INTERNATIONAL STANDARD

ISO/IEC 11581-6

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Information technology — User system interfaces and symbols — Icon symbols and functions —

Part 6:
Action icons

Technologies de l'information — Interfaces pour système utilisateur et symboles — Symboles et fonctions d'icônes —

Partie 6: Icônes d'action



Reference number
ISO/IEC 11581-6:1999(E)

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) and IEC (the International Electrotechnical Commission) form the specialized system for worldwide standardization. National bodies that are members of ISO or IEC participate in the development of International Standards through technical committees established by the respective organization to deal with particular fields of technical activity. ISO and IEC technical committees collaborate in fields of mutual interest. Other international organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO and IEC, also take part in the work.

In the field of information technology, ISO and IEC have established a joint technical committee, ISO/IEC JTC 1. Draft International Standards adopted by the joint technical committee are circulated to national bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the national bodies casting a vote.

International Standard ISO/IEC 11581-6 was prepared by Joint Technical Committee ISO/IEC JTC 1, *Information technology.*

ISO/IEC 11581 consists of the following parts, under the general title *Information technology — User system interfaces and symbols — Icon symbols and functions*:

— *Part 1: Icons — General*

— *Part 2: Object icons*

— *Part 3: Pointer icons*

— *Part 4: Control icons*

— *Part 5: Tool icons*

— *Part 6: Action icons*

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Introduction

Action icons permit users to invoke functions that act upon pre-selected or default objects. Functions initiated by action icons may also be available via text commands on menus. Action icons provide more direct access to functions by representing those text commands graphically.

The icon functions and graphics included in this part of ISO/IEC 11581 have been selected on the basis of their common use across contemporary platforms and applications.

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Information technology — User system interfaces and symbols — Icon symbols and functions —

Part 6:
Action icons

1 Scope

ISO/IEC 11581 applies to icons that are shown on a screen, that users can manipulate and interact with, and that represent data or computer system functions. This part of ISO/IEC 11581 addresses only action icons. Action icons represent actions by association with objects that prompt the user to recall the intended actions. This part of ISO/IEC 11581 describes user interaction with and appearance of action icons on the screen. Other types of icons are covered in other parts of the standard, listed in the Foreword.

2 Conformance

A system, application, or set of one or more icons conforms to this part of ISO/IEC 11581 if all action icons available to the user in the system or application conform to ISO/IEC 11581-1, clauses 5 and 6.1 and to subclauses 6.1.1 to 6.1.3 of this part of ISO/IEC 11581.

3 Normative references

The following standards contain provisions which, through reference in this text, constitute provisions of this part of ISO/IEC 11581. At the time of publication, the editions indicated were valid. All standards are subject to revision, and parties to agreements based on this part of ISO/IEC 11581 are encouraged to investigate the possibility of applying the most recent editions of the standards indicated below. Members of IEC and ISO maintain registers of currently valid International Standards.

ISO/IEC 11581-1:—[1)], *Information technology — User system interfaces and symbols — Icon symbols and functions — Part 1: Icons — General.*

ISO/IEC 11581-2:—[1)], *Information technology — User system interfaces and symbols — Icon symbols and functions — Part 2: Object icons.*

1) To be published.

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4 Definitions

For the purposes of this part of ISO/IEC 11581, the definitions given in other parts of ISO/IEC 11581 and the following definitions apply.

4.1 Action icon: icon which acts upon a selected source and/or target, and provides single step access to functions typically also available via a menu.

NOTE For some action icons, such as «Cut», the source is pre-selected whilst the target is the default. For «Paste» the source is the default whilst the target must be selected by the user.

4.2 Filing system: container which provides an organised collection of objects such as documents, folders and filing cabinets.

5 Conceptual construction of action icons

The conceptual construction of action icons is similar to that shown for object icons in clause 5 of ISO/IEC 11581-2. The metaphor is that of pushing a button to invoke the associated functionality.

