

Patent Research Activity- Intellectual Property Protection

By John Berner

I have found 760 entries at the US Patent Office that contain the name shelf in the title. Other possible search terms I tried to go through were also tables, stands and risers, but then your search gets mixed up in other ideas that happen to use the same word in the title, such as tables and flow charts. The categories can get way off track. It would have increased my search results from 760 to 10's of thousands of entries had I used those words. From the entries that I have sorted through, I have not found anything that my product would infringe upon, but have generated ideas on a rebuttal if the US Patent Office rejects my proposal.

There were patents for shelves that mount to the side of a grill, to a wall, or to nothing at all and are free standing, and/or sit in a corner. I have found several patents that I would consider to have been the same thing where as I would reject the request, but someone was able to pull it off. One patent is for a shelf mounted to a barbecue, and another is a shelf that is mounted to a grill. In my opinion, that is the same thing but worded differently, but in their opinion, it seems as if the fact that the shelf is mounted to a different location and/or the shapes and types of materials being used also make the difference as to whether there are infringements.

They each have their own patent, obtained for very similar ideas, so with my shelf idea, I think I could easily pull off a patent in due time. My shelf is different in that it happens to be plastic and mounted on metal adjustable arms to attach to a picnic table for added space. The shelf's use is intended to fold up which makes it mobile and adjustable to fit different length tables. It is designed to be weather resistant. These unique features need to define the difference between other shelves and itself.