



Singapore Trademark Essentials

A practical guide to protecting your brand – from first search to
registration

FREE GUIDE

What a trademark is • What can be registered • Searches • Classes • Filing • Examination • Publication •
Registration • Pricing • International protection

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1. What is a trademark?

A trademark is a sign used to distinguish the goods or services of one business from those of another. In everyday terms, it is the part of your brand that tells customers where a product or service comes from.

Common forms of trademarks

- A word or business name, such as a brand name
- A logo or stylised design
- A combination of words and graphics
- A slogan, if it functions as a badge of origin
- In suitable cases, non-traditional signs such as shapes, colours, sounds or movement

A business name is not the same as a trademark

Registering a company or business name with ACRA does not automatically give you exclusive trademark rights. ACRA registration allows an entity to operate under a name; trademark registration is what may give the proprietor exclusive rights to use the mark for the registered goods or services, subject to the Trade Marks Act and the scope of the registration.

2. Why register your trademark?

- Stronger legal rights in the registered mark for the listed goods or services
- A clearer basis for objecting to later conflicting trademark applications
- A valuable business asset that may be licensed, assigned or sold
- Greater confidence when investing in packaging, advertising and expansion
- A foundation for seeking protection in overseas markets
- The ability to use the ® symbol once the mark is registered

Registration does not guarantee that every dispute will be simple or inexpensive. It does, however, generally place a brand owner in a much stronger position than relying only on unregistered rights.

3. What can and cannot be registered?

A registrable mark should be distinctive

The strongest marks are invented words, unusual names or distinctive logos. The more directly a mark describes the goods or services, the harder it may be to monopolise.

Common grounds for refusal

- The mark is descriptive of the goods, services, quality, intended purpose or other characteristics
- The mark is generic or customary in the relevant trade
- The mark lacks distinctive character
- The mark is confusingly similar to an earlier trademark covering identical or similar goods or services
- The mark is deceptive, contrary to public policy, or contains protected emblems or symbols

- The application was filed in bad faith

A refusal is not always the end of an application. Depending on the objection, the applicant may amend the specification, provide arguments, submit evidence of acquired distinctiveness, seek consent or take another appropriate step.

4. Choosing the right mark

Stronger choices

- Invented or coined words
- Unexpected words used outside their ordinary meaning
- Distinctive logos with memorable visual elements
- Names that do not merely describe the product or service

Higher-risk choices

- Descriptive phrases such as “FAST ACCOUNTING” for accounting services
- Common laudatory words such as “BEST”, “PREMIUM” or “SUPERIOR”
- Names that closely resemble a competitor’s mark
- Marks containing geographic terms or industry terms without distinctive elements

Tip: choose a mark that customers can remember but competitors would not reasonably need to use to describe their own goods or services.

5. Trademark classes and specifications

Trademark protection is organised under the Nice Classification, which divides goods and services into 45 classes. Classes 1–34 cover goods; Classes 35–45 cover services.

Why classification matters

Your registration only covers the goods and services stated in the application. Selecting the wrong class, or drafting the specification too narrowly or too broadly, may create gaps, unnecessary cost or examination problems.

6. Searching before filing

A pre-filing search helps identify earlier marks that may create a risk of objection. It is not compulsory, but it is usually a sensible first step.

A useful search considers

- Identical marks
- Similar spellings and pronunciations
- Conceptually similar words

- Logos with similar dominant features
- Related goods and services, not merely identical class numbers
- The overall impression of the marks

No search can eliminate all risk. Databases may not reveal unregistered rights, newly filed marks that have not yet appeared, or every possible commercial conflict.

7. The Singapore registration process

Step 1 — Brand and ownership review

Confirm the mark, the correct applicant, the business activities and the intended markets.

Step 2 — Clearance search

Search the Singapore register for identical and similar marks and assess the risk.

Step 3 — Classification and specification

Select the appropriate classes and prepare the list of goods and services.

Step 4 — Filing with IPOS

Submit Form TM4 through IPOS Digital Hub and pay the official filing fee for each class.

Step 5 — Formalities and examination

IPOS checks the application and examines whether the mark meets legal requirements and conflicts with earlier marks.

Step 6 — Responding to objections

Where an examination report is issued, the applicant may need to amend the application or file written submissions by the stated deadline.

Step 7 — Publication

If accepted, the application is published for third parties to review and, where appropriate, oppose.

Step 8 — Registration

If no opposition is filed, or any opposition is resolved in the applicant's favour, the mark proceeds to registration.

8. Timelines and possible outcomes

A straightforward application can commonly take around 6-8 months, although the actual period varies. Objections, amendments, oppositions, complex specifications or missed deadlines can extend the process significantly.