6 Action icon requirements and recommendations

6.1 Requirements

6.1.1 Graphic and function

If a system or application uses an action icon that has the appearance of the action icon graphic specified in clause 7 of this part of ISO/IEC 11581 within the specific variations given, and within the global variations specified in ISO/IEC 11581-1, it shall serve the primary function specified in clause 7 of this part of ISO/IEC 11581.

6.1.2 Arrangement

Related action icons shall be grouped together. These groups shall be arranged together in rows, columns or boxes.

6.1.3 Selection

Selection of an action icon shall be made by indicating with the pointer and activating the associated input device (e.g. clicking a mouse button).

6.1.4 Visual feedback

There shall be a clear visual discrimination between action icons that represent available and unavailable functions.

There shall be visual feedback when a function has been invoked via an action icon. There shall also be visual feedback that indicates the status of the action.

NOTE Typically, action icons are presented, and have the same behaviour as real, three-dimensional push buttons.

The visual feedback to the user from activated action icons shall be consistent and logical.

6.2 Recommendations

6.2.1 Function and graphic

If a system or application uses an action icon that serves the primary function specified in clause 7, it is highly recommended that it have the appearance of the action icon graphic specified in clause 7, within the specific variations given and within the global variations specified in ISO/IEC 11581, 6.3.

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6.2.2 Metaphor

Action icons should be presented in a cell that uses shadows and highlights to re-enforce the metaphor of real buttons and their corresponding behaviour.

6.2.3 Arrangement

If action icons are provided according to clause 7, they should be grouped in the same sets as shown in that clause.

6.2.4 Colour

Action icons may be coloured.

6.2.5 Appearance

All icons of a similar selection status should be of a similar visual strength.

6.2.6 Typeface

An uncomplex typeface should be employed if letters, numbers, punctuation marks and mathematical symbols are used as integrated elements of the action icon.

All text should be concise.

7 Action icon specifications

The classifications in this clause are provided to group related action icons. They are classified into the following six sets:

- general action icons (7.1)
- filing action icons (7.2)
- print action icons (7.3)
- editing action icons (7.4)
- command reversal action icons (7.5)
- text action icons (7.6)

In the following icon specifications, the illustrations represent the basic graphics for the action icons subject to global variations (see ISO/IEC 11581-1, 6.3) and the specific variations given in this clause, listed for each icon where appropriate.

The graphics for all categories are shown bounded by a rectangular outline cell that represents the edges of the button top only. The size of the cell and the location of the graphic within it are shown for illustration, and are implementation dependent. The three-dimensional button effect, described in 6.2.2, has not been included here.

The grey zone within each cell represents the button top background colour, whilst the white areas within the graphics should be a colour appropriate to the depicted object.

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7.1 General action icons

7.1.1 Help

Primary function. To provide access to the Help functions of the system, either to general help or related help to a user-selected object.

Specific instance. A question mark.

Components.

A question mark as commonly used in Latin languages

Graphic.



7.1.2 Find

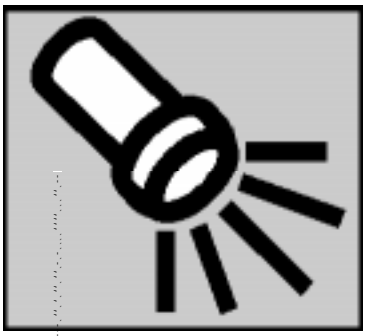
Primary function. To locate an object specified by the user within the current system or application. This icon should be enhanced further by additional components to identify the target of this function (see ISO/IEC 11581-1, clause 6).

Specific instance. A hand held torch or flashlight.

Components.

- Torch/flashlight. Comprising two diagonal cylinders, joined together and orientated from the upper left to the centre of the button top/cell. The larger cylinder is in the centre of the cell.
- Light beams/rays. A series of lines emanating from the larger cylinder in the general direction of the lower right corner of the cell.

Graphic.



Specific variations.

- The torch/flashlight may be orientated in any direction.
- The light beam may be illustrated by some other means, e.g. by a highlighted area.

