements for a quality management system (QMS).

It helps businesses and organizations consistently provide products and services that meet customer and applicable requirements, improve customer satisfaction, and strengthen the way they manage their processes.

The 2026 edition keeps the familiar ISO 9001 approach while updating and clarifying requirements so that the standard remains relevant to today's fast-changing world. This includes greater attention to creating and sustaining a positive culture underpinned by ethical behaviour, considering climate-related impacts, evolving interested-party expectations, and distinct consideration of both risks and opportunities.



Is it very complicated?

→ **No. ISO 9001 can seem complex at first, but the ideas behind the standard are straightforward.**

At its heart, ISO 9001 asks an organization to understand what it does, who it serves and what customers and other relevant interested parties expect. It is designed to help you consistently provide the products and services that you promise. Therefore, at its core the standard is about knowing your own organization and understanding your customers. The requirements help you navigate what is needed.

The seven quality management principles described in ISO 9000 remain a good place to start: customer focus, leadership, engagement of people, process approach, improvement, evidence-based decision making and relationship management.

The 2026 edition does not require organizations to start again from zero.

Organizations already using ISO 9001:2015 should review how their quality management system addresses the updated requirements, especially those relating to leadership and culture.

The new edition also separates the requirements for risks and opportunities to encourage more proactive consideration of both.

Isn't it only for big business?

→ No. ISO 9001 can be used by any organization, regardless of size, sector or type. Applying these principles makes it easier to implement, maintain and improve your QMS.

ISO 9001 can help small businesses establish a whole organization system to give them the best possible chance of success. A systems approach ensures no single aspect is looked at in isolation or overlooked completely.

The standard is flexible. It does not prescribe how to organize your quality management system, just the elements that need to be considered. The level of detail should be appropriate to the size, level of complexity, maturity and activities of your organization.

Smaller and less complex organizations can effectively implement ISO 9001 without the need for a consultant or other external help.

Tips can be found in [ISO guidance and supporting publications from ISO and ISO members](#).



Isn't quality management designed for the way businesses worked in the 1990s?

→ **No. Quality management underpins all successful businesses and industries.**

A QMS ensures that an organization keeps focus on both its customers and the products and services it expects to provide.

ISO 9001 was first published in 1987 but remains as relevant today as it always was. The standard is regularly reviewed and updated to ensure it reflects how businesses work in the 21st century.

The 2026 edition builds on the familiar, trusted approach. It keeps the core framework, but reflects how organizations operate today: more interconnected, more exposed to disruption, more digital, and more accountable to customers, regulators, employees and society.

Does ISO 9001:2026 change everything?

→ **No. The 2026 revision is evolutionary not revolutionary.**

The familiar structure of ISO 9001 remains. The process approach, customer focus, risk-based thinking, performance evaluation and continual improvement remain central.

The main updates clarify and strengthen requirements, including quality culture, ethical behaviour, leadership, and the treatment of risks and opportunities.

For organizations that already have an effective ISO 9001:2015 quality management system, the transition will not be a complete rebuild.

Is ISO 9001 becoming a climate or sustainability standard?

→ **No. ISO 9001 remains a quality management system standard.**

Organizations are, however, required to determine whether climate change is a relevant issue for their quality management system. Relevant interested parties can also have requirements related to climate change.

The requirement is there because climate change can impact operations, and operations can impact climate change. Extreme weather events like storms or heatwaves disrupt supply chains and daily activities. Ongoing long-term impacts of climate change may also permanently alter how organizations operate, or what products and services they offer. New regulation related to climate change is also being introduced and customers increasingly expect businesses to consider impact.

This does not mean that every organization must implement specific environmental standards or set climate targets as part of ISO 9001.

Does ISO 9001 require artificial intelligence or digital tools?

→ **No. ISO 9001 does not require organizations to use artificial intelligence or any specific technology.**

Organizations do, of course, use digital tools, data dashboards, automated workflows, remote collaboration tools or AI-supported systems to manage quality. Consequently, good quality management requires every organization to consider both the risks and the opportunities associated with technologies and implement appropriate checks and controls.

