



Defining Protection

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Q What's the difference between patents, trademarks and copyrights?

A Stated in simplest terms: patents protect new ideas, trademarks identify the source of goods or services, and copyrights protect original expressions embodied in tangible media. Patents protect the utility or design of an invention – something new and useful (utility patents), or new and ornamental (design patents). Formalities must be complied with to obtain a patent. Trademarks are typically words or symbols that identify a source of origin -- the Nike swoosh, for example. Copyrights are born when creative original work is recorded, and are owned by the creator unless assigned or a “work for hire.” Registering trademarks and copyrights is optional, and not always possible, but can be very beneficial. Contact an experienced intellectual property attorney to explore your options.