



# Intellectual Property Guides

# Patent Information on the Internet

**A guide to the main resources  
available on the internet for  
patent searching, application  
details, patent classification etc.**

Turn a new page



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# Patent Searching on the Internet

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If you are new to patent searching we would suggest you use the **esp@cenet** database (page 2) since this will give you a worldwide search. There are basic guides to using this database at:

<http://www.espacenet.com/getstarted>

<http://www.epo.org/topics/innovation-and-economy/handbook/novelty/espacenet-searching.html>

Further information about patent searching, classifications etc can be found at:

<http://www.espacenet.com/info>

Try beginning your search using keywords and if you find similar patents look at the classifications (use International Patent Classification, see page 5) and go back and search under these classifications. See our leaflet entitled **Esp@cenet—a basic guide to starting your patent search**.

**Note: This guide is not intended to be a comprehensive account of all patent information available on the internet. Since addresses and content are constantly changing this information may not be fully up to date.**



## Esp@cenet

<http://gb.espacenet.com>

This database is run by the European Patent Office. The address given allows access through the UK Intellectual Property Office website. If this is unavailable you can also access the same database through the European Patent Office website, [www.epo.org](http://www.epo.org), or directly at [www.espacenet.com](http://www.espacenet.com).

Click on the **Advanced Search** link, then make sure the word **Worldwide** is showing in the box labelled **Database**. This allows you to search **title**, **abstract** and **bibliographic information** in English for over 50 countries including GB (from around 1918), US (from around 1970) and other countries, e.g. EP, WO, JP, from 1978.

To search by keyword type in the box labelled **Keyword(s) in title or abstract**. You can use the following wildcards at the end of words: \* for any number of characters and ? for zero or one character. For example entering **comput\*** will locate abstracts containing the words compute, computer, computing etc. To search an exact phrase place inverted commas, “ ”, around your keywords. You are limited to 4 keywords.

Click on the **Search** button and you will get a list of patent titles that match your search criteria (the patent number is shown in bold after the words **Publication Info**). Clicking on a patent title will show bibliographic details and an abstract and drawing (if available).

Click the **Original Document** tab to view the full specification (which will include full description and drawings) as a pdf document. You will need to install Adobe Acrobat Viewer software, which can be downloaded free of charge. Click the **Maximise** button to view the specification on the whole screen. Note that patent specifications are in the language of filing, however, English abstracts are available for most patents.

## US Patent Office

<http://www.uspto.gov/patft>

This database allows you to search **title**, **abstract**, **claims** and **bibliographic information** for US granted patents (1976 onwards) and applications (from their introduction in March, 2001). Full specifications from 1790 onwards can be viewed, but patents between 1790 and 1975 can only be searched by patent number, issue date or US classification. To view specifications a particular kind of TIFF viewer is needed and there are links to known free viewers at:  
<http://www.uspto.gov/patft/help/images.htm>

## Japanese Patent Office

<http://www19.ipdl.inpit.go.jp/PA1/cgi-bin/PA1INIT?>

The Patent Abstracts of Japan database allows you to search **title**, **abstract**, **claims** and **bibliographic information** for Japanese applications from 1976 onwards. Full specifications are available from 1993 (patent number 05-000001) onwards with the facility for machine translation into English.

Until 2004 the Japanese patent numbering system was based on the number of years the emperor had been on the throne. A guide to conversion of Japanese dates to years is thankfully available at:  
[http://www.ipdl.inpit.go.jp/HELP/tokujitu/db\\_en/2\\_1frame.html](http://www.ipdl.inpit.go.jp/HELP/tokujitu/db_en/2_1frame.html)

## Depatisnet (German Patent Office)

<http://depatisnet.dpma.de>

Click button for English user interface. This database allows you to search **title**, **abstract**, **full text** and **bibliographic information** for DE, EP, WO, US, GB, JP, AT, CH and FR applications. Data is in the original language of filing which may present a problem when searching text. Coverage is similar to esp@cenet.



### World Intellectual Property Organization

<http://www.wipo.int/ipdl>

Select **PCT (Patents)**. This database allows you to search **title, abstract, description, claims and bibliographic information** for WO applications from 1978 onwards. You do not have to create an account in order to search the database, but doing so will enable you to save search histories. Information on entry to national phase is also given.

