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Simple steps to protect your intellectual property

Use our checklist to identify your IP assets, and pick up some easy tips to keep your IP protected.

Warning: Never show your new invention to companies to see if they're interested in buying it, or investing in it, without first getting patent advice.

Basic business IP checklist

Have you got this?	Type of IP	Steps you can take
Business or trading name	Trade mark (R or U)	Before trying to register your name with IPONZ, first use an online search engine to check no one else is using this business name, or has one that looks or sounds similar.
Logo	Trade mark (R or U)	If you're commissioning a graphic designer to make you a logo, first check it's unique and can be registered.
Customer database	Copyright and/or confidential information (U)	Limit access to any customer databases you may have and change passwords regularly.
Website content	Copyright and/or confidential information (U)	Don't put confidential information on public websites.
Apps or software code	Copyright (U)	There is copyright not only in software code but also in database structures and screen layouts/graphical user interfaces. Make sure ownership of all forms of copyright is clear.
New packaging design	Design (R)	Have a confidentiality agreement in place before discussing your design with anyone.
Advertising or signage	Trade mark and/or copyright (R and U)	If you haven't registered your logo with IPONZ (external link) add the ™ symbol. If you have, use ®.
Photos or imagery	Copyright (U)	If you're getting a photographer to take pictures for you, make sure you get in writing that you own the images – not them.
Goods	Trade mark (R or U)	Check your sales agreement to make sure your supplier is legitimate.
Slogan	Trade mark (R or U)	Check no one else is using your slogan by running it through an online search engine.
Secret recipe	Trade secret (U)	If you're sharing your recipes with staff, you can try and prevent them from telling your competitors by including a clause around this in their employment agreements.

Have you got this?	Type of IP	Steps you can take
Invention (new product or process)	Patent (R)	Don't tell anyone else about your idea. If you have already, don't give up hope because you might still be able to assert some rights.
Employment agreements	Confidential agreements (U)	Never rely on a handshake. Make sure the founders, employees or any third parties sign all documents.

Use our [IP checklist \[PDF, 94 KB\] \(/assets/Uploads/Documents/Intellectual-property-assets-checklist.pdf\)](#) to tick off your IP assets.

Table key:

R = Registered IP

U = Unregistered IP

Registering your business name with the Companies Office doesn't automatically give it IP protection.

Use the ™ symbol or register it as a trade mark with the [Intellectual Property Office of New Zealand\(external link\) \(https://www.iponz.govt.nz/\)](https://www.iponz.govt.nz/) (IPONZ).

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