

International Patent Classification (IPC)

An effective and easy-to-use system to classify
and search patent documents

What is the IPC?

The IPC system is a precise, effective and easy-to-use tool for classifying and searching patent applications, specifications of granted patents, utility models, and similar technical documents.

It divides technology fields into eight sections (A-H) with approximately 75,000 subdivisions, each represented by a language independent symbol consisting of Latin alphabet characters and Arabic numerals.

The IPC consists of several hierarchical levels. Subgroup level is indicated by a number of dots: a higher number of dots represents a lower subgroup level.

Who should use the IPC?

In addition to classification and examination experts in patent offices, who use the IPC to classify patent applications and to search for the purpose of examination, anybody involved in research and development, inventing or applying technical solutions can benefit from using the IPC to search patents or patent-related information. Inventors, researchers, teachers, students, lawyers, global companies, SMEs and start-ups will find it indispensable.

Why use the IPC?

The IPC can be used to search almost 110 million patent documents worldwide. It enables the user to locate the right technology in many types of patent-related searches, or find an informative technology overview or a complete and detailed list of patent documents relating to a specific technology represented by IPC symbols.

The IPC appears:

- in **databases** of patent or non-patent documents by providing the principal criteria for technology search or as bibliographic data that can be used for a search or examination;
- on the **front page** of a patent document, including published patent applications or utility models, indicating the technical information it contains;
- in **search reports** issued by search authorities, to indicate technology areas covered by patent searches or examination;
- in **libraries or reading rooms** as an information source relating in particular to paper-based patent collections, e.g. linking document numbers and IPC symbols based on common patent collections;
- in the **IPC Official Publication** available from the IPC pages on the WIPO website www.wipo.int/classifications/ipc/ipcpub;
- in **books, articles, magazines** and **websites** related to patent information, including inventions and technical solutions.

How to use the IPC

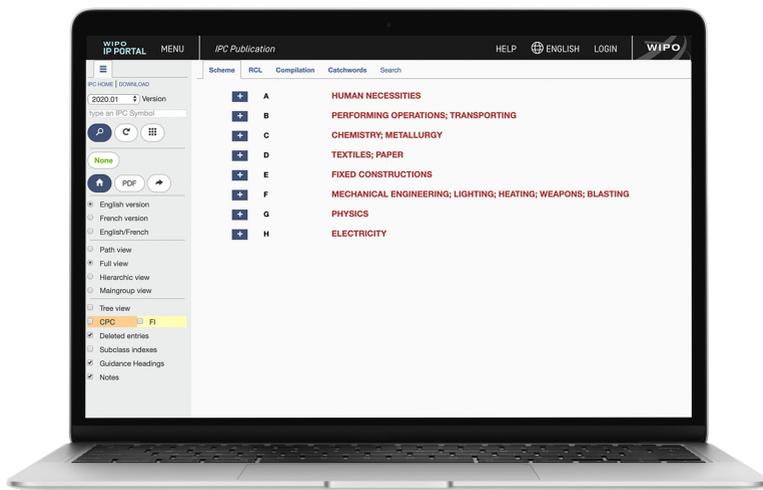
- Browse the IPC scheme and see IPC definitions, catchwords and other information available in the [IPC Official Publication](#) web application.
- Search the IPC by using the smart search or advanced term search options.
- Classify patent applications by using an artificial intelligence (AI) based IPC categorization tool
- See the frequency of IPC symbols in patent documents by using IPC statistics.
- Use IPC symbols in patent databases to find patents, patent applications or other patent-related information.

The easy way to search a database using the IPC

Open the *IPC Official Publication*

1. Enter an IPC symbol, e.g. A47J 31/30, in the search field and click on the search icon
2. Click on the bridge icon 
3. Click on the database name, e.g. PATENTSCOPE
4. See results in the database.

For more information, guides and training, see www.wipo.int/classifications/ipc/en



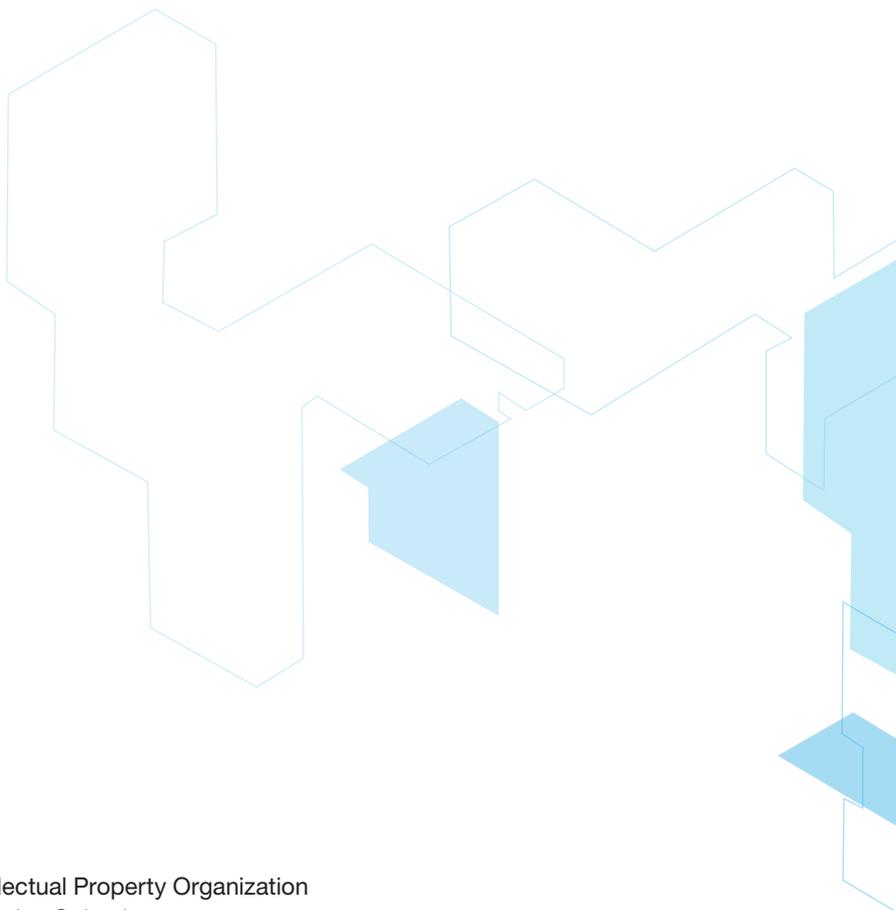
IPC: The unifying system of patent classification worldwide

The IPC is used to classify patent documents in more than 100 countries. Authentic IPC versions are available in English and French, with translations in many other languages including Chinese, German, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish.

IPC is the unifying system of patent classification worldwide. Other patent classifications built upon the IPC provide more granular and advanced classification, ensuring the maximum coherence for patent classification internationally.

The IPC was established by the *Strasbourg Agreement*. Its members constitute the IPC Union, with its principle bodies being the Assembly and the Committee of Experts (IPC/CE) and its subsidiary body the IPC Revision Working Group (IPC/WG).

The Working Group is responsible for revision of the IPC. Participation in its meetings is open to all members and observers of the IPC Union.



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