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7.2 Filing action icons

7.2.1 Create new

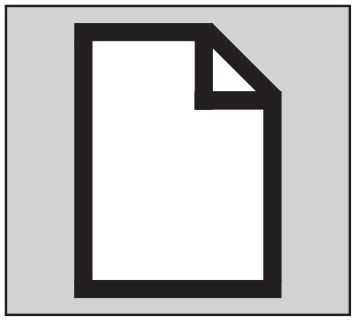
Primary function. To create a new document.

Specific instance. An empty document

Components.

- Document, see ISO/IEC 11581-2, 7.1.1.

Graphic.



Specific variation. Gleam/sparkle/star burst. An eight-pointed star located on the unfolded, top corner of the document.

7.2.2 Open

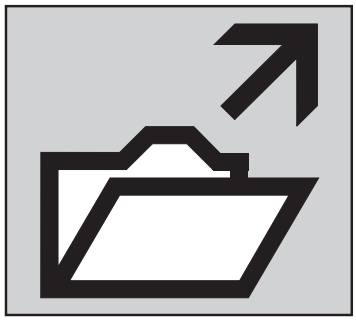
Primary function. To open an existing document. If no document is pre-selected, this icon will take the user directly into the filing system.

Specific instance. An open folder with an arrow moving from it.

Components.

- An open folder (based upon ISO/IEC 11581-2, 7.1.2).
- A direction arrow. Located in the top right corner of the cell, above the folder and pointing upwards and to the right, away from the open folder.

Graphic.



Specific variations.

- An object, representing a document, may be included moving from the folder if space permits this additional level of detail.
- For languages oriented from right to left the graphic may be «mirrored» horizontally.

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7.2.3 Save

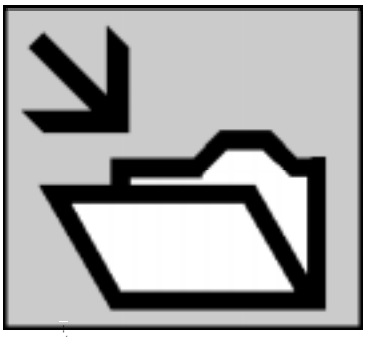
Primary function. To save the current document with the same name within the filing system, whilst keeping the document open.

Specific instance. An open folder with an arrow moving into it.

Components.

- An open folder (based upon ISO/IEC 11581-2, 7.1.2).
- A direction arrow. Located in the top left corner of the cell, pointing downwards and into the open folder.

Graphic.



Specific variations.

- An object, representing a document, may be included moving into the folder if space permits this additional level of detail.
- For languages oriented from right to left the graphic may be «mirrored» horizontally.

7.3 Print action icons

7.3.1 Print preview

Primary function. To provide a view of the layout and composition of the current document for printing. Typically, several levels of enlargement or reduction are available.

Specific instance. A document with a magnifying glass overlaid.

Components.

- Document, see ISO/IEC 11581-2, 7.1.1.
- Magnifying glass. A circle with an adjoining diagonal line at the lower right to signify the handle. The circular part of the magnifying glass overlays the lower right of the document.

Graphic.



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7.3.2 Print

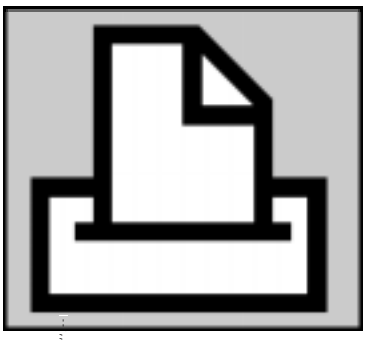
Primary function. To print the current document to the predefined settings within the system or application.

Specific instance. An electromechanical printer with a document emerging.

Components.

- Printer, see ISO/IEC 11581-2, 7.1.5

Graphic.



7.4 Editing action icons

7.4.1 Cut

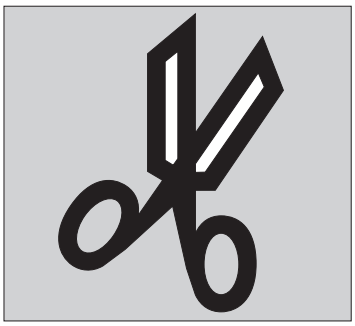
Primary function. To remove pre-selected text or an object from the current document into a storage buffer.

