



Global Innovation Award

SINCE 2011

How Do I Protect My Invention?

FIRST encourages teams to learn and explore the patent process in their own country. Intellectual property protection is an important part of inventing. We encourage teams to look in the Award and Patent Resources area at the Guide to Applying for a Patent, compiled to assist *FIRST* LEGO League Global Innovation Award teams navigate the first steps of protecting their Project solutions. Please keep in mind that it is a simple resource to get you started on the right path if you would like to pursue protection for your idea. We encourage you to learn more about the patent process in your country and to seek help from a patent attorney or patent agent. Many may be willing to donate their services if you explain your team history and goals. *FIRST* LEGO League recommends that the Global Innovation Award Semi-Finalists file an [application for a US Provisional Patent](#) if your country allows its residents and/or citizens to file for a patent application in any country. It is easier and less expensive compared to filing a patent application in some other countries.

What is a Patent?

Many people have never heard of patents, know very little about them, or think they are only for adult inventors. We strongly recommend learning the basics about how to patent your idea in your home country so that you can protect your idea.

A patent is a right, granted by a particular country, giving a person or entity exclusive control over a product or process. In other words, whoever owns the patent on an invention makes the decisions about how that invention may be used in a country (or countries) where the idea is patented.

Each country sets its own rules about what type of invention can or cannot be patented, but usually it must be a product or process that is new (different enough from everything else out there), useful (it has some practical use, no matter how strange or silly it may seem), and non-obvious (an average person working in the field would not naturally think of it). During the time when a patent is valid, no one else may make or sell the invention in that country (or countries) without the patent-holder's permission.

Applying for a patent will help to protect your team's idea. Having a patent does not mean that your team cannot sell, share, or give away your idea later – it just means that your team has the right to make that decision.

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What's a Trademark?

A trademark is a symbol, name or phrase that identifies a business or product. It is the image or words that you associate with a particular product. Any time you see a [™] or ® symbol next to a logo or word, you know that it is a trademark. For example, *FIRST*® is a registered trademark of our organization, so any time you see *FIRST* in italics and all capital letters, you know it is referring to the *FIRST* that organizes *FIRST*® LEGO® League.



Registering a trademark with your national government allows you to protect your right to use a special name, picture, or tagline that identifies your product. If your team chooses to develop your invention into a sellable product, you may choose to register a trademark to make your brand stand out. It is not required though.

Even if you choose not to register a trademark, it is a good idea to look at the list of registered trademarks in your country. If you find one that is similar to your logo or product name, you may want to consider changing your idea to make your brand more original.

Special Thanks

FIRST LEGO League wishes to thank Maureen Toohey, Esq. for providing legal guidance regarding patent law for these resources. The legal information provided here is for informational purposes only. Teams should seek their own legal counsel regarding protection of individual ideas submitted to the Global Innovation Award.

