

Searching for Patents

Welcome to Searching for Patents by the UNLV University Libraries.

A patent gives its owner the right to exclude others from making, using, selling, and importing an invention for a certain period of time. If you are an inventor, you can use patents as a way to stake your claim to your inventions. Patents can protect a new design, a specific process, or the sale of a thing.

Engineers, business people, and researchers use patents for a variety of reasons. They can help with many different research questions. You can use them to explore the development of a technology over time, look through all the patents filed by one inventor or company, or discover whether your design project idea or invention is truly novel.

When searching for patents, Google patents is a great place to start.

You can enter keywords and get a list of related results, just like regular Google.

However, keep in mind that the language that patents use is often technical. So, a touch screen might be called a “tactile display screen” in some patents, even though we usually say “touch screen” in everyday conversation. Think about this when you’re searching.

If you’d like to learn more about a particular patent, you can click it to read its record. One of the most meaningful pieces of information here is the patent number. A patent number is a series of characters that identifies an individual patent.

Other relevant information on this page includes title, name of inventor(s), current owner, summary, images, description, and legal claims to control. The date of patent grant is useful if you want to know if it is still “controlled”. There are also citations to other documents including related patents and categories that the invention fits into.

These categories are helpful for browsing for other patents that have similar characteristics. Explore each of the categories that your sample patent document is tagged with to see if they capture a relevant aspect of your research interest. You can often find additional patents that are related to your interests this way.

If you have any questions please feel free to click the “Ask us” button at the top right-hand corner of the UNLV Libraries website to contact a librarian by livechat, text, phone, or email. If you’re on campus, drop in help is available on the first floor of Lied Library. You can also check out our other tutorials for more quick and easy help.