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What Is a CUSIP Number and What Does It Mean?

A CUSIP number is Wall Street's bar code for security identification. Here's how it works.

A CUSIP number is Wall Street's way of identifying an investment security, like a stock, bond or mutual fund.

Officially, a CUSIP number (more formally known as the Committee on Uniform Securities Identification Procedures) identifies all registered U.S. publicly-traded companies and all U.S. government and municipal bonds. A CUSIP also identifies less traditional investment securities, including preferred stock; funds; certificates of deposit; syndicated loans; and U.S. and Canadian listed options.

The CUSIP number is a powerful aid in helping investment companies, investors, and government regulators track a security, and is especially helpful in managing an efficient trade clearance and settlement process.

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