This chapter discusses patents, which protect inventions — often new medicinal compounds or new aspects of technology — that are novel, inventive, and capable of industrial application. There are four arguments in support of patent protection. The first is a moral justification based on the assertion that there is a natural property right in ideas. The second argument is that justice and fairness demand that there should be a reward for services useful to society. The third argument is that patents are necessary to secure economic development. Finally, the fourth justification is the ‘exchange for secrets’ theory. The Patents Act 1977 dealt with the substantive law of UK patents for the first time. The Act’s provisions are influenced primarily by the terms of the Patent Cooperation Treaty 1970 and the European Patent Convention 1973. The chapter then considers the five key stages in the UK procedure to obtain a domestic patent.
15. Introduction to patents

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