

# Whose idea is it anyway?

In a world where ideas can be accessed at the touch of a screen, what incentive is there for anyone to actually create something new, rather than simply taking what's already there?

The answer lies in the protection of Intellectual Property: the right of the creators of ideas to be acknowledged as the owners of those ideas, in whatever form they take. These rights are being celebrated around the world on 26 April as part of World Intellectual Property Day. Planned events include conferences, exhibitions, competitions and awards. A major aim of these events is to counter the growth of piracy, which is the illegal copying and selling of designs, products or technologies without the permission of the owner.

Inventors can protect themselves against piracy by patenting their invention. A patent is document which recognises you as the inventor of something that is new and has a practical use. One problem for inventors is that there are no world patents. It's possible to receive a European or African patent, but in most parts of the world, inventors need a separate patent for each country. Another problem is that there are differences over what can be patented in different countries. For instance, in many countries it's not possible to patent software.

In the commercial world, the most important intellectual property is trademarks: any kind of sign which differentiates products or services. This could be a distinctive name, slogan, logo, design or even colour, which competitors can't use for their own products. A geographical indication is a similar kind of protection that can be given to products which are traditional in a particular region. So, sparkling wine can only be called 'champagne' if it is produced in the Champagne region of France. More recently, this concept has been extended to the protection of traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples.

Finally, did you notice the word *copyright* at the bottom of this page? It means Macmillan can control the way this text is used. If you were to copy parts of it and pretend you had written them, you would be guilty of plagiarism. Unlike inventions and trademarks, literary or artistic works do not need to be registered. The copyright exists as soon as the work is created and continues for as much as seventy years after the creator's death depending on the country where the copyright is created, even if it is sold or given away.

1 Which paragraph of the text best matches the title below?

- |   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| 1 A global answer                         | paragraph _____ |
| 2 Protection for writers and artists      | paragraph _____ |
| 3 Protection for scientists and engineers | paragraph _____ |
| 4 A global question                       | paragraph _____ |
| 5 Protection for companies                | paragraph _____ |

2 Decide if the sentences are true (T) or false (F). Circle the correct statements and correct those that are false.

- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| 1 Intellectual property can take a wide variety of forms.               | T/F |
| 2 World Intellectual Property Day is a major international conference.  | T/F |
| 3 Piracy involves selling stolen goods in new markets.                  | T/F |
| 4 Patents are not available for purely theoretical innovations.         | T/F |
| 5 Patents have to be obtained separately for each country in the world. | T/F |
| 6 Champagne is an example of a protected geographical indication.       | T/F |
| 7 Because an article is copyright, readers must pay to use it.          | T/F |
| 8 Copyright lasts for seventy years after a text is written.            | T/F |

3 Find the words in the text to complete the word-building table below.

verb	noun	adjective
	access / accessibility	accessible
	creation / creativity	creative
	acknowledgement	acknowledged
permit		permissible
	patent	patented
	difference	different
distinguish	distinction	
	extension	extensive

4 Use words from the table in exercise 3 to complete the questions below.

- 1 It can be difficult to \_\_\_\_\_ clearly between genuine and pirated DVDs.
- 2 It is important for students to \_\_\_\_\_ the sources of ideas they use in their essays and projects.
- 3 We are looking for \_\_\_\_\_ young designers to join our team.
- 4 The library must be \_\_\_\_\_ to all students, including wheelchair-users.
- 5 Our new logo needs to be \_\_\_\_\_ if it is to stand out from the other brands.
- 6 We conducted \_\_\_\_\_ research to ensure our product was attractive to our target market.
- 7 We do not \_\_\_\_\_ students to use mobile phones in the library.
- 8 Companies frequently have to defend their \_\_\_\_\_ in court.

5 *If you were to copy* (paragraph 5) is similar to *should you copy* (see lesson 63) – in other words, we are not suggesting you are going to copy it, but just asking you to imagine doing it. Write three other sentences about other crimes or antisocial behaviour, using the same pattern: *If you were to \_\_\_\_\_, you would be guilty of \_\_\_\_\_.*

6 Discuss these questions with your partner(s).

- How many trademarks have you seen or heard today?
- How serious a problem is piracy (of software, DVDs etc)?
- What can schools and universities do to counter plagiarism?

## Glossary

**incentive** (*noun*) - something that makes you want to work harder

**acknowledge** (*verb*) - recognise someone publicly for their achievement

**counter** (*verb*) - take action to stop or reduce the negative effects of something

**differentiate** (*verb*) - see or show a clear difference between things

**slogan** (*noun*) - a short, memorable phrase used for promotional purposes

**logo** (*noun*) - a symbol that represents a brand

**sparkling wine** (*adjective + noun*) - wine with bubbles

**indigenous peoples** (*adjective + noun*) - those who've lived somewhere for a very long time

**plagiarism** (*noun*) - copying someone's writing and pretending you wrote it