



Finding Patent Information

Patents are granted by a government for a novel invention for a limited period of time. The patent gives the inventor exclusive rights to the invention and prevents others from making, using or selling the invention without the permission of the inventor.

A Typical Patent Process

- The patent application is filed. A document with a full description of the invention and a set of claims defining the scope of protection requested is presented to the Patent Office. The document is given an **application number**.
- A search report of other granted patents is carried out by the Patent Office to check the novelty of the application.
- The Patent Office publishes the patent application together with the search report. This will usually happen about 18 months after the application was originally filed. At this point the published patent application can also be known as an unexamined patent. The patent document is given a **publication number**.
- The Patent Office carries out a detailed substantive examination of the claims for the invention made by the applicant. This is to ascertain whether the invention can genuinely be manufactured. The Patent Office can raise objections and the application will then be amended accordingly – if possible.
- The Patent Office grants the patent. This final granted patent is known as an examined publication and in some countries (not GB) will be given a new publication number.

Patent Numbers

All patent documents are numbered. They will all have an original application number and then a publication number. The publication number will be suffixed by a letter indicating where the document is in the patent process. These are known as **status letters** and are often referred to as Kind of Document (KD) codes by patent databases.

- A is an unexamined patent publication. You may also see some documents where the A is followed by a number (although this can vary from country to country), in which case:
 - A1 – patent application published with the search report
 - A2 – patent application published without the search report
 - A3 – search report without patent application (this will often be published later)
- B is a granted patent that has been through substantive examination

- C is also sometimes used. These are amended or corrected patent publications.

Patent Families

A patent family is a group of related patent documents. It contains a collection of all the equivalent patent applications for the same invention in different geographical regions. The patent document with the earliest application date is considered to be the **priority document** within a patent family.

Sources of Patent Information

esp@cenet is the European Patent Office network of patent servers. Access through the European Patent Office at <http://ep.espacenet.com>

Quick Search esp@cenet

Select **quick search** from the options on the left of the screen and then choose the database you wish to search. Selecting **worldwide** gives access to patents from over 70 countries, including UK, US and Japan and larger time span. The level and range of coverage varies from each country. The full text of many older or non-English language patent documents may not be available through the esp@cenet.

Select your type of search. You can search either by **words in the title or abstract**, or **persons or organisations**. Enter one or two search terms in the final box. You can use * at the end of words to search for all words beginning with the same letters. e.g. **speed** and **hull***

This will return results with speed and hull, hulls or hulling anywhere within the patent title or abstract. For example, patent number: US2011056425 "Watercraft with Hull Ventilation" will be returned because both terms appear either in the title or the abstract.

You cannot limit your search when you are using **quick search**. If you find you have a large number of search results, you should consider using the **advanced search** option to refine your results.

Advanced Search esp@cenet

Select **advanced search** from the list on the left of the screen. You will again have the option to choose which patent database you wish to search. The **advanced search** allows you to combine a number of different fields and limit your search to a specific range of dates.

The search fields available in **advanced search** are:

- **Keywords in title:** this will only find search terms when they appear in the title. Note: this may be an English translation of the title of a document originally in another language.
- **Keywords in title or abstract:** this will find search terms when they appear in either the title or the abstract. The abstract contains a concise summary of the invention. Not all patents have an abstract.
- **Publication number:** this is the number assigned to a patent application on publication.
- **Application number:** this is the number assigned to a patent application when filed.
- **Priority number:** this is the application number of the patent with priority rights within a family of patents; that is, the published patent with the earliest application date.
- **Publication date:** this is the date the patent application was first published.
- **Applicant:** the person or organisation which originally filed the patent application.
- **Inventor:** the person or persons named in a patent application as the inventor.
- **ECLA Classification:** more detailed extension of the International Patent Classification.
- **International Patent Classification (IPC):** classification scheme for the technical content of patent documents. For further information about the IPC and ECLA as used within esp@cenet select **classification search** from the options on the left of the screen.

You can limit your search to patents from a particular country by using the two letter country code in the **publication** field. e.g. **GB**

This will retrieve all patents published by the UK Patent Office. For a complete list of all country codes see <https://worldwide.espacenet.com/help?topic=countrycodes&method=handleHelpTopic> To see the most recent patent documents available for a particular country, combine your country code search with the current year in the **publication date** field.

Classification Search

You can search for patents that have ECLA classification. Select **Classification Search** from the list on the left of the screen. Enter relevant keywords into the search bar (maximum of ten) and click search. You will then be presented with classification codes that match that search. Tick the box(es) of relevant classification codes and click copy at the bottom of the screen. This will copy the codes into the advanced search box and from there you can carry out an advanced search. e.g. Speed and Hull

This will find the code B63B1 which is for "Hydrodynamic or hydrostatic features of hulls or of hydrofoils"

Viewing Patent Information

To view the full text of the patent document, select the title of the document from the search results list. To view the bibliographic data, description, claims, mosaics or original document choose the corresponding tab from the top menu. (The mosaic collects together all the drawings in a patent document, so they can easily be viewed at the same time.) Select **view INPADOC patent family** to link to other members of the same patent family, including A and B versions. You can navigate back to the original document by

selecting the **back to** option at the top right above the list of results.

Printing

You can only print or download one page at a time. Select the page you would like to print and use the options within the Adobe Acrobat reader to print the page.

Saving

You can export a list of patents to Excel. Select the patents you want to export and click Export at the top of the screen. Note it will only export records selected on the current results page (maximum 20 results).

Top Search Tips

- Think of a wide variety of keywords and synonyms. Patents aren't written as normal documents, they use a variety of legal and technical terms. Also the original language of the patent may not be English.
- Check the retrieved items classification code to make sure it is relevant to your search
- Carry out a classification search as well as a keyword search.
- You can use Boolean operators (AND, OR NOT) and wildcards such as *, ? and # and also parentheses to group your search terms.

Further Sources of Patent Information

Scopus contains over 24 million patents from World Intellectual Property Organization, European, US, UK and Japan Patent Office.

Google Patents uses google search functionality to look for issued patents and patent applications from the USPTO. Patents can be searched from 1790 to current.

SciFinder Scholar gives access to the CAS database of world-wide patent documents covering all aspects of chemistry and chemical engineering.

Patent Offices In general esp@cenet offers the most successful freely available method of searching for all worldwide patents. However, you may also be interested in finding further information about patents from individual national Patent Offices.

British Library holds a substantial collection of British and worldwide patents. Although esp@cenet offers the full text of many patents, you may find that there are some patents cited in the database that only have bibliographic information or an abstract. If you have a particular need to see the full text of a patent and it is not available through esp@cenet you may need to visit the British Library.

Contact Details

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