Specific instance. An open pair of scissors.

Components.

Two open, crossing blades with handles. The open, cutting part of the scissors pointing upwards.

Graphic.



Specific variation. The scissors may be rotated in any direction.

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7.4.2 Copy

Primary function. To copy pre-selected text or an object to a storage buffer for relocating elsewhere in a document.

Specific instance. Two identical objects.

Components.

- Front object. A rectangle with its height greater that its width. Contained within the rectangle are several, equally spaced, horizontal lines, which do not touch the sides of the rectangle.
- Rear object. Same as the front object, but placed behind it (to the left and above). The front object partially conceals the rear object.

Graphic.



Specific variation. For languages oriented from top to bottom the horizontal lines may be arranged vertically.

7.4.3 Paste

Primary function. To copy text or an object from a storage buffer and place it at the current cursor position within the document.

Specific instance. A pot of glue and brush.

Components.

- Glue pot. A rectangle with curved corners and its height greater than its width and a second rectangle with its width greater than its height placed at the top of the larger rectangle. The second rectangle represents the neck of the pot.
- Brush. A diagonal line with an eliptical shape at right angles across its centre to signify the lid of the jar, and at the lower end of the line a shape to represent the actual brush.

Graphic.



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7.5 Command reversal action icons

7.5.1 Undo

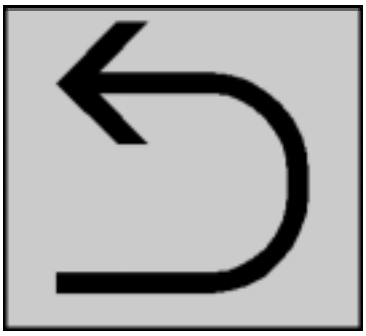
Primary function. To reverse the previous editing or text action (except Undo) and return the object to its previous state.

Specific instance. An arrow, looping back on itself.

Component.

- An arrow with a long, single shaft, which begins horizontally on the left of the graphic and loops around anticlockwise for about a 180 degree turn to return to a position immediately above its starting position, but pointing in the opposite direction.

Graphic.



7.5.2 Redo

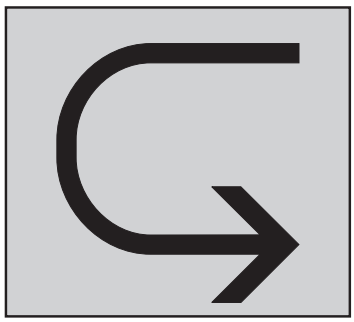
Primary function. To reverse the previous Undo action and return the object to its previous state.

Specific instance. An arrow looping back on itself.

Component.

- An arrow with a long, single shaft, which begins horizontally on the right of the graphic and loops around anticlockwise for about a 180 degree turn to return to a position immediately below its starting position, but pointing in the opposite direction.

Graphic.



7.6 Text action icons

7.6.1 Text formatting action icons

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7.6.1.1 Increase indent

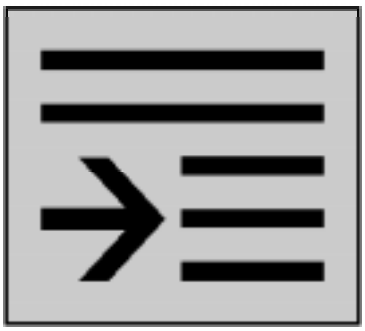
Primary function. To increase the indent of sentences or paragraphs of text to the next tab position.

Specific instance. The left-hand margin of several lines of text being moved in a rightwards direction.

Components.

- An arrow. Pointing horizontally to the right to show the direction of indent.
- Horizontal lines. Several horizontal lines representing lines of text, the lower lines directly adjacent to the arrow to be shorter than the remainder to indicate specific lines being indented independently of the others.

Graphic.



Specific Variations.

