

# How To Read a Search Report

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When you get the Search Report you may be confused. These guidelines will help you navigate the document.

## WHAT A SEARCH IS NOT

It helps to understand what this is not; by itself it is not an opinion of novelty nor a comment on the prior art. In many ways it is analogous to lab results that a doctor must interpret. Only a patent lawyer, with help from you, can give you an opinion.

## OBJECTIVE

This is a restatement of the disclosure. Don't worry if it differs slightly from what you sent; just look for big differences.

## FIELD OF SEARCH

This is important because it demonstrates how comprehensive the search was, and it helps us compare our search to the one an examiner does. It also proves you have made a wise choice in opting for a search. As I have explained, the entire field of inventions has been classified into groups, or classes, and this makes searching much more specific and accurate. See:

<http://www.uspto.gov/web/patents/classification/> Both USPC and CPC classes have been searched.

## RESULTS

Typically, the searcher has listed those patents that you should look at first at the head of this section. If the searcher has found overlap between a patent and the Objective (see above) it will be noted here, (usually be noting that the patent “discloses . . .”)

Patents (both published applications and issued) are usually referred to by country code, number, and kind code. For shorthand, they are sometimes referred to by the first inventor's family name.

Country codes are usually self-evident (e.g., “US”), but can be obscure (“GB” for the United Kingdom). A list of WIPO two letter codes is here:

[http://www.wipo.int/pct/guide/en/gdvol1/annexes/annexk/ax\\_k.pdf](http://www.wipo.int/pct/guide/en/gdvol1/annexes/annexk/ax_k.pdf)

For US publications, if the number begins with a year (e.g., “2014”) then it is a publication of an application, not an issued patent. There may in fact be a later issued patent, however.

Kind Codes (e.g., A, B1, etc.) vary by country, and can be arcane. It basically tells you whether the document is a granted patent, or in some cases, an application. A full list of Kind Codes is here:

[http://www.thomsonfilehistories.com/docs/RESOURCES\\_Kind%20Codes%20by%20Country.pdf](http://www.thomsonfilehistories.com/docs/RESOURCES_Kind%20Codes%20by%20Country.pdf)

If the patent on your result list makes reference to “Fig. 1” or the like, that would be one of the figures toward the front of the patent. Generally this suggests that the searcher thinks one of the embodiments should be considered.

If you see a reference to “Col. 5, Ln. 40” or something similar that means column 5, line 40. Column numbers are at the top of the page, usually two columns per page on US publications. Line numbers are down the middle, in blocks of 5. You just have to count lines to find the location. Paragraph numbers, if they appear, will be sequential with leading zeros, placed within brackets.

If the patent is from a non-English speaking country, the text will be in the local language (e.g., Chinese), but a translation may be included, or at least an English version of the abstract.

If the searcher has found relevant web pages through an Internet search, these will be listed also. These can be important in demonstrating lack of novelty, or obviousness, and also can be helpful to you in assessing potential competitors, and commercial viability.

## **ADDENDUM**

US Applications are not published until 18 months after filing the application (or any earlier provisional), so it is entirely possible that a relevant pending application is not on the Report. Note that the Report itself states: There is no guarantee made or implied that every patent which may be considered relevant is presented in this search report.