



ISO/IEC 23859:2023 — Why Readability Standards Matter More Than Ever in Localisation

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In July 2023, [ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC 35](#) released [ISO/IEC 23859:2023](#), a deceptively slim but strategically potent standard titled *Information technology — User interfaces — Requirements and recommendations on making written text easy to read and understand*. At just 21 pages, it's not a heavyweight—but its implications for the localisation and translation industry are profound.

This standard doesn't concern itself with devices, platforms, or transmission mechanisms. Instead, it zeroes in on the clarity and accessibility of written text in user interfaces, regardless of language or delivery format. For LSPs, UX writers, and localisation strategists, it offers a fresh lens on how we evaluate and produce source content—especially in multilingual environments.

Bridging Standards: ISO/IEC 23859 meets ISO 18968 and ISO 24896

While ISO/IEC 23859 originates from the **Information Technology** domain, its relevance to Language and Terminology professionals is amplified when viewed alongside two draft standards from [ISO/TC 37](#):

[ISO 18968: Translation-Oriented Writing](#)

This draft standard provides guidance on producing source texts that are fit for translation: clear, unambiguous, and structurally sound. It complements ISO/IEC 23859 by reinforcing the idea that readability isn't just a UX concern – it's a translatability imperative.

[ISO 24896: Notation for Business Reporting](#)

This standard, currently a draft, aims to harmonise how business information is structured and presented. For LSPs working in financial, legal, or regulatory domains, it signals a shift toward standardised, machine-readable, and linguistically neutral reporting formats.

Together, these three standards form a cross-industry triad that touches on IT, business, and language, mirroring the very nature of our work as localisation professionals.

Why LSPs must track standards beyond language

Translation and localisation don't exist in a vacuum. We operate at the intersection of technology, regulation, design, and communication. That's why staying informed about standards from adjacent industries like IT, business reporting, and accessibility isn't optional. It's strategic. Our profession is well-equipped to provide:



- **Client education:** Standards like ISO/IEC 23859 can help LSPs advocate for better source content and inclusive design.
- **Process alignment:** Integrating readability and translatability criteria into workflows improves quality and reduces rework.
- **Strategic positioning:** Awareness of emerging standards allows LSPs to lead conversations—not just follow them.

Engage, Influence, Lead

If you're a member of the **Association of Translation Companies (ATC)** or part of the wider localisation community, now is the time to:

- **Review [ISO/IEC 23859:2023](#)** and consider its implications for your workflows and client guidance.
- **Track the development of ISO 18968 and ISO 24896** and contribute feedback where possible
 - [ISO 18968](#) commenting deadline: 11 November
 - [ISO 24896](#) commenting deadline: 6 December
- **Champion cross-industry dialogue**—whether through standards committees, client education, or internal training.

The future of localisation is not just multilingual—it's **multidisciplinary**. Let's make sure our voices shape the standards that shape our work.

Read more about ISO standards development for language services at

<https://atccertification.com/about-iso-standards/>