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Changes to IPC

On January 1, 2006, International Patent Classification Reform (IPC-R) superseded the IPC. IPC-R is also referred to as IPC8, but the nomenclature "IPC-R" more clearly emphasizes the nature of the new system as a single classification scheme that will feature frequent revisions to keep up with rapidly changing technologies and will be applied to both newly published documents and retrospectively to previous publications. The fundamental changes introduced by IPC-R include:

- Attributes to use in searching IPC-R
 - Two IPC classification levels: [Advanced](#) and [Core](#) (and [Subclass](#))
 - [Invention and Additional attributes](#)
- [Version](#)
- Frequent revision of IPC classes
- Ongoing reclassification of existing patent documents

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Advanced Level

The Advanced level of classification represents the complete IPC that begins as of January 2006 with a similar breakdown of subgroups as the previous IPC-7. The Advanced level will be revised on the order of every three months to allow for its rapid adaptation to cover emerging technologies. Advanced IPC classification will be useful for a precisely focused search and when capturing documents published by the major authorities is sufficient.

The Advanced level will be used by large patent offices, which include at least those offices included in the PCT Minimum Documentation. The full-text collections available on Delphion are all Minimum PCT Documentation authorities.

All documents classified at the Advanced level will also have a Core level classification that is automatically generated from the Advanced code. The Core level classification may sometimes be identical to the Advanced level, but it will usually be different.

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Core Level

The Core level of IPC-R is a subset of the Advanced classification scheme with significantly fewer numbers of subgroups, primarily (but not only) those at the main group level (having a subgroup of 00). This "light and stable" version of the IPC will be used by small and medium patent offices, and its classification scheme will be updated only every three years.

Searching at the Core level will be more generic, and will result in more results, but will extend the search to those smaller patent publishing authorities that use the Core level.

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Subclass Level

In addition to Advanced or Core Level distinctions within IPC-R, it may sometimes occur that a patent document is published with only a 4-character IPC Classification code. In this case, the IPC-R code will be tagged as Subclass-level classification.

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Invention and Additional (Value) Attributes

IPC-R defines two types of information found in patent documents:

- Invention information
- Additional information

According to WIPO:

"Invention information is technical information in the total disclosure of a patent document (for example, description, drawings, claims) that represents an addition to the state of the art. The Invention information is determined in the context of the state of the art, using guidance provided by the claims of the patent document, with due regard given to the description and the drawings.

Additional information is non-trivial technical information which does not in itself represent an addition to the state of the art but might constitute useful information for the searcher."

In contrast to Main Classification in pre-reform IPC, there can be more than one Invention classification for a given document in IPC-R.

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Version

In place of formerly used "edition," each new classification subgroup that is created in the ongoing revision of IPC-R will carry with it a creation date, which is called "version." It will be printed on the document in the format yyyyymm and seen in the database record with a full date, yyyyymmdd. This version number signals the date on which this particular subgroup came into effect.

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Revision Cycle

The Core level will be revised every three years. The Advanced level will be revised every three months. By contrast, the previous IPC was revised every five years.

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Reclassification

Prior to 2006, revisions to the IPC were introduced at 5-year intervals, and as each new edition was published, its classification would be applied to documents from that date forward. With IPC-R, the entire backfile of published patent documents is being reclassified, and ongoing changes to the IPC classification scheme will result in reclassification of all previously published documents that are affected by the change in the class scheme.

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Layout of Classification Symbols

- Sections
- Classes
- Subclasses
- Groups
- Subgroups

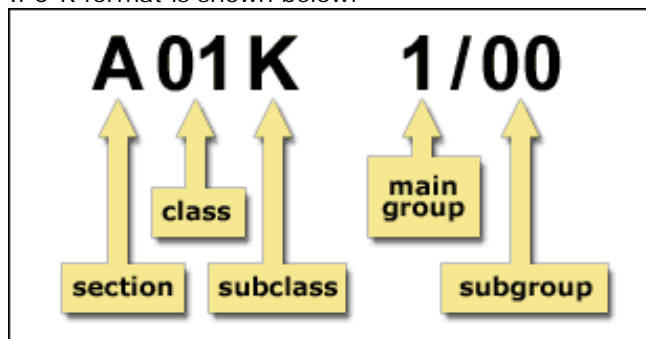
The Classification represents the whole body of knowledge which may be regarded as proper to the field of patents for invention, divided into eight sections. Sections are the highest level of hierarchy of the Classification.

Each section is subdivided into classes. Classes are the second hierarchical level of the Classification.

Each class comprises one or more subclasses. Subclasses are the third hierarchical level of the Classification.

Each subclass is broken down into subdivisions referred to as "groups," which are either main groups (i.e., the fourth hierarchical level of the Classification) or subgroups (i.e., lower hierarchical levels dependent upon the main group level of the Classification).

IPC-R format is shown below:

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IPC-R on Delphion

See the [IPC field definition](#) on the Field Help: Definitions and Searching page in the Delphion Help Center for the description of how IPC-R is used on Delphion.

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Additional Reference Materials

Refer to the following documents for an extensive description of IPC-R:

Thomson Scientific

- [Frequently Asked Questions about IPC R](#)

WIPO

- [International Patent Classification Guide](#)
- [IPC-R Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [IPC Reform](#)
- [IPC Eighth edition](#)
- [IPC8 Concordance](#)

Go to the IPC Eighth edition (link above) and click the RCL tab

USPTO

- [US to IPC8 Concordance](#)

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IPC Reform Training

See the Delphion [Web Seminar page](#) for IPC R training sessions.

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