There are no specific requirements in ISO 9001:2026 about emerging technologies other than the need to consider them as potential risks or opportunities.

Will ISO 9001 help me increase my profits?

→ ISO 9001 can help bring financial benefits in a number of ways.

- It can increase productivity and effectiveness by helping organizations define, align and improve their processes.
- It can reduce errors and waste by improving control of activities and learning from nonconformities.
- It can improve customer experience, leading to repeat business, new customers and increased confidence in the organization.
- It can support better decision making by encouraging the use of relevant data and evidence.
- It can improve resilience by helping organizations identify risks, opportunities, dependencies and potential disruption.
- Certification to ISO 9001 can provide confidence in the organization's quality management system, enhance credibility and, in some markets, support access to customers and supply chains.

ISO 9001 is not a guarantee of profit, but it provides a practical framework that can support better performance and more consistent delivery of value.



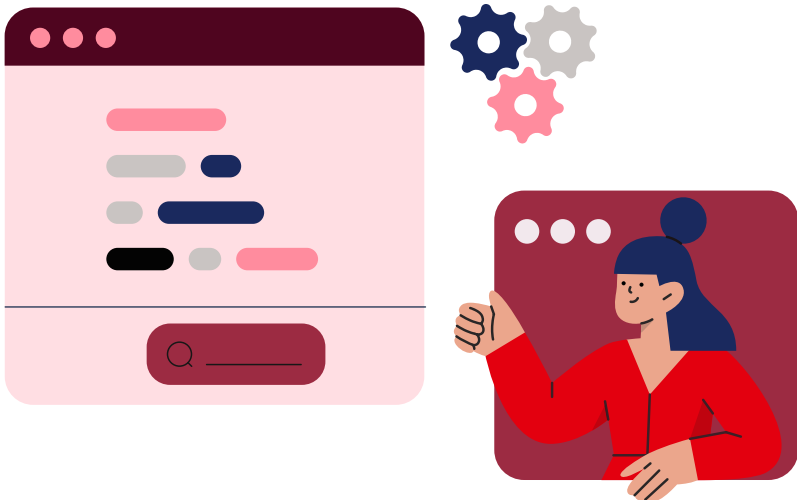
Is ISO 9001 very expensive?

→ **No. The standard can be purchased from the ISO member in your country or through the ISO Store and can be implemented without external support or significant expense.**

Certification is optional and significant benefits can be achieved without it. If the organization does choose to pursue certification, to help apply for new contracts or enter new markets, it will incur additional costs. These costs vary depending on the certification body, the size and complexity of the organization, and other factors.

Some organizations choose to use an external consultant; however, smaller and less complex organizations usually do not need to.

A quality management system based on ISO 9001 should fit your organization. It should help you work better, not create unnecessary cost or bureaucracy.



Isn't ISO 9001 just for manufacturers?

→ **No. ISO 9001 can be used by any organization, including service providers, public-sector bodies, educational institutions, healthcare providers, digital businesses, charities, associations and professional services organizations.**

The standard specifies generic requirements that apply to all types of organizations, with the starting point being context: understanding the issues that affect your specific QMS, as well as the needs and expectations of relevant interested parties, ensures the system is completely tailored to your own needs. In the rare instances where a requirement is not applicable, the organization can provide justification for this and still claim conformity.

Does implementing ISO 9001 mean lots of extra paperwork?

No. ISO 9001 only requires documented information to support the effective operation of the quality management system.

The term “documented information” is also inclusive of all types of information capture: photographs, videos, audio recordings, spreadsheets and emails all contribute. It is no longer necessary to create a “quality manual” or other paper-based documentation if it is not the best solution for you.

The amount and type of documented information you use for your own quality management system should be appropriate to your organization and how it operates. A small service organization, for example, is likely to need a different level and type of documented information from that needed by a complex multinational manufacturer.

