

The classification symbols of the German Patent Classification (DPK)

The classification symbols of the DPK are not by far as well standardized as those of the IPC, and the formats can be very different. Furthermore, the ways of presenting the symbols have varied considerably between different countries and different times. In order to make a correct search one has to know the different parts of the classification symbols. For example, 65a1-10 is not the same thing as 65a-1/10!

The classification symbols always start with a **class number**, between 1 and 89.

In most classes the class number is followed by a **subclass letter**. Classes 16, 60, 69 and 73 are exceptions – those classes have only one subclass and therefore no subclass letter is used.

In some subclasses the subclass symbol also contains a **sub-subclass number**, between 1 and 11.

Most of the subclasses are subdivided into groups, which means the classification symbols also contain a **group number**. Subclasses 6e, 8o, 12b, 12s, 15f, 27a, 38l, 42s, 46h, 67b, 78f and 87c are exceptions – they are not subdivided, so the complete classification symbol consists of only the subclass symbol. Group numbers range between 1 and 158.

In many cases the group number is followed by a **subgroup number**. It should be noted that in older classification schemes the existence of subgroup numbers does not imply that there is a hierarchically higher "main group", but it is only way of numbering the groups. Subgroup numbers have two to four digits, from 00 and upwards.

In the Swedish Patent Database and the Swedish version of the DPK the classification symbols have been standardized. A hyphen is used between the class/subclass symbol and the group number, and an oblique stroke is used between the group number and the subgroup number, for example:

3e-5	6e	15i-6
21a4-35/18	45a-3/421	46a11-4
60-22	73-8/03	81e-148/03

DPK symbols have been presented on the first page of Swedish patent documents in many different ways through the years. Here are some examples of how they can look on documents (the left columns) and how they are searched and displayed in the Swedish Patent Database:

3: e: 5	3E-5	46:a ¹⁰ ₅	46A10-5
6: e	6E	65: a ² : 26	65A2-26
6 e:-	6E	65 a ² :38	65A2-38
19: f: 1	19A-1	69: -: 12	69-12
21 a ¹ 16/02	21A1-16/02	69-:21/02	69-21/02
21:a ¹ ₃₂	21A1-32	69: -: 21-03	69-21/03
21 a ¹ :36/22	21A1-36/22	69 :21/03	69-21/03
42 r:4	42R-4	69: 21-03	69-21/03
45 a:61/00	45A-61/00	81 e 83/02	81E-83/02
45: c: 26-60	45C-26/60	81:e ₁₂₉	81E-129
45 g:5/14	45G-5/14		

The Swedish Patent Database uses capital letters and the classification scheme uses lower case letters. Searches can be made in either way. Blank spaces within the classification symbols are not accepted.