Possible outcomes

- Accepted without substantive objection
- Accepted after an amendment or response
- Partially accepted for some goods or services

- Refused after examination
- Opposed by a third party after publication
- Withdrawn by the applicant

From 1 September 2026, IPOS is resuming its SG Trade Marks Fast programme, which lets applicants fast-track the first stage of examination. Instead of the usual wait, you can receive your first examination report — or notice of publication for opposition, if there are no objections — within 3 to 6 weeks of filing. The acceleration request is made at the point of filing, together with the acceleration fee, and it applies automatically across all classes in a multi-class application.

The acceleration fee is \$200 per class if your specification is fully drawn from IPOS' pre-approved Classification Database, or \$250 per class otherwise — on top of the standard official fee. Note that acceleration only covers the first round of examination: if your application faces an objection, your response to that office action goes back into the standard processing queue.

9. Pricing

NAIR TRADEMARKS service pricing

Service	Fee	What it covers
Free Assessment	-	Our complimentary trademark assessment provides an initial review of your proposed mark, including potential registration concerns and possible conflicts with earlier trademarks. We will also recommend suitable next steps to help you make an informed decision before filing.
Comprehensive Clearance Search	From S\$180	Detailed similarity review and written risk report.
Singapore Trademark Application (pre-approved goods/services)	S\$450 first class; S\$450 each additional class	Covers the total fee for preparing and filing your Singapore trademark application with IPOS, including classification of the relevant goods and services, completion of the application.
Singapore Trademark Application (customised goods/services)	S\$580 first class; S\$580 each additional class	Covers the total fee for preparing and filing your Singapore trademark application with IPOS, including classification of the relevant goods and services, completion of the application.

Response to Examination Objection	From S\$250	Fee quoted after review of the examination report. Covers the preparation and filing of a response to an examination objection raised by IPOS, including analysis of the examiner's concerns, legal and factual submissions, and proposed amendments where appropriate.
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10. After registration

Duration and renewal

A Singapore trademark registration is protected for 10 years from the filing date and may be renewed for further 10-year periods. Renewal may be requested from six months before expiry. Late renewal or restoration involves additional fees.

Use your mark consistently

Keep records of use, such as invoices, advertisements, website screenshots, packaging and sales materials. A registration may become vulnerable to revocation for non-use if the statutory requirements are met.

Monitor and maintain

- Watch for later confusingly similar applications
- Record changes of owner, company name or address
- Renew before expiry
- Review coverage when launching new goods, services or sub-brands
- Consider registering updated logos where the design changes materially

11. International protection

A Singapore registration protects the mark in Singapore only. Businesses expanding overseas should consider protection in each market where the brand will be used, manufactured, licensed or sold.

Main filing routes

Direct national filing: A separate application is filed in each country, usually through a local associate.

Madrid System: An international application may designate multiple Madrid members through one central filing system. Each designated office still examines the mark under its own law.

Madrid fees depend on the mark, number of classes and designated countries, and are calculated mainly in Swiss francs.

12. Common mistakes

- Assuming ACRA registration automatically protects the name as a trademark

- Filing in the wrong owner's name
- Skipping the search because the exact name does not appear
- Choosing classes based only on competitors rather than the applicant's actual business
- Using a specification that is too vague, too narrow or commercially irrelevant
- Launching before checking overseas markets
- Ignoring an IPOS deadline or examination report
- Believing registration automatically covers every logo, variation, product and country
- Using the ® symbol before registration

13. How NAIR TRADEMARKS can help

NAIR TRADEMARKS provides practical trademark filing and brand-protection support for startups, entrepreneurs and established businesses. Our approach is designed to make the process clear, transparent and manageable.

- Comprehensive searches
- Classification and specification drafting
- Filing the application
- Application monitoring and status updates
- Responses to examination objections
- Renewals and recordals.

For contested proceedings, complex legal disputes or matters requiring legal representation, an independent legal practitioner may need to be engaged.

14. Glossary and filing checklist

Useful terms

Applicant: The person or entity applying to own the trademark.

Class: A category of goods or services.

Specification: The exact list of goods and services claimed.

Examination report: A notice from IPOS raising an objection or requiring clarification.

Publication: The period when an accepted application is advertised for possible opposition.

Opposition: A formal challenge by a third party against registration.

Registration: The grant of trademark rights after completion of the process.

Renewal: The process of extending the registration for another 10-year period.

Before you file

- ☐ Confirm the exact word, logo or slogan to be protected
- ☐ Confirm the correct legal owner and address
- ☐ List all current and near-future goods and services
- ☐ Decide whether to file a word mark, logo mark or both
- ☐ Set a budget for filing and possible objections

Important notice

This booklet provides general information about Singapore trademark practice and is not legal advice.

Trademark outcomes depend on the facts of each matter, the wording of the application, earlier rights and the law and practice in force at the relevant time. Official fees and procedures may change. Always obtain a current quotation and tailored advice before filing or responding to an objection or dispute.

Contact NAIR TRADEMARKS

Trademark searches • Applications • Objections • Renewals • International filings

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