GUIDELINES FOR MAINTAINING AN INVENTOR’S NOTEBOOK
Adapted by Ran Raider, government and history librarian, University Libraries, Wright State University from the U.S. Department of Energy and Los Alamos lab notebook guides

Inventor’s Notebook

The inventor’s notebook can be one of the most important elements of the patent process. As the official record of your technical work (calculations, experiments, prototype, ideas and improvements, etc.) it establishes the dates and times when you have worked on the development of an invention. The notebook shows the progress from conception of an idea to the reduction to practice. It is extremely important for you, as an inventor, to maintain accurate records detailing the work you have done on your invention. These substantiating documents can be used if there is ever a dispute between you and another party regarding work on the same idea. The notebook can also be used to verify date of conception and the intellectual dominance you held during the inventing process. The inventor’s notebook can demonstrate the reduction to practice of your idea. The proper recording of your ideas, witness signature, and accurate dating is the very first step toward ensuring their protection. Basically, the Inventor’s Notebook establishes the legal trail for your idea.

This documentation is especially important in the United States. Your inventor’s notebook will prove critical in interference and derivation proceedings. Interference proceedings still occur even though we are a first to file country. Derivation proceedings allow an inventor to protest the application they feel was derived from their idea or disclosure. You can see the importance of maintaining the notebook in order to certify, and prove in court if necessary, that your work on the invention was done prior to that of another. One other important piece about the notebook, your patent attorney will need it when they write the application.

Recommended Procedures and Helpful Hints

1) The description of the invention will be written in a bound or glued notebook with numbered pages and writing in indelible ink.
2) Clearly indicate the following information in the notebook
   a. Name of the person maintaining the notebook
   b. Address of the inventor
   c. Identification of the subject-matter
   d. Dates of the entries in the notebook; with witnessing if a significant development occurs
3) Be sure to record all experimental work, calculations, sketches, diagrams, and any other related information regarding the process of inventing, research conducted, and the invention itself directly in the notebook.
4) It is very important to make successive entries on consecutive pages. Do not insert, remove or modify any of the pages.
5) Record everything! It is better to have too much information than too little information on the invention.
6) Do not start a new page until the previous page is full or has been so marked that no additional entries can be made on it.
7) Sign and date the material you enter in the notebook for that particular day.
8) Periodically have the entries in the notebook witnessed with a signature of a friend or family member. Only one signature is required other than yours. It is best that the
person has a understanding of your actual work recording using the notation: “Read and understood pages [blank] through [blank] this day of [day] [month] [year].” The description of the invention will be written to allow another person, who is skilled in the art, to comprehend and reproduce the invention.

9) After an entry has been signed and dated, DO NOT make any changes, interlineations, deletions, or additions. Create a new entry for any corrections that you make and refer back to the original entry.

10) Do not erase or blot out any entry at any time. Before an entry is signed and dated, changes can be made, but be careful not to obliterate what was originally written. A simple line through the entry will suffice.

11) Remember to treat your inventor’s notebook as a legal document. Keep it in a safe place.

For more information see:


From publisher: The best way to protect your invention is to keep good records. Let *The Inventor’s Notebook* track and prompt you to take care of every important step in the process. Use it to document the development of your invention, make refinements while building and testing, assess the commercial potential of your invention, calculate how much capital you are likely to need, organize your search for funds to build, test, manufacture and distribute your invention and create a record of contacts who know of your invention and have signed confidentiality agreements. The perfect companion to Nolo’s bestselling *Patent It Yourself*, this book includes worksheets, forms, sample agreements, instructions, references to relevant areas of patent law, a bibliography of legal and non-legal aids and more! *The Inventor’s Notebook* also includes up-to-date agreements, a glossary of patent terms and a section on using the Internet to develop and promote your invention.


From Publisher: For over 30 years, this bestselling, all-on-one guide has been explaining how to evaluate hurdles to patentability, write a clear patent application, prepare patent drawings of your invention, conduct a patent search online, and complete all forms required by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. The 19th edition includes the latest implications of recent patent law reforms.

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