

PATENTS EXAMINATION BOARD

Subject: The Drafting of Patent Specifications - Paper 1

Date: July 2025

Time: 09h00 - 13h00 (although candidates requiring extra time are entitled to an additional two hours)

Examiners: TH Doubell
Louw Steyn (Paper 2)

Moderator: JD Whittaker

Question 1

Your client writes to you as follows:

"I have invented a kindling block for simplifying the making of some solid-fuel fires.

The making of a fire with solid fuel such as wood chunks, broken coal or anthracite, briquettes and the like can be cumbersome. These fuels are usually stacked or piled together to allow sufficient space for the air to flow around the stack or pile, but some fuels do not ignite easily and typically do not light merely by applying a spark, lit match or other type of igniter directly to the fuel, requiring an intermediary firelighter to light the solid fuel successfully.

Firelighters ideally are easily ignitable and combustible yet capable of burning for a sustained period and at a sufficient temperature in order to light the solid fuel effectively.

One type of firelighter is made of recycled and/or chemical byproducts, but many of these are either costly or not as biofriendly as one would prefer.

Another type of firelighter is a so-called kindler, comprising a unitary element or member such as a relatively large piece of wood or other solid

fuel with a natural or bespoke shape or configuration. A disadvantage with kindlers is their inability to be used proportionally to the extent required to make a specific fire.

A fire may also be started with kindling, comprising a plurality of elements or members such as a bundle of relatively smaller pieces of wood, twigs or chips. In order to produce kindling of suitable quantity and sizes conventionally, a user typically gathers small pieces of wood or uses a wood splitter for splitting larger wood chunks into smaller pieces that can be lit with ease and used as a firelighter. Most wood splitters are however relatively heavy and lead to rather cumbersome and laborious splitting processes.

With my invention, kindling of suitable sizes and quantities can be selected, produced and/or used with relatively little effort.

I have spent quite some time on the Internet and believe that I have identified all the prior art of relevance. Drawings of the most relevant prior art are attached as Prior Art A, B and C to my letter.

Prior Art A as shown in Figures 1 and 2 is a fire building kit 10 for the building of a log fire. The kit consists of your typical fire-building material 11 pre-packed in a combustible corrugated paperboard box 12. The material 11 is in the form of fine kindling 32, coarse kindling 35, a few intermediate wood pieces 34 and a few larger wood pieces 36, all spaced, packed and stacked upwardly from the fine kindling to the coarse kindling to the intermediate pieces to the larger pieces in the box 12. The Box 12 is designed for purpose and has a bottom 14, side walls 15 and 16 and end walls 17 and 18, inter-connected along fold lines 20, corner flaps 19, inter-connected along fold lines 21, corresponding cuts 22 and tabs 24, a flap 25 with a tab 26 and corresponding opening 27, handles 40 and 41, a flap 44 and finger opening 45, all with a locking strip 47, end-tabs 48 and slotted openings 49. The fire kit as stacked is lit with the use of matches inserted into the openings 50.

Prior Art B as shown in Figures 1 to 3 is a combustible fire log 10, pre-cut in a specific design to enable easy ignition and sustain a fire until further fuel is added to it. The log 10 is typically cut in about 30 to 60 cm-lengths with a flat base 12 to stand upright (vertically). The log 10 is further provided with four vertical, diametrical cuts 16 to define eight pie-slice segments 18 extending downwardly from the top 14 towards the base of the log, stopping short of the entire length to leave about 25% of the log

as an uncut base portion 12. One of the segments 18a is also cut at its base so that it can be removed to start the fire and to improve air flow.

Prior Art C as shown in Figures 1 to 3 is a kindler in the form of a wooden block 10 of typically about 20 cm in length, 15cm in height and 4 cm in width. The block 10 has a generally V-shaped aperture 12, extending from side-to-side therethrough, and two slots 14A and 14B, extending longitudinally across the top of the block and downwardly into the block and into at least part of the V-shaped aperture to create air communication between the aperture and the slots. The V-shaped aperture 12 has a bottom portion 12A and two top portions 12B and 12 C. The block 10 can be ignited with a single match M placed in the bottom portion 12A.

My invention in turn is an easily-separable, kindling block 1 as illustrated in Figures 1 to 6, with two different embodiments, wherein the kindling block as shown in Figures 1 to 3 has a generally rectangular body, and the kindling block as shown in Figures 4 to 6 has a generally cylindrical body.