### IP Australia

[http://www.ipaustralia.gov.au/patents/search\\_index.shtml](http://www.ipaustralia.gov.au/patents/search_index.shtml)

Allows you to search Australian patent applications from 1975 onwards. Searching is limited to **title** and **bibliographic information**.

### Canadian Intellectual Property Office

<http://patents1.ic.gc.ca>

Allows you to search **title, abstract, claims and bibliographic information** for Canadian applications and granted patents from 1978 onwards. Full specifications are available from 1869 onwards. Note that Canadian applications can be filed in either English or French; titles are in both English and French except between 1960 and 1978.

### Intellectual Property Office of Singapore

[http://www.surfip.gov.sg/\\_patent-f.htm](http://www.surfip.gov.sg/_patent-f.htm)

Free. Registration allows you to save searches etc. Covers Singapore, China, Korea, Taipei, Thailand, JP, US, WO and Canada. Includes only very recent GB and EP specifications (not fully searchable).

### Sumo Brain

<http://www.sumobrain.com>

Full text searching, but limited to US, EP, WO and JP

These databases are only available to subscribers and offer more extensive data or enhanced searching facilities.

## **Derwent World Patents Index (WPI)**

[http://thomsonreuters.com/products\\_services/legal/legal\\_products/intellectual\\_property/DWPI](http://thomsonreuters.com/products_services/legal/legal_products/intellectual_property/DWPI)

Comprehensive coverage for 41 patenting authorities including GB, JP and US from 1963 onwards, and EP and WO from 1978 onwards. English titles and abstracts are written by Derwent's subject experts, which makes this database particularly powerful. It is the database of choice for professional patent searching.

## **Delphion**

<http://www.delphion.com>

Coverage includes US granted patents from 1971 onwards, US applications from Mar 2001 onwards, EP applications from 1979 onwards, EP granted patents from 1980 onwards, WO applications from 1978 onwards and Patent Abstracts of Japan from 1976 onwards. Also access to Derwent WPI.

## **Patbase**

<http://www.patbase.com>

Covers around 90 countries including GB, US, EP, WO etc

## **Questel Orbit**

<http://www.questel.orbit.com>

PlusPat database covers >80 countries. Also access to Derwent WPI.

**Micropatent:** <http://www.micropat.com/static/index.htm>

**PROPIS:** <http://www.propis.com>

## International Patent Classification (IPC)

<http://www.wipo.int/classifications/ipc/ipc8>

Every new patent application is classified using the IPC (in addition to any national classification such as US). In use since 1968, it used to be updated every 5 years. From Jan 2006 an electronic version has been in use which can be updated as advances in technology occur. Within patent databases changes are applied retrospectively to all records.

## European Patent Classification (ECLA)

<http://v3.espacenet.com/eclasrch>

Before the introduction of the new electronic IPC this classification performed the same function (frequent amendments, retrospective classification on [esp@cenet](mailto:esp@cenet)), but the new IPC will probably be used in preference. However, the ECLA is more detailed than the IPC with twice as many groups.

## US Classification (with IPC Concordance)

<http://www.uspto.gov/go/classification>

This is the official US Patent Office listing. The US Patent Office uses an automated computer system to assign IPC classes to its patent applications and as a result some unusual IPC classes arise. If a US patent is identified as relevant to a search the IPC concordance feature can be used to establish how the US Patent Office would classify the invention and this classification can then be used, for example, in a search on [esp@cenet](mailto:esp@cenet).

An alphabetical listing of US patent classification can also be found at: <http://www.patentec.com/data/class>

In searching to establish the novelty of an invention it is not necessary to know the status of a patent application since anything published will be considered to be prior art. However, checking patent status is necessary if you wish to establish whether you are infringing a patent.

## UK Patents

<http://www.ipo.gov.uk/types/patent/p-os/p-find/p-find-number.htm>

This is available on the UK Intellectual Property Office website. It is accessed by patent or application number. Provides status information for UK patent applications and granted patents and also for granted European patents designating the UK.

## US Patents

<http://portal.uspto.gov/external/portal/pair>

The Patent Application Information Retrieval database is available on the US Patent Office website. It is accessed by patent or application number.

## European Patents

<http://www.epoline.org/portal/public>

Use the **Register Plus** tab to search for either an EP number or a WO application (which includes European designation). You can view not only the full status information but also copies of all documents relating to the application (including correspondence between applicant and the office).