The aim is to keep useful information available, controlled and up to date – not to create paperwork for its own sake.

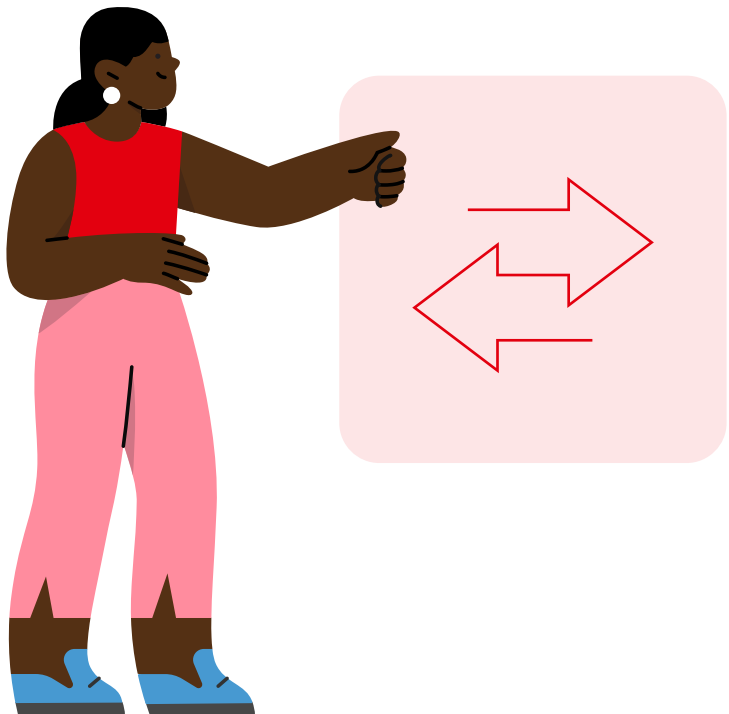
Is certification mandatory?

→ **No. Certification to ISO 9001 is not mandatory.**

Organizations can choose to certify according to their own needs and objectives. Many organizations realize the benefits of ISO 9001 without ever seeking certification. Where organizations choose certification, independent conformity assessment can provide customers and other interested parties with additional confidence that the quality management system conforms to ISO 9001.

If an organization is already certified to ISO 9001:2015, it should liaise with its certification body to ensure a smooth transition to the 2026 edition.

ISO does not undertake certification. This is conducted by other parties, such as certification bodies, testing laboratories and accreditation bodies.



What benefits will it bring to my business or organization?

→ **Implementing a Quality Management System (QMS) helps improve efficiency, manage risks, meet regulatory requirements, and consistently enhance customer satisfaction.**

Implementing a quality management system can help you:

- Assess the overall context of your organization, including internal and external issues that can affect your ability to achieve intended results.
- Determine whether climate change is a relevant issue for your organization.
- Understand who is affected by your work and what they expect from you.
- Decide which relevant interested party requirements need to be addressed through your quality management system.
- Clearly state your objectives and identify opportunities for improvement and growth.
- Put your customers first, making sure you consistently meet their needs and enhance their satisfaction.
- Promote a culture of quality, integrity and ethical behaviour throughout your organization.
- Work in a more efficient way by ensuring that processes are aligned, understood and effectively managed.
- Meet applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.
- Identify and address risks and opportunities that can affect your organization.
- Improve resilience in the face of disruption, supply-chain pressures, changing customer expectations and technological change.
- Expand into new markets, as some sectors and clients require ISO 9001 before doing business.

About ISO

ISO (International Organization for Standardization) is an independent, non-governmental international organization with a membership of 176* national standards bodies. Through its members, it brings together experts to share knowledge and develop voluntary, consensus-based, market-relevant International Standards that support innovation and provide solutions to global challenges.

ISO has published more than 26 400* International Standards and related documents covering almost every industry, from technology to food safety, to agriculture and healthcare.

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