

<http://www.sba.gov/content/patents-trademarks-copyright/>

## Patents, Trademarks & Copyright

Intellectual property is a term used to describe trade secrets, patents, trademarks, and copyright. Protecting your intellectual property is an important part of your business, particularly if you are looking to trademark your business's name, symbol, motto, etc., or if your business is based on an invention or involves writing and producing original written works, music or video content.

The following resources provide an overview of intellectual property.

- [Stop Fakes: Small Business](#)  
Provides a comprehensive guide to intellectual property law, patents, trademarks and copyright for small businesses.
- [Protecting Intellectual Property FAQs](#)  
Lists answers to commonly-asked questions about patents, trademarks and copyright.

## Basic Patent and Trademark Information

To patent an invention or register a trademark, you'll need to fill out an application with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO). The following guides provide more detail about registering patents and trademarks.

- [How-To Guide to Patents and Trademarks](#)  
Offers a how-to guide to all services of the Patent & Trademark office.
- [Patent and Trademark FAQs](#)  
Supplies a one-stop resource to get answers to questions about patents and trademarks.

## Patents

- [How to Get a Patent](#)  
Provides a plain language guide to filing a patent application.
- [Types of Patents](#)  
Details types of patent applications.
- [Patent Guidance, Tools and Manuals](#)  
Offers directory guides, tools and manuals covering the patent application and review process.
- [Patents FAQs](#)  
Answers frequently asked questions about applying for a patent.

# Trademarks

- [Basic Facts About Trademarks](#)  
Provides answers to frequently asked questions and essential information you need to know about filing a trademark application.
- [Learn About the Trademark Application Process](#)  
Gives a step-by-step guide to filing a trademark application.
- [Madrid Protocol](#)  
Explains how trademark owners are able to register in other countries by filing out a single application.
- [Trademark Electronic Application System](#)  
Allows businesses to officially file online by submitting a trademark application directly to the USPTO.
- [Trademark FAQs](#)  
List frequently asked questions about applying for a trademark.

# Copyright

If your business involves creating original written works, music or videos, they are covered by copyright laws. Copyright is a form of protection provided to the authors of original works of authorship, both published and unpublished, for a limited period of time. Copyright is granted by the U.S. Copyright Office.

- [Pre-Register Your Work](#)  
Explains the pre-registration service intended for works that have had a history of prerelease infringement. The service focuses on the infringement of movies, recorded music and other copyrighted materials before copyright owners have had the opportunity to market fully their products.
- [Copyright FAQs](#)  
Lists answers to frequently asked questions about registering a copyright and copyright law.
- [Copyright Forms](#)  
Supplies copyright application forms.
- [Copyright Circulars and Fact Sheets](#)  
Offers circulars and fact sheets that provide basic information about registration, fees, compulsory licenses, and other aspects of the copyright process.

# Trade Secrets

A trade secret is information that has value because it is not generally known and is the subject of efforts to keep it secret. State law protects against disgruntled ex-employees, sabotage by current employees, or simple carelessness about the risk and possible protections of your trade secrets. Protection for trade secrets does not expire, as it does for copyright. As long as the owner makes reasonable efforts to keep the information secret, the information is protected.

- [Uniform Trade Secrets Act](#)

Explain the Uniform Trade Secrets act, which has been passed in whole or in part by 45 states. For the specific provisions that apply to your business, consult a local attorney.

- [Economic Espionage Act of 1996](#)

Provides information on the Economic Espionage Act, which makes the theft or misappropriation of a trade secret a federal crime.

You can protect your trade secrets by requiring employees and others with whom you share the information to sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDA). SCORE, which provides free online and face-to-face business counseling, mentoring, training, and advice for small businesses, offers the following resources on how to protect your trade secrets using a non-disclosure agreement.

- [Protect Your Trade Secrets with a Nondisclosure Agreement](#)  
Details information on how to protect your business's trade secrets using an NDA.

Related Articles:

[Digital Rights](#)

Related Success Stories:

[Small Business Owner Receives Guidance from SBDITC, Applies for Patent](#)

Related FAQs:

[Do I need a patent attorney or agent to file my patent application?](#)

[What is a patent and how do I know if my invention is eligible for a patent?](#)

[What is a provisional patent?](#)

[Will innovations that have been patented or have patents pending be considered under SBIR?](#)

[What exactly does copyright protect?](#)

[What should be in a copyright statement on the website I've created?](#)