

# How to Conduct a Preliminary U.S. Patent Search

**Database:** USPTO Web Patent Database

**Search Strategy:** Classification search

**Content:**

- 1790- Present: Scanned images of patents are available & searchable by current U.S. patent classification, patent number and issue date
- 1976- Present: Text searchable
- 2001-Present: Published patent applications

## Recommended Patent Search Strategy

### 1. Brainstorm keywords to describe the invention

- a. What does it do?
  - i. *The essential function of the invention.*
- b. What is the end result?
  - i. *The essential effect or basic product resulting from the invention.*
- c. What is it made of?
  - i. *The physical structure of the invention.*
- d. What is it used for?
  - i. *The intended use for the invention.*
- e. What problem(s) does it solve?
  - i. *What key problem does it resolve?*

---

### 2. Use brainstormed keywords to find initial class/subclass combinations in the Index to the U.S. Patent Classification

- a. Go to the Index to the U.S. Patent Classification website  
<http://www.uspto.gov/web/patents/classification/uspcindex/indextouspc.htm>
- b. Multi-step:
  - i. Locate each keyword generated from the brainstorm (step 1)
  - ii. Record class and subclass numbers for each keyword term
  - iii. A plus sign + following a subclass indicates that additional subclasses may be relevant



Preface to the Index to the USPC  
Select the format and section (by letter) ...  
Index in HTML  
Index in PDF

---

### 3. Verify the relevancy of class/subclasses using the Classification Schedule

- a. Look in the class schedule for all the class/subclasses identified in step 2

- b. See where subclasses suggested by the Index fall in the schedule
- c. Subclasses are not always in numerical order

A	P	69.5
A	P	72
A	P	72.5
A	P	73
A	P	74
A	P	75

**BIRDBATH**  
**WATERING OR LIQUID FEED DEVICE**

- Drop-delivering
- Temperature-controlling
- Fountains and troughs
- Animal-controlled supply

Shipping crates .....	D30 / 109+
Stop in building .....	52 / 101
Stop in sewage system .....	210 / 131
Training or training devices .....	119 / 712+
Tissue treatment .....	8 / 94.1R+
TOYS .....	446 / 268+
Trough .....	43 / 58+
Design .....	D22 / 119+
Temperature-controlling .....	119 / 72+
Whips & whip apparatus .....	231
Animal Cell Culture .....	435 / 325+
Animal Cell Growth Media .....	435 / 404+
Animal Cell Per Se .....	435 / 325+
Animated Cartoons See Motion Picture	
Animation .....	345 / 473+
Antisidins .....	564 / 443
Ankle	
Protector .....	D29 / 121.2
Supports .....	602 / 65
Anklets .....	2 / 239+
Annealing	

**4. Confirm the scope of subclasses using the Classification Definitions**

- a. Read the corresponding subclass definitions to establish the scope of subclass(es) relevant to the search
- b. Definitions also include “See” references that will point to additional appropriate classes and subclasses

**Definition Subclass: 73**

**73 Temperature-controlling:**  
 This subclass is indented under subclass 72. Water holding devices for supplying stock involving a trough or the combination of a barometric fountain or other means of constant supply and a trough with means to prevent the freezing of the water or to regulate the temperature for other purposes.

**5. Retrieve complete patent documents and published applications by classification**

- a. Click red P icon: Retrieve the list of patent numbers and titles for all the patents within the subclass
- b. Click blue A: Retrieve published application

A	P	69.5
A	P	72
A	P	72.5
A	P	73
A	P	74
A	P	75

**BIRDBATH**  
**WATERING OR LIQUID FEED DEVICE**

- Drop-delivering
- Temperature-controlling
- Fountains and troughs
- Animal-controlled supply

**6. Review complete patent documents and published applications**

- a. Review each patent/patent application associated with classification:
  - i. Title
  - ii. Abstract
  - iii. Drawings
  - iv. Description of Drawings
  - v. Summary
  - vi. Description of Invention

**7. Retrieve and review cited references from relevant patents**

References Cited (Referenced By)		
U.S. Patent Documents		
1033799	July 1912	Harvey
1378246	May 1921	Melbourne
2465242	December 1948	Layton
2665366	January 1954	Chevaland
2703328	March 1955	Mertler
2838850	June 1958	Laird
2882932	May 1961	Mosey
3336523	April 1969	Stanford
3648659	March 1972	Joans
3820508	June 1974	Robinson
3868348	July 1976	Stanfield
4072642	February 1978	Clayton
4320721	March 1982	Sikora
4561384	December 1985	Laf
4640246	February 1987	Laf

**Other References**

"Heated Water Bucket", Dunn's Catalog, Fall 1988, p. 79.