

Intellectual Property Lawyer

Patents, trademarks and copyright. The one legal specialty where a science degree matters.

TYPICAL PAY

\$140,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$80k to \$350k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

7 to 8 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Intellectual property boutiques, big law firms, tech and pharma comp...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
Physics, chemistry, biology or computer science if you want patents. English regardless.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 4 years
Engineering, computer science, chemistry or life sciences for patent work. Any degree for trademarks and copyright. Write the LSAT (law school admission test).
- 3 Law school (JD, juris doctor)** 3 years
Take intellectual property, technology law and Federal Court practice. The University of Ottawa and Osgoode Hall are known for it, and Osgoode runs a term-long intellectual property placement program.
- 4 Articling** About 1 year
8 to 10 months at an intellectual property boutique or a big firm's group, plus the barrister and solicitor licensing exams. Ontario's Law Practice Program is the alternative.
- 5 Agent licence, optional** 1 to 2 more years
Work under a registered patent or trademark agent, then pass the agent exams run by the College of Patent Agents and Trademark Agents.

Pros and cons

- + You work at the edge of new technology and science
- + High pay and a global, portable skill set
- + Less courtroom stress for agents and solicitors, if you want that
- The patent side needs a science degree you cannot fake later
- Agent exams are a second hurdle after the bar
- Deadline-driven: miss a filing date and the right is gone

Good to know

20 years, 10 years, or life plus 70

A Canadian patent lasts 20 years from filing. A trademark registration lasts 10 years and can be renewed forever. Copyright lasts the author's life plus 70 years, up from 50 since a 2022 change.

You do not need to be a lawyer to file a patent

Registered patent agents, many of them engineers and scientists with no law degree, draft and file most Canadian patents. Lawyers get involved when someone has to be sued.

Optional boosts

Patent agent licence. An engineering or life sciences degree. Federal Court litigation. Pharmaceutical patent work.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Lawyers and Quebec notaries, wages (updated Nov 2025)
Law Society of Ontario: Becoming a lawyer
Canadian Intellectual Property Office
College of Patent Agents and Trademark Agents

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in Canadian dollars, based on Government of Canada Job Bank wage data and published salary grids. They vary by province, employer and experience. Tuition is for domestic students. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/ca/careers/intellectual-property-lawyer>



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