- For languages oriented from right to left the graphic may be «mirrored» horizontally.
- For languages oriented from top to bottom the graphic may be rotated 90 degrees clockwise.

7.6.1.2 Decrease indent

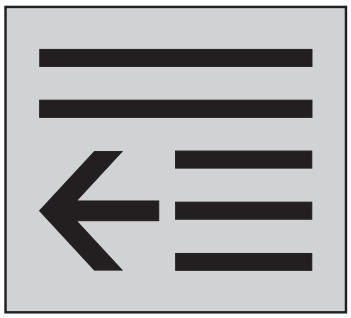
Primary function. To decrease the indent of sentences or paragraphs of text to the next tab position.

Specific instance. The left-hand margin of several lines of text being moved in a leftwards direction.

Components.

- An arrow. Pointing horizontally to the left to show the direction of indent.
- Horizontal lines. Several horizontal lines representing lines of text, the lower lines directly adjacent to the arrow to be shorter than the remainder to indicate specific lines being indented independently of the others.

Graphic.



Specific Variations.

- For languages oriented from right to left the graphic may be «mirrored» horizontally.
- For languages oriented from top to bottom the graphic may be rotated 90 degrees clockwise.

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7.6.1.3 Enumerate/numbering

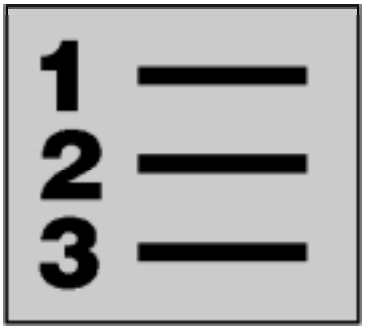
Primary function. To create a numbered list.

Specific instance. Several lines of text, each preceded with a numeral.

Components.

- Numerals. Numerals arranged separately and aligned vertically.
- Lines. Several horizontal lines, each one arranged to the right of each numeral.

Graphic.



Specific Variation. For languages oriented from right to left the numerals may be to the right of the lines.

7.6.1.4 Itemise

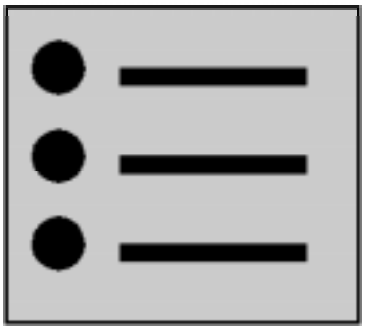
Primary function. To create a «bulletted» list.

Specific instance. Several lines of text, each preceded with a «bullet».

Components.

- Bullets. Several solid circles arranged separately and aligned vertically.
- Lines of text. Several horizontal lines, each one arranged to the right of a «bullet».

Graphic.



Specific variations.

- The bullets may be solid squares or other geometric shape
- For languages oriented from right to left the bullets may be to the right of the lines.

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7.6.2 Text attribute action icons

7.6.2.1 Make bold

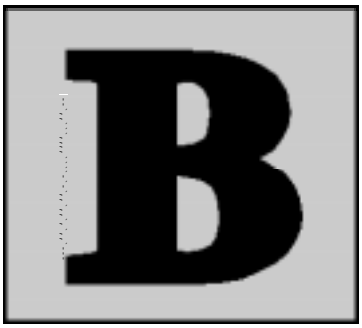
Primary function. To make a selected area of text bold (i.e. increase its visual weight).

Specific instance. The letter «B».

Components.

- A bold, serifed, capital character «B».

Graphic.



Specific variations. For non-English language implementations the character may be replaced by the mnemonic in that language or a generic character «A», but in either instance the character shall be bold, serifed (if a Latin language) and a capital (if appropriate). These variations shall be consistent through all text attribute action icons.

7.6.2.2 Italicise

Primary function. To italicise a selected area of text.

Specific instance. The italic letter «I».

Component.

- A normal weight, italic, serifed, capital character «I».

Graphic.



Specific variations. For non-English language implementations the character may be replaced by the mnemonic in that language or a generic character «A», but in either instance the character shall be italic, serifed (if a Latin language) and a capital (if appropriate). These variations shall be consistent through all text attribute action icons.

