

INNOVATION AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

This article is the first in a series written by the Canadian Intellectual Property Office (CIPO).

You've probably heard about how important it is to be innovative. Whether it's in the business section of your local newspaper, in a major economic magazine, or on your favourite entrepreneurial blog, everyone is talking about innovation and how it's the secret to success.

But with innovation always in the limelight, intellectual property (IP) is sometimes missed. IP is tied to anything and everything new, unique, and innovative. It's so important that if you don't learn about it early, you could be missing valuable opportunities, and exposing your business and innovations to risks.

SO WHAT IS IP?

IP includes creations of the mind that can be protected, such as inventions, new technologies, new brands, unique designs, original literary or artistic works, unique processes, and more. IP can be classified into five categories: [patents](#), [trademarks](#), [industrial designs](#), [copyright](#), and [trade secrets](#).

IP IS EVERYWHERE

Believe it or not, these five types of IP surround you every day. In fact, they're surrounding you right now as you read this blog.

The content of this blog, including blog posts and photos, is protected by [copyright](#). Copyright protects original literary, artistic, dramatic, or musical works. It's the legal protection that lets content creators cash in on their creative works, whether those works are simple blog posts, or your favourite recording artist's latest album. Copyrights are convenient too, as original works are automatically protected by copyright when they're created.

Many organizations are protected by [trademarks](#). Trademarks represent a brand or company's identity and reputation. They include logos, names, slogans, and more. Brand value can be very important to businesses—small, medium and large businesses can sell their company and its brand value to another business or entrepreneur. And it's through trademarks that companies can defend themselves from copycats looking to cash in on their brand name and image.

You may be reading this blog on your phone. The technology inside your phone or computer is covered by hundreds of [patents](#). A patent protects any new and useful invention, such as a product, composition, machine,

process, or an improvement to any of those. All mobile phone companies have an enormous collection of patents which they use both to protect their innovative technology, and to license that technology to other companies in exchange for monetary compensation.

The outward appearance of your phone or computer is also protected, but instead by a registered [industrial design](#). Industrial designs cover the decorative, non-functional aspects of products—essentially their physical appearance.

Now, suppose you're reading this article on your phone or laptop in your local coffee shop. You may have used the coffee shop's app on your phone. In doing so, not only did you get reward points, but you also gave your local coffee shop valuable information about your purchase. Customer lists, and data like this, are an example of [trade secrets](#). Trade secrets are anything of value which gives you a competitive edge. They can be used to protect recipes, patterns, devices, processes, customer lists, supplier lists, business plans, and more. However, there is no formal protection for trade secrets. As the name implies, you just have to keep them secret.

So while you browse these copyrighted articles on our trademarked website, using your patented and industrial-design-registered phone or computer, and as your local coffee shop keeps your purchase data secret, remember this: protect your innovations. Think IP.

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT IP?

Check WEOC's website for more IP articles.