

# An Introduction to Intellectual Property

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**SUBJECT(S):** Entrepreneurship

**GRADE LEVEL(S):** 9, 10, 11, 12

## ≡ OVERVIEW:

In this lesson, students will get an introduction to intellectual property and the concept of owning information. They will begin by watching a PowerPoint slideshow that highlights famous products and brands and their fake counterparts. Then students will read and discuss the key ideas in the Knowledge@Wharton article: “The Two Faces of Intellectual Property in Brazil,” which highlights the problems intellectual property theft creates for companies and governments abroad and at home. To get a different perspective on the issue, students will read the Knowledge@Wharton article: “Intellectual Property Concerns Aren’t Keeping Firms Out of China,” and discuss key ideas mentioned in it.

## ≡ NBEA STANDARD(S):

- Entrepreneurship, VIII. Legal

## ≡ RELATED ARTICLES:

- [“Working for the Family Business: Are You Ready?”](#)
- [“What Is Design Thinking?”](#)
- [“The Value of Intellectual Property”](#)
- [“The Mission for this Teen’s Drone: Locate and Destroy Landmines”](#)
- [“Snap Caps, Sharks and Sparks: Maddie Bradshaw, Teen Millionaire”](#)
- [“Developing Prototypes: ‘Share Your Ideas in Hopes of Improving Them’”](#)

- “Designer Christian Louboutin Goes to Court to Protect His Precious Red Soles”
- “Career Insight: Elvis Zhang on Making Cities Better”

**Common Core Standard(s):** Vocabulary acquisition and use, key ideas and details, integration of knowledge and ideas.

**Objectives/Purposes:** In this lesson, students will understand the concept of ownership of information and intellectual property law. They will also gain an understanding of the implications of intellectual property on companies and governments at home and abroad.

**Knowledge@Wharton Articles:**

- “The Two Faces of Intellectual Property in Brazil”
- “Intellectual Property Concerns Aren’t Keeping Firms Out of China”

**Other Resources/Materials:**

- Create a Power Point slideshow that highlights the diversity and number of items, (including cars, food, electronics, websites, clothes, website layouts and other items) that have been victims of intellectual property theft.
- Create mini red, yellow and green stop signs out of construction paper and popsicle sticks for each of your students.

**Activity:**

1. (15 mins) Begin this lesson by having students work with a partner to brainstorm a list of companies and products that have fake counterparts (Apple, Ikea). Then, have each group share their list with the class so that you create a master list. Next, hand out mini red, yellow and green stop signs to each student and show the Power Point slideshow that you have created which highlights various brands both national and international, and their fake counterparts. Hopefully there will be many products shown in the Power Point slideshow that students did not even think of or had not previously known about. For each slide, have students vote (red if they think the product violates intellectual property, yellow if they are not sure, and green if they do not think there is a problem).

Lead a brief discussion to get students' reactions to each slide in the PowerPoint. You can ask students questions like: why do they think companies make counterfeit goods, and whether they think this is an ethical practice. Take a poll to see how many students think it is wrong for companies to make these kinds of products and how many think it is a valid practice. Then you can explain that for many companies, especially from developed countries, it is very hard to enforce intellectual property laws in developing countries, where many of these kinds of goods originate.

Slides to include may be:

- Chrysler 300 vs. Bentley
- Fake purses
- Fake Disneyland
- Fake Rolls Royce
- Payless vs. Adidas shoes
- Mock Kate Middleton wedding dress
- Fake Mickey and Minnie Mouse

2. (15 mins) To highlight the difficulties of enforcing intellectual property laws internationally, have students read the article: "The Two Faces of Intellectual Property in Brazil." Then have students discuss with a partner the following key points from the article:

- Brazil has become one of the world's largest economies in part because of their "illegal seizure" of U.S. technology and information. This has caused to U.S. to lose \$1 billion in revenues.
- Does Brazil have the moral right to distribute valuable drugs, software and other patent-protected products to poor people who cannot afford them even if that means violating the country's obligations as a member of the World Trade Organization?
- In what ways is Brazil's stance against IP bad for the country?
  - It discourages multinational companies from making investments in Brazil that could exploit the countries biodiversity and rapidly improve skills in that sector.

After students have finished discussing these issues with their partner, lead a class discussion to see what reflections students had on the article and countries that openly violate intellectual property laws.

3. (15 mins) Then, to get a different perspective on this issue, have students read the article: “Intellectual Property Concerns Aren’t Keeping Firms Out of China,” and have them discuss the following key points:

- In what ways is the protection of intellectual property a challenge for firms doing business in China?
- Why do some companies feel like intellectual property theft is not China’s problem but the companies’?
- What are companies’ strategies to deal with intellectual property theft in countries like China?
- What can the Chinese government do to protect intellectual property in their country?
- Why might some people, including [Yu-Sheng Zheng](#), a Wharton professor of operations and information management, claim that China is not copying their foreign competitors?
- What are the gaps between perception and reality about doing business in China?

Lead a brief discussion with the class to go over students’ answers and reflections.

**Tying It All Together:** (5 mins) To end the class, ask students the same question you asked when you polled them at the beginning of the class – Do you think it is ethical for a company to produce counterfeit goods? – to see if any students have changed their minds. Try to get some volunteers to share why or why not they have changed their mind.

**Practice Outside of the Classroom:** Have students think about how and where fake goods are usually bought and if the implications of these methods of commerce are good or bad for a particular community or society.

**What Worked and What I Would Do Differently:** This lesson is a great way to engage students and introduce them to the basic concept of intellectual property. Students really enjoyed the PowerPoint slideshow, and making the mini stop signs and having students use them to vote on each slide is a great way to keep students engaged and participating actively. Additionally, you may want to divide the class into two groups and have each group read a different article and present their findings to the class. Since the two articles take different stances on IP, you could also conduct a debate.