Some status information for **Japanese patents** (1993 onwards) is given on the Japan Patent Office website database.

A **patent family** is a group of patents which are connected by a single original application (called a priority application). Since patent applications can be based on more than one priority application it is possible that members of a patent family will have different combinations of priority applications provided there is one particular one in common to all.

**Equivalent patents**, however, are those arising from exactly the same set of priority applications.

If infringement of a patent is likely you should find the patent family for that application. This can be done using the INPADOC-EPIDOS database. This used to be available via a free website run by the National Informatics Centre in India, but is now only available free as part of the **esp@cenet** database. When viewing bibliographic details for a patent on esp@cenet click the link **view INPADOC patent family**.

When viewing details for a patent on esp@cenet you may sometimes see a list of patents on the right hand side labelled **Also published as**; these are the **equivalent patents**. If you come across a patent relevant to your search, but which is published in an unfamiliar language you can, for example, check to see if there are any equivalent patents in English. Note that national patents are published in the national language, EP patents can be in English, French or German and WO patents can be in English, French, German, Spanish, Russian, Japanese or Chinese.

The official journals or gazettes are published weekly and list new applications, published patents, granted patents etc. The main ones likely to be of interest are listed below. The name index can be useful if you wish to keep up to date with applications made by a competitor. Similarly the subject-matter index can be used to keep up to date with applications in your field of technology.

## **UK Patents and Designs Journal**

<http://www.ipo.gov.uk/types/patent/p-os/p-journal.htm>

The UK Intellectual Property Office website contains PDF versions of the journal from 12 August, 1998 onwards.

## **US Electronic Official Gazette**

<http://www.uspto.gov/web/patents/patog>

Only the current 52 weeks are maintained online.

## **Official Journal of the European Patent Office**

<http://www.epo.org/patents/law/legal-texts/journal.html>

The European Patent Office website has PDF versions of the journal from Jan 1997 onwards.

## **PCT Gazette**

<http://www.wipo.int/pctdb/en/>

This was discontinued in paper and pdf format in Jul 2006. The information can be accessed using the **PatentScope Search Service** (use the option to browse by week). Archive copies of the Gazette (Apr 1998 - Jun 2006) are to be found at:

<http://www.wipo.int/pct/en/gazette/year.jsp>

As more and more data is added to internet databases the possibility of carrying out historical searches via the internet is improving.

Full specifications are available from a number of sources providing you know the patent number.

The **esp@cenet** database is a useful source in searching for old GB and US patents. GB patents are officially available from 1900, but you will find many from around 1893 already on the database (no earlier GB patents have been added for many years so at present it seems unlikely any more will be added). Title and abstract data may not be available to be searched for older patents, however they will be classified under the European Patent Classification (ECLA - see page 5); for GB patents the ECLA is allocated from about 1909 onwards and for US from about 1920. For GB patents before 1978 the applicant's name also appears at the beginning of the abstract. This is useful for older applications originating from abroad where the applicant field actually contains the name of the agent in UK who filed the application, but the original applicant's name will be found by searching in the abstract field. From around 1930 to 1938 the applicant's address also appears in the abstract.

To find GB patents by patent number prior to 1916 you need to know the year of publication in addition to the number. The number should be entered on esp@cenet in the following format: **GBYYYYNNNNN**, where **YYYY** indicates the year and **NNNNN** is a 5 digit number (enter leading zeros if the number is less than 5 digits).

For British patent information prior to that available on esp@cenet Newcastle City library has a number of paper resources (including name indexes and bound abstracts).

All US specifications from number 1 onwards are available on both **esp@cenet** and **US Patent Office** databases.

Addresses for a number of useful websites are given over the page.

For general information regarding the procedure for application in the UK visit the **UK Intellectual Property Office** website. Application forms can be downloaded. You can also contact them to get free booklets that explain the patent application process

For applications made under the European Patent Convention information and forms can be found on the **European Patent Office** website. The **World Intellectual Property Organization** website contains information and forms for international applications made under the Patent Co-operation Treaty.

The **British Library** website has a number of useful resources:

- Brief list of links to patent databases:  
<http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelpsubject/socsci/intprop/ippatents/links/patentlinks.html>
- Intellectual property e-learning course:  
<http://bipc-ecourses.bl.uk>
- Guides to intellectual property:  
<http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelpsubject/busmanlaw/ip/intro/ipintro.html>

The **Chartered Institute of Patent Agents** website has a directory of all registered patent agents.

