

# INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

**Q** Can I get inexpensive patent protection by filing a quick “provisional” patent application?

**A** No, but it’s a good start. A provisional application never becomes a patent – you will have to file a regular application later to obtain enforceable patent protection. But, it can often be put together quickly, and can substantially lower your initial costs. A provisional application can act as a “placeholder,” allowing you to test the market, secure funding, and deter competitors. However, taking shortcuts upfront in the breadth of the application’s disclosure can leave you without the optimum scope of protection. This is because your later patent can rely only on the provisional for what was disclosed. Much depends on context – consult a patent professional to explore whether a provisional application might be a good option for your specific situation.

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