Product identifiers: barcodes, GTINs and SKUs explained

From the teas.co.uk wiki

A **product identifier** is a code used to tell one item from another. That matters when two boxes have similar names but different pack sizes, prices or ingredients.

Why a tea shop cares: a barcode tells an assistant that the 80 bag box and the 240 bag box are different products, with different prices per cup.

For a shopper, the important question is simple: does the record describe the exact box I am choosing?

The names you may see

A **GTIN** is a Global Trade Item Number, used to identify a trade item. The number associated with a familiar retail barcode is often a GTIN. The barcode is the machine-readable symbol carrying information; the identifier is the value it represents.

A **SKU**, short for stock keeping unit, is a shop or supplier's own stock code. Different businesses may use different SKUs for the same retail item. A site's internal product ID is another local identifier. These codes should not be treated as interchangeable without checking what each system means.

Schema.org's Product documentation includes fields for product identifiers and explains the expected GTIN format. A well-formed number still needs to be matched to the actual product.

Why pack size matters

An 80-bag box and a 240-bag box can share a brand and blend while being different saleable packs. Mixing up their identity can attach the wrong price to a comparison or produce the wrong cost per cup.

Do not assume that similar names mean identical ingredients either. A decaf version needs its own accurate record. Pack changes and reformulations need review rather than an automatic copy of older facts.

How teas.co.uk uses the idea

The shop's public Product Truth API guidance supports exact lookups using several identifiers. That lets software request a particular item and receive its linked facts instead of guessing from a broad search term.

A clean product link should open the same item the answer describes. That is part of route hygiene. Connecting the right identifier to the right record also supports the wider entity model: facts about one thing should stay attached to that thing.

An identifier establishes which item is being discussed. Sources, current stock and the pack itself still determine what can honestly be said about it.

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