



Patent Factsheets: Claims

The basis of a UK patent application is a legal document called a specification. Its contents determine whether a patent can be granted. You would be well advised to seek professional assistance when preparing your patent application. A patent specification includes:

- a full description of your invention, plus any drawings referred to within your description
- one or more claims.

This factsheet tells you about the claims. An example is shown overleaf. Other factsheets in this series explain how to prepare a description, drawings, and an abstract (which is another essential part of an application).

Content

A claim is a precise statement of the invention that you want to protect.

Your first claim must define the invention by setting out its distinctive technical features. These are the features which distinguish your invention from what is already known within the same or similar field.

Your first claim should only include the essential features of your invention and you should consider how restrictive in meaning the terms you need to be. For example, if the invention which you have described uses a hook on which to hang coats, consider whether it needs to be a hook, or if another type of support would fulfil the same function. If so, you should consider whether you should call it simply “a support for clothes” rather than a “coat hook”.

Subsidiary features may be set out in “dependent claims”: these refer to one or more previous claims (as shown in the example claims 2-6 overleaf).

Note that if you include more than 25 claims there will be an additional fee of £20 per claim, later in the process.

A claim should not contain any statements relating to commercial or other advantages or other non-technical aspects; e.g. claims of the type “I claim that my invention is novel” or “I claim £250 for my clothes stand” or “I claim to be the inventor of this clothes stand” or “I claim that my clothes stand will make it easier to get access to the clothes” will not be accepted.

Do not use a full stop in the middle of any claim as this would make it unclear.

Do not put anything in your claims which you have not already referred to in your description. **The claims must be fully supported by the description.**

The Intellectual Property Office will conduct a search on your application based upon the invention defined in your claims. If your claims aren't well written or thought out, the results of our search may not be as helpful as they could be. **Your application cannot be ‘searched’ if it has no claims.**

Drafting commercially successful claims is not easy. If you are in any doubt about the effectiveness of your claims, consult a patent attorney.

At the substantive examination stage the claims will be assessed to determine whether the invention is new and inventive. If necessary, you will then be given the opportunity to amend your claims.

Style and presentation

Type (or print) the claim(s) on one side only of separate sheets of white A4 paper.

Begin your claims on a separate sheet of paper, preferably headed “CLAIMS”. If you decide to write more than one claim, number them in order beginning with claim 1.

Number the pages of claims in order, to follow on from the pages of the description (for example, if your last descriptive page is numbered 2, your first claim page will be numbered 3).

Leave margins of 2.0cm.

Join the pages together with a paper clip or bulldog clip at the top centre of the pages. Please do not join the pages by stapling.

The claims should be in English or Welsh. (The Office will provide a translation of any material filed in Welsh).

IMPORTANT: You will need to file your claims at the Intellectual Property Office within 12 months of your filing date (where no claim to priority is made).

Claims: Typical example

Page numbered to follow on
after the description page(s)

Use A4 paper

Preferred heading for your claims

Broadest claim - include only the essential features.

The claims must relate to technical features of your invention.

Dependent claims relating to subsidiary features (these claims are optional)

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Claims

1. A bicycle stabilising unit comprising attachment means for attaching the unit to a bicycle, a ground-engaging wheel which can freely rotate about an axis, and cushioning means such that the axis of the wheel can be displaced relative to the attachment means.
2. A bicycle stabilising unit according to claim 1, in which the cushioning means is provided by a damped suspension strut.
3. A bicycle stabilising unit according to claim 1, in which the cushioning means is provided by a housing which supports the ground-engaging wheel, the housing including at least one slot which allows linear displacement of the wheel, perpendicular to its axis, the housing also having at least one spring which controls the displacement of the wheel.
4. A bicycle stabilising unit according to claim 1, in which the cushioning means is provided by a torsion bar or torsion spring.
5. A bicycle stabilising unit according to any of the preceding claims, in which the cushioning means is adjustable so that the degree of cushioning can be varied.
6. A bicycle stabilising unit according to claim 2, in which the damped suspension strut is detachable so that the ground-engaging wheel is stored in a non-ground-engaging position.

Enquiries: You can contact the Intellectual Property Office on: 0300 300 2000 (local call rate). Alternatively visit our website at www.gov.uk/ipo

We are keen to help all our customers as much as possible, but regret that we cannot assist with the commercial exploitation of your invention. This factsheet is not intended to be a comprehensive guide and necessarily omits details which may be relevant in particular circumstances.