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7.6.2.3 Underline

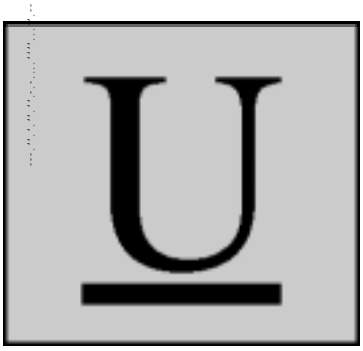
Primary function. To underline a selected area of text.

Specific instance. The letter «U», underlined.

Components.

- A normal weight, serifed, underlined, capital character «U». The underlining shall be the same width as the character.

Graphic.



Specific variations. For non-English language implementations the character may be replaced by the mnemonic in that language or a generic character «A», but in both instances the character shall be normal weight, underlined, serifed (if a Latin language) and a capital (if appropriate). These variations shall be consistent through all text attribute action icons.

7.6.3 Text alignment action icons

7.6.3.1 Align left

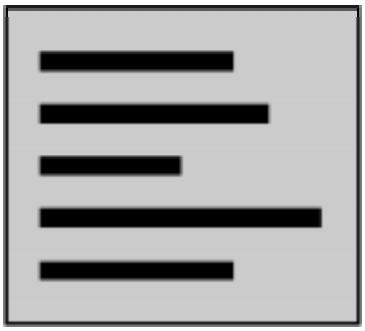
Primary function. To align selected text to the left-hand margin.

Specific instance. A block of text aligned vertically on the left side.

Components.

- A series of several horizontal lines with their left-hand ends aligned vertically and their right-hand ends arranged ragged.

Graphic.



Specific Variations.

- For languages oriented from right to left the graphic may be «mirrored» horizontally.
- For languages oriented from top to bottom the graphic may be rotated 90 degrees clockwise.

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7.6.3.2 Align right

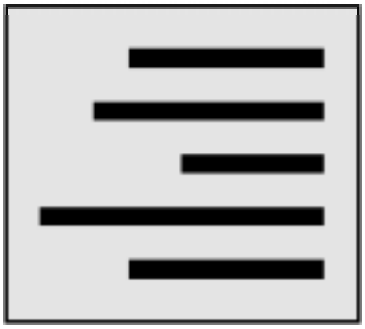
Primary function. To align selected text to the right-hand margin.

Specific instance. A block of text aligned vertically on the right side.

Components.

- A series of several horizontal lines with their right-hand ends aligned vertically and their left-hand ends arranged ragged.

Graphic.



Specific Variations.

- For languages oriented from right to left the graphic may be «mirrored» horizontally.
- For languages oriented from top to bottom the graphic may be rotated 90 degrees clockwise.

7.6.3.3 Centralize

Primary function. To align selected text centrally between the left and right-hand margins.

Specific instance. A block of text aligned vertically about an invisible centre line.

Components.

- A series of several horizontal lines with both their left-hand and right-hand ends arranged ragged, but in a symmetrical pattern about a virtual centre line.

Graphic.



Specific Variation.

- For languages oriented from top to bottom the graphic may be rotated 90 degrees clockwise.

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7.6.3.4 Full justify

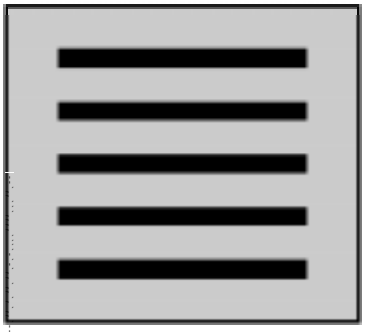
Primary function. To align selected text centrally to the left and right-hand margins.

Specific instance. A block of text aligned vertically on both the left and right line ends.

Components.

- A series of several horizontal lines of equal length, with both their left-hand and right-hand ends aligned vertically.

Graphic.



Specific Variation.

- For languages oriented from top to bottom the graphic may be rotated 90 degrees clockwise.

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