



INVENTORS' ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH CENTRAL KANSAS

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## **STEPS TO INVENTING**

The following STEPS TO INVENTING is a summary list of actions that an inventor may follow in pursuing his or her invention. For more detailed instructions you may wish to visit [Neustel-Zimmer Approach To Successful Inventing](#) and [INVENTOR FIRST STEPS](#).

### **DOCUMENT YOUR IDEA**

One of the first things you will want to do is to make a sketch of your idea. As you develop your invention, it is very important to document your progress. It is highly recommended that you purchase a notebook which has bound pages. These can't be removed or added to. You will want to number the pages and log your activities. Initial and date each page. Keep track of development, tests, purchase sales slips of prototype and photos of your invention. The last page should contain a statement which is signed and dated by relatives or friends. The statement must state that they understand your idea. If there is ever a dispute, this notebook will establish the invention as your original idea and the dates of the developments. A suitable notebook The Idea Journal designed for inventors is now available from [UIA/USA](#).

### **BUILD A PROTOTYPE**

It is important that you can show that your invention actually works. Therefore it is recommended that you build a prototype. This will be especially helpful if you decide to obtain a patent and market your invention. Building a prototype will help work out bugs and further refine your idea.

## **DO A PATENT SEARCH**

Before submitting your invention to a patent attorney or agent, you can do a preliminary patent survey to see if you are infringing on someone else's invention. A patent survey can be done at a patent depository library such as Wichita State University Library or Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, OK. Check with [USPTO](#) for a library in your State. However, a preliminary patent survey can now be done on the Internet.

The USPTO has a patent database on the Internet. The ease of doing a patent survey on your personal computer has several advantages. First, the search can be done by entering keywords relating to your invention. The subsequent list of patents that match your keywords can further be visited. The [USPTO data base](#) contains the full text and figures of the patent.

A program called Alternatiff is required to print the figures. It can be downloaded free of charge from the USPTO web site. The USPTO also has added a Trademark database. A trademark search is easily obtained following instructions on the web site. The afore mentioned libraries can be very helpful in getting you started surveying your ideas and inventions. In the event your idea has been patented before, you can make your patent superior, ie: cheaper, more environmentally friendly, efficient or etc., to what has been done before.

## **DO A PROVISIONAL APPLICATION**

The [Provisional Application](#) was introduced by the Gatt Treaty. It allows one year of grace period to file the Patent application. The application is less formal than a patent application and provides patent pending status, allowing earlier marketing of your product.

## **FILE A PATENT APPLICATION**

There are three options in filing a Patent Application, using a Patent Agent, a Patent Attorney or doing it yourself. It is generally recommended that you should not file your own patent application. Using an experienced Agent or Attorney to file for the Patent will

greatly increase your chances of getting the patent and will generally make the Patent broader by including more claims than you may come up with on your own. If you wish to file your own application, help is available from several sources. Check the ads in Inventor's Digest for books and/or software such as "Patent It Yourself" by David Pressman, Nolo Press. Once your [Patent Application](#) is accepted by the USPTO, you may mark your invention Patent Pending.

## **PATENT TYPES**

There are three types of patents, Utility, Design and Plant. The Utility patent gives protection for 20 years after filing. The Utility patent generally applies to a new and useful process, machine, manufacture or any new and useful improvements thereof. The Design patent covers any new, original and ornamental design. The Design patent is effective for 14 years after issue. The Plant patent applies to new and distinct variety of plant and is effective for 20 years after filing.

## **MARKETING YOUR INVENTION**

You may get a manufacturer to build and market your product and pay a royalty. This is probably the most desired method but is sometimes very difficult to arrange. Another method is to build your own company and market the product yourself. If this works out and you establish a market, you can sell the company.

One of the ways to find a company to manufacture and market your invention is to show it at invention shows, fairs or other appropriate industrial, boat, travel or home shows. Check with [UIA/USA](#) Home Page for upcoming events.

There are companies advertising on the television and in magazines that promise to take your idea to the market. One should check with an attorney before using these companies. Many of these companies make their money through fees charged to the inventors rather than through inventions that have been successfully marketed. Check with The [National Inventor Fraud Center](#) for lists of companies to use or avoid.

## **COSTS INVOLVED IN PATENTS**

Disclosure Document \$10  
Provisional Application \$80  
Utility Patent Filing Fee \$385  
Design Patent Filing Fee \$170  
Plant Patent Filing Fee \$265  
Utility Patent Issue Fee \$665  
Design Patent Issue Fee \$240  
Plant Patent Issue Fee \$320  
Printed Copy of Patent \$3  
Patent Renewal Costs  
After 3.5 years \$455  
After 7.5 years \$1045  
After 11.5 years \$1610

These figures change from time to time. It's a good idea to check with [PTO](#) for all updated fees for these and other services.

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