



Why Keep an Invention Logbook?

All inventors should keep an Invention Logbook to record the thinking process and ideas that lead to an invention. This is like a diary of your invention process. It should contain *everything* that is related to your invention. Entries can include photos, clippings, quotations, and stories related to the invention or inventing process. The inventor may include written comments they hear, ideas they think about, observations they make--just about anything related to the invention.

Logbooks are important to inventors because they protect their ideas in the development stages. For the most complete patent rights protection or documentation of idea ownership, inventors use clothbound books because pages cannot be inserted or deleted without detection. Composition books work well. Logbooks record ideas, possibilities, and observations which can be useful for future reference.

The format for the logbook is a chronological recording of the entire process of inventing. Any original entry should be handwritten in ink and dated. Any sketches and designs drawn should be placed in the log. Original text or graphics should be permanently attached to logbook pages (e.g., written on the page, glued, etc.). Cross out any mistakes; do not erase. Periodically, a trusted witness who is not related to the inventor should review, sign, and date the logbook; indicating that they understand the ideas recorded belong to the person keeping the log. Inventors often have notary publics sign their logbooks.

The invention process recorded in a logbook is more than the day to day account of constructing an invention. It also contains research about the invention's originality and social value, documentation of testing, expenses incurred while inventing, materials and sources, and credit given to those who helped along the way.

Keeping an Invention Logbook is an important part of the invention process!

A LESSON LEARNED

This short story illustrates how one man learned a painful lesson about recording invention ideas. Daniel Drawbaugh could have been a household name, but never became famous because he had no journal or record of what he claimed was his invention, the telephone. When Alexander Graham Bell filed for a patent application for the telephone in 1875, Drawbaugh tried to block Bell, saying that the telephone was his invention. Since Drawbaugh had no logbook or record of his work inventing the telephone, the Supreme Court rejected his claims and awarded the patent to Bell.

GUIDELINES FOR LOGBOOKS

- ✓ Use a bound notebook, make notes each time you work on your invention.
- ✓ Write in ink and do not erase. Cross out mistakes.
- ✓ Document all research.
- ✓ Sign and date all entries at the time they are made & have them witnessed periodically.
- ✓ Add sketches and drawings to make things clear.
- ✓ Record ideas and how you thought of them.
- ✓ List all parts, sources, & costs of materials.
- ✓ Write about problems you encountered and how they were solved.