

RESOLUTION ITU-R 34-1

Guidelines for the selection of terms and preparation of definitions

(1986-1990-1993-2000)

The ITU Radiocommunication Assembly,

considering

- a) that the individual Radiocommunication Study Groups have a responsibility for the selection of terms and preparation of definitions;
- b) that there is sometimes a wide diversity of approach in the implementation of these procedures;
- c) that there is a need for conformity in their implementation,

resolves

1 that when selecting terms and preparing definitions, the Radiocommunication Study Groups should use the guidelines given in Annex 1.

Annex 1

Guidelines for the selection of terms and preparation of definitions

1 Introduction

Given below are guidelines for:

- selection of terms;
- preparation of definitions.

2 Terms

2.1 What is meant by a term?

A term is a word or a group of words used to express a definite concept.

2.2 Conciseness of terms

The term should be selected to be as concise as possible, without impairing the understanding of the text containing the term.

When a term is used in more than one field in a general vocabulary, the field of application should be added between brackets, for example:

- coverage area (of a space station);
- coverage area (of a terrestrial transmitting station).

2.3 Ambiguous terms

The occurrence of terms with more than one meaning is occasionally inevitable. When one term has several meanings, confusion can arise in the following cases:

- the meanings are very similar;
- the terms appearing in the same text with different meanings (for instance when they are in the same field).

In such cases different terms should be found to express the different meanings of such ambiguous terms.

2.4 Complex terms

A complex term should reflect the combination of concepts included in the definition. However, it need not include every constituent of the combination of concepts shown in the definition.

Care should be taken to avoid the unnecessary proliferation of terms and definitions where an already-defined qualifying term, used in conjunction with a simpler term, would suffice.

3 Definitions

3.1 What is meant by definition?

To define, is to state clearly, accurately and precisely what is a concept. This should preferably be done in one sentence, expressing exactly the meaning of the term used to designate the concept.

A definition should describe the concept fully for the engineering experts and contain sufficient data for the concept to be perfectly understood and its limits properly identified. The definition must be simple, clear and relatively brief. If necessary, additional information should be in the form of notes.

3.2 Use of terms in definitions

The following general principles may be adopted for the terms used in a definition:

- all the technical terms which appear in a definition must either be well known or defined elsewhere in the text,
- the term or terms representing a concept to be defined should not appear in the definition,
- the meaning of a term must not be expressed using another term which is itself defined by means of the first term.

3.3 Accuracy of definitions

The degree of accuracy of definitions may depend on their intended use. Attempts to achieve greater accuracy may lengthen the text unnecessarily. This may involve the use of more specific and hence less familiar technical terms, thereby making the definition harder rather than easier to understand.

3.4 Changes to, or limitation of, generally accepted terms

No attempt should be made to modify or limit the established usage of a term, unless the use of the existing terms causes confusion or ambiguity. In this case the use of the term may be deprecated.

When certain general terms are used in a restricted sense in the telecommunications fields, the definition should include an indication of this constraint.

3.5 Formulation of definitions

The wording of the definition should clearly indicate whether the term is a substantive noun, a verb or an adjective.

3.6 Incomplete definitions

Care should be taken not to omit the specific characteristics of a term in its definition. Such definitions are incomplete. The term and its definition should be interchangeable.

3.7 Definitions with more than one term

It sometimes occurs that more than one term may apply to the same concept. In such cases the alternative term should also be shown (separated by a semicolon).

3.8 Definitions of limited application

In general, the definitions which appear in ITU publications are of limited application, i.e. are valid only in the particular publication or field concerned.

The International Telecommunication Constitution (Geneva, 1992) stipulates that the terms used in the Constitution and defined in its Annex shall have the meanings assigned to them in that Annex. The same applies to the terms used in the Geneva Convention and defined in the Annex thereto, those used in the Radio Regulations and defined in Article 1 thereof, and those used in the International Telecommunication Regulations and defined in Article 2 thereof. It is also stated that these terms and definitions do not necessarily apply for other purposes. The same considerations hold good for the terms defined by the experts of a Radiocommunication Study Group for the specific requirements of their Study Group.

However, when the experts of a Radiocommunication Study Group develop, for an existing term, a specific new definition which differs from an existing definition in a text that has already been approved, they should ensure that the new definition does not contradict the one which already exists for the same term.

In the case of definitions which are applicable in other Radiocommunication Study Groups, the relevant experts are requested to prepare their definitions to allow them to be used in the widest possible field.

3.9 Illustrations

Illustrations can often be used to clarify or explain a definition. The type of illustration used will depend on each specific case; an example of a graphical depiction of terms used in the transmission loss concept can be seen in Recommendation ITU-R P.341 (see also Recommendation ITU-R V.573, subsection A4).

3.10 Further use of terms and definitions

It should be borne in mind that it may be useful later to include a definition in a dictionary and, in this case, it would be valuable if the definition were fully comprehensible even when taken out of context. It could then be included in the dictionary without amendment.

4 Presentation of terms and definitions

4.1 For the presentation of terms and definitions, reference should be made to Resolution ITU-R 33 which states that the terms, definitions and where necessary the abbreviations, should be published in the different working languages and presented in a logical order by subject which is the same in each language.

4.2 Index of terms

Should there be a need for an index, complex terms may be shown under one or other of the key words.

4.3 Printing of terms

Initial letters of terms should be printed in upper-case or lower-case letters as they would appear within a sentence according to the usage in each language.

5 Further references

For further and more specific guidance on the drafting of terms and definitions, reference may be made to ISO International Standard 704 “Principles and methods for terminology” (1987).
