

# Free Guide to the Types of Intellectual Property

Using McDonald's as a Real-World Example,  
from Trademarks to Patents

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# Introduction

**Most businesses protect their name. Very few protect everything else.**

This guide shows you the different types of intellectual property available, using McDonald's as a simple, recognisable example, so you can identify what you may be missing.

## 1. Word Trademark

**Example:** McDonald's / Big Mac

**What it protects:** The name of your business or product.



**Protection Level:** ● ● ● ● ● (Very High)

**Threat Level if unprotected:** ● ● ● ● ● (Critical)

**Why it matters:** This is the strongest and most enforceable form of protection. Words are clear, less open to interpretation, and easier to defend legally.

**McDonald's Insight:** Without owning names like "Big Mac", competitors could legally use similar product names.

**Ask Yourself:** Do I have a brand or product name that generates revenue - but isn't protected?

## 2. Logo / Figurative Mark

**Example:** The Golden Arches

**What it protects:** Your visual identity - logos, symbols, icons.



**Protection Level:** ● ● ● ● ● (High)

**Threat Level if unprotected:** ● ● ● ● ● (High)

**Why it matters:** If customers recognise your brand visually, this is essential. Without it, similar-looking brands can appear and confuse your audience.

**McDonald's Insight:** The Golden Arches are recognised globally. Without protection, imitation would be widespread.

**Ask Yourself:** Would customers recognise my brand from the logo alone?

## 3. Series Trademarks

**Example:** McChicken / McMuffin / McNuggets

**What it protects:** A consistent naming structure across multiple products or services.



Example only. Not a registered series mark.

**Protection Level:** ● ● ● ● ● (High)

**Threat Level if unprotected:** ● ● ● ● ● (Moderate)

**Why it matters:** Perfect for growing brands. It protects your naming strategy, not just individual names.

**McDonald's Insight:** The "Mc" prefix is instantly recognisable and commercially valuable.

**Ask Yourself:** Am I building a range of products that follow a naming pattern?

## 4. Slogan / Tagline

**Example:** "I'm Lovin' It"

**What it protects:** Your marketing message or tagline.



**Protection Level:** ● ● ● ● ● (Medium)

**Threat Level if unprotected:** ● ● ● ● ● (Moderate)

**Why it matters:** A strong slogan builds brand recall, but only if it's distinctive enough to protect.

**McDonald's Insight:** Their slogan is as recognisable as their logo.

**Ask Yourself:** Do I use a tagline consistently in my marketing?

## 5. Sound Trademark

**Example:** "ba da ba ba ba"  
**What it protects:** Distinctive sounds linked to your brand.



**Protection Level:** ● ● ● ● ● (High - if distinctive)  
**Threat Level if unprotected:** ● ● ● ● ● (Moderate)

**Why it matters:** In audio-driven marketing (social, radio, TV), sound can be as powerful as visuals.  
**McDonald's Insight:** Their jingle is instantly recognisable worldwide.  
**Ask Yourself:** Do I use music, jingles, or sounds people associate with my brand?

## 6. Design Marks

**Example:** Fries packaging / burger boxes  
**What it protects:** The shape and appearance of products or packaging.



**Protection Level:** ● ● ● ● ● (Medium)  
**Threat Level if unprotected:** ● ● ● ● ● (Moderate)

**Why it matters:** Prevents others copying the physical look of your product.  
**McDonald's Insight:** Even their packaging contributes to brand recognition.  
**Ask Yourself:** Do my products or packaging have a distinctive look?

## 7. Trade Dress

**Example:** Restaurant design, colours, layout

**What it protects:** The overall look and feel of your brand experience.



**Protection Level:** ● ● ● ● ● (High but complex)

**Threat Level if unprotected:** ● ● ● ● ● (High)

**Why it matters:** This is what competitors often copy - your "vibe".

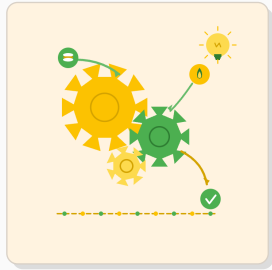
**McDonald's Insight:** You can recognise a McDonald's from across the street.

**Ask Yourself:** Is my brand experience visually distinctive enough to be copied?

## 8. Patents

**Example:** Kitchen systems / operational tech

**What it protects:** How something works - processes, systems, inventions.



**Protection Level:** ● ● ● ● ● (Very High)

**Threat Level if unprotected:** ● ● ● ● ● (High)

**Why it matters:** If you've created something innovative, this stops others using it.

**McDonald's Insight:** Operational efficiency is a huge competitive advantage.

**Ask Yourself:** Have I built something unique that gives me an edge?

## Final Thought

**Most businesses protect one thing.**

**The most valuable brands protect everything.**

Naturally budget plays a factor for most SME's, which is why it's important that your budget is spent protecting the Intellectual Property that truly matters to you.

## What Are You Missing?

Do you have intellectual property you didn't realise could be protected, or you haven't secured yet?

## Have More Questions?

If you're unsure what applies to your business, this is exactly where most people start.

Get a review of your brand and identify what's worth protecting before someone else does.

**Book a Free Consultation with one of our Experts today.**

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