The easily-separable kindling block 1 (as illustrated in Figures 1 to 3) with a generally rectangular body has a first slit arrangement 2 located on one side of the block, the arrangement having a number of evenly spaced slits that extend through the entire body of the block. The slit arrangement 2 defines a set of slats 3 that extends substantially across the length of the kindling block 1. The set of slats 3 is joined at a first end portion 4 of the kindling block 1, which is configured and dimensioned to allow the slats to be broken off manually from the residual end portion with relative ease along a line of weakness, extending longitudinally from the slats through the end portion.

The kindling block 1 further has a second slit arrangement 5 located on a transverse side of the block relative to the first slit arrangement 2, the arrangement similarly having a number of evenly spaced slits that extend through the entire body of the kindling block 1. The second slit arrangement 5 also defines a set of slats 6 that extends substantially across the kindling block 1. The set of slats 6 is joined at a second end portion 7 that is located at an opposite end of the kindling block 1 relative to the first end portion 4. The second end portion 7 is similarly dimensioned and configured to allow the slats 6 to be broken off manually from the residual end portion with relative ease along a line of weakness, extending longitudinally from the slats through the end portion.

In use and as illustrated in Figure 2, the user firstly would break off either

set of slats 3 or 6 from the kindling block 1 by applying pressure manually to one of the end portions 4 or 7. For example, the application of pressure on end portion 7, would cause a set of slats 6A to break off at line A - A and along a line of weakness 8 and thereby allows the set of slats to be separated from the residual kindling block 1.

As illustrated in Figure 3, the user would then apply pressure manually to any of the individual slats 6B from the set of slats 6A that are still joined together by the second end portion 7. Due to the dimensions and configuration of the second end portion 7, the individual slats 6B can easily be broken off and separated manually from the residual end portion, leaving the remaining set of slats 6A still joined at the end portion. The separated individual slat 6B can then be used to kindle a fire by applying an igniter (not shown) to it. This process can be repeated by the user as many times as required, by breaking off individual slats from the remaining set of slats 6A, depending on the amount of kindling that is required to light the fire.

In a second embodiment of my invention, an easily-separable, kindling block 9 (as illustrated in Figures 4 to 6) with a generally cylindrical body has a first slit arrangement 10 located on one side of the cylinder that comprises a number of evenly spaced slits that extend through the entire body of the kindling block. The slit arrangement 10 defines a set of slats 11 that substantially extends across the length of the kindling block 9. The set of slats 11 is joined at a first end portion 12 of the kindling block 9, which is configured and dimensioned to allow the slats to be broken off manually along a line of weakness, extending longitudinally from the slats through the end portion, from the residual end portion with relative ease.

The kindling block 9 further has a second slit arrangement 13 located on the transverse side of the cylinder relative to the first slit arrangement 10 that similarly comprises a number of evenly spaced slits that extend through the entire body of the kindling block 9. The second slit arrangement 13 also defines a set of slats 14 that extend substantially across the kindling block 9. The set of slats 14 is joined at a second end portion 15 that is located on the opposing side of the kindling block 9 relative to the first end portion 12. The second end portion 15 is similarly dimensioned and configured to allow the slats 14 to be broken off manually along a line of weakness, extending longitudinally from the slats through the end portion, from the residual end portion with relative ease.

Referring to Figure 5, it will be appreciated that a set of slats 11 may be broken off from the kindling block 9 along a line of weakness 16 in a similar

manner to that described above with reference to the first embodiment.

Also, with reference to Figure 6, it will be appreciated that an individual slat 11B may be broken from the set of slats 11A in a similar manner to that described above with reference to the first embodiment.

You will also appreciate that the kindling block of my invention is not limited to the specific body shapes illustrated in the two embodiments, nor is it limited to any specific space or size of the slit arrangements."

The candidate is required to identify the inventive feature(s) of the above invention, and to draft up to three claims to protect the invention and its primary inventive features.

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Question 2

Your client writes to you as follows:

"I have designed an improved, inexpensive closure (also called a lid, cap or dust cover) for refillable and disposable manual condiment grinders.

Most condiments such as pepper, salt and the like have a limited shelf life, especially after having being pre-ground, and lose their fragrance, flavour and/or strength over time and/or after prolonged exposure to the ambient environment. Thus, many chefs prefer to retain condiments in an unground form, and to grind the condiments shortly before using them.

There is a large variety of manual and motorized condiment grