

Record Keeping

Adherence to the following procedures will help ensure the retention of maximum patent rights:

- Use ink, not pencil, when recording ideas and experiments.
- Keep all records in bound notebooks with all pages numbered permanently in ink.
- Keep lab notebooks intact and free from mutilation.
- Make no erasures; cancel mistakes by drawing a line through them and writing the correct data in the margin, placing your initials and the date after each such correction.
- Make no changes or insertions on a page at any date later than that shown. If it is necessary to make insertions, indicate by using an initialed and dated marginal note when the change and insertion are made.
- Leave no blank pages between successive entries in your notebook. If you wish to skip a page or part of a page, draw lines through the unused portions with the word cancel and initial and date in the margin along such areas.
- Use the past tense of the verb to describe actions and experiments that were actually completed.
- Label ideas or proposals or suggestions as such so that they may be differentiated from work actually performed.
- State in detail how you propose to carry an idea into actual practice. If the indicated method turns out to be inoperative, then the record will prove only the conception of a problem, not the conception of an invention.
- Be explicit about what was actually done.
- When using abbreviations or terms, make sure they are standard. Your use of such terms or abbreviations should be explained in a table at the, front or at the back of your notebook.
- Record all experiments contemporaneously with the performance of the actual events. Do not use loose slips of paper to record data for subsequent entries.
- Sign and date each page of your notebook as it is completed. For pages relating to ideas or laboratory work that may lead to important inventions, be sure to have each such page witnessed and dated as soon as possible after completion of the page.
- In selecting a witness for the notebook, choose one who (1) is not likely to be an inventor or a coinventor and (2) will understand the experiment when it is explained and when he or she reads it over in the book.
- If the notebook entry records the conception of an idea, have the witness sign and date the notebook entry and indicate that the witness has read and understood what has been written.

- When the notebook records experiments, a witness who has seen the performance of the experiments, and can thereby testify from personal knowledge what took place, should sign the notebook entry and indicate on the notebook page that he or she has been present and has actually seen what is stated to have taken place.
- Try to preserve the first sample of new products or of products produced by a new method. To each sample, attach a permanent label, dated and signed and witnessed.
- Whenever an experiment or apparatus is new, it should be very helpful to photograph the project. All such photographs should be signed and dated and attached firmly to the notebook page.