This chapter introduces the reader to patents, how they work, and the laws governing them. It begins with a history of the patent system in the UK up to 1977. This is followed by a discussion of various justifications that have been proposed in support of the patent system, such as the natural rights of inventors to their work and the public benefits that flow from the grant of patent monopolies. It also considers the current regulatory regime governing the creation and use of patents in the UK and Europe, with particular reference to the European Patent Convention and the Patents Act 1977. Finally, the chapter discusses the impact of the European Commission on patent law and some of the international treaties that have influenced British patent law, including the Patent Cooperation Treaty, the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), and the Convention on Biological Diversity. The chapter also speculates on the impact of Brexit on UK patent law.