

Common Intellectual Property Abbreviations and Symbols

The meaning of abbreviations and symbols for Patents, Trademarks, Copyrights, Mask Works & Designs

Abbreviation or
Symbol

Meaning

Patent or Pat.

Indicates an invention protected by an issued United States patent. A proper patent notice consists of the words "patent" or "patented," followed by the patent number. Sometimes the letters "U.S." are added before one of the terms. The abbreviations "No." or "Number" are used after one of the terms, but they are not required. The notice should be placed on the protected article or, if that is not possible, on a label affixed to it or to its packaging. For more information on patents, refer to:

**Patent Pending, or Pat.
Pending**

An application has been filed seeking to protect some aspect of the marked invention. This patent has issued. It may never issue.

**Reg. U.S. Pat & TM
Office or ®**

Indicates a mark which has been registered with the United States Patent & Trademark Office. This mark has greater protection than do owners of unregistered marks. For more information about trademarks, see this short article on appropriate trademark use:

SM or ™

Stands for “service mark” and means that someone is claiming the adjacent word or symbol as identifying the services, such as restaurant services, which they are offering. Sometimes the letters are placed within a circle. This abbreviation or symbol does not mean the mark has been registered anywhere.

TM or ™

Stands for “trademark” and means that someone is claiming the adjacent word or symbol as identifying the goods. Sometimes the letters are placed within a circle. This abbreviation or symbol does not mean the mark has been registered anywhere.

Copyright, Copr., or ©

Indicates that the work on which it appears is a creative work protected by copyright (but not necessarily in the public domain). It is the proper copyright notice for protection not only in the U.S. but also most foreign nations conforming to the Berne Convention, followed by the name of the copyright owner and the date when the work was first published. Example: © Olive, P.A. 2006. Where the notation is to be used only in the U.S., one can use the word “Copyright” instead of the symbol and, for certain works, can omit the date; copyrighted sound recordings can use a circle “P” symbol (see below). Often words such as “All rights reserved” are added to a copyright notice, but they have no particular legal status. For more information about copyrights and copyright notices, refer to the Copyright Law of the United States.

P

Stands for “phonorecord” (which includes not just records but also CDs, DVDs, MP3s and other digital formats). It indicates that the recording to which it is affixed is protected by copyright. (The “P” symbol refers to protection of the sound, as opposed to protection of the underlying words or musical work.) A proper copyright notice for phonorecords contains the phonograph symbol, followed by the name of the copyright owner, the year of first publication, and the date when the work was first published. [Note: the P symbol can be found in the web address bar of many web browsers and computers.]

**Mask Work, *M*, or the
letter M in a circle**

Indicates that the work on which it appears is a mask work (images of the pattern of material on the layers on a semiconductor chip—i.e. the layout of the chip), or embodies a mask work, through the work provisions of the United States Copyright Act. A proper mask work notice consists of the mask work symbols, followed by the name of the owner of the mask work or an abbreviation by which the owner is generally known or recognized. [Note: the M in a circle symbol is in normal fonts; graphic designs, or the simpler asterisk-M symbol, typically are used in typed documents] For more information about mask works, refer to:

**Protected Design,
Prot'd Des., *D*, or the
letter D in a circle**

Indicates that the boat hull on which the term or symbol appears embodies a design protected under the Design Protection Act of 1998. A proper design notice contains one of the listed terms or symbols, followed by the name of the owner and the date when protection of the design commenced, or the registration number, if there is no registration number, then the design work may not be registered. [Note: the D in a circle symbol is in normal fonts; graphic designs, or one of the typed terms or the asterisk-D symbol, typically are used in typed documents]