**A Better Mousetrap** is an organization run by people with many years' experience helping inventors and they offer a charged service to assess the feasibility of new ideas. **Own It** is an organization which now has a base in Teesside offering regular patent clinics. **C2M (UK) Ltd** is a company based in Gateshead which develops for market ideas it considers commercially viable. The **Business & Innovation Centre** in Sunderland can help develop innovative products, create prototypes etc.

## Patent and Intellectual Property Offices

- Australian Patent Office** <http://www.ipaustralia.gov.au>  
**Canadian Intellectual Property Office** <http://www.cipo.gc.ca>  
**European Patent Office** <http://www.epo.org>  
**Irish Patent Office** <http://www.patentsoffice.ie>  
**Japanese Patent Office** [http://www.ipdl.inpit.go.jp/homepg\\_e.ipdl](http://www.ipdl.inpit.go.jp/homepg_e.ipdl)  
**UK Intellectual Property Office** <http://www.ipso.gov.uk>  
**US Patent and Trademark Office** <http://www.uspto.gov>  
**World Intellectual Property Organization** <http://www.wipo.int>

## Patent Attorneys

- Chartered Institute of Patent Attorneys** <http://www.cipa.org.uk>  
**Hargreaves Elsworth** <http://www.heip.co.uk>  
**Urquhart-Dykes & Lord** <http://www.udl.co.uk>  
**Murgitroyd & Co** <http://www.murgitroyd.com>

## Innovation Centres

- North East Business & Innovation Centre**  
<http://www.ne-bic.co.uk>  
**RTC North** <http://www.rtcnorth.co.uk>

## Help for Inventors

- A Better Mousetrap** <http://www.abettermousetrap.co.uk>  
**British Library** <http://www.bl.uk>  
**C2M (UK) Ltd** <http://c2muk.co.uk>  
**Innovators Counselling and Advisory Service for Scotland**  
<http://www.icass.co.uk/index.htm>  
**Ideas 21** <http://www.ideas21.co.uk>  
**Institute of Patentees and Inventors** <http://www.invent.org.uk>  
**Inventor Basics (US Patents)** <http://www.inventorbasics.com/>  
**Inventor Resource** <http://www.inventorresource.co.uk>  
**Own It (Teesside)** <http://www.own-it.org>

## Funding and Grants

- British Business Angels Association** <http://www.bbaa.org.uk>  
**Business Link** <http://www.businesslink.gov.uk>  
**British Venture Capitalists Association** <http://www.bvca.co.uk>  
**Entrust** <http://www.entrust.co.uk>  
**Grant NET (database of available funding)** <http://www.grantnet.com>  
**NESTA** <http://www.nesta.org.uk>

## Confidentiality Agreements

- C2M (UK) Ltd** <http://www.c2muk.co.uk>  
**UK Intellectual Property Office**  
<http://www.ipo.gov.uk/types/patent/p-applying/p-apply/p-cda.htm>  
**Mewburn Ellis**  
[http://www.mewburn.com/downloads/IP-Confidentiality\\_-\\_Nov\\_2008.pdf](http://www.mewburn.com/downloads/IP-Confidentiality_-_Nov_2008.pdf)  
**Outlaw (Microsoft Word format)** <http://www.out-law.com/page-342>

## Amusing and Interesting Patent Websites

- Brown & Michaels** <http://www.lightlink.com/bbm/weird.html>  
**Patently Absurd** <http://www.patent.freemove.co.uk>  
**Patent Pending Blog - Patents & the History of Technology**  
[http://patentpending.blogs.com/patent\\_pending\\_blog/](http://patentpending.blogs.com/patent_pending_blog/)  
**PATSCAN - Bizarre Patents Calendar** <http://www.patscan.com>  
**The Museum of Unworkable Devices**  
<http://www.lhup.edu/~dsimanek/museum/unwork.htm>  
**US Patent Models** <http://www.ipmall.info/about/user13.asp>



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City Library  
Charles Avison Building  
33 New Bridge Street West  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE1 8AX  
Tel: 0191 277 4100  
Fax: 0191 2774137  
Email: [newcastlebipc@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:newcastlebipc@newcastle.gov.uk)  
<http://www.bipcnewcastle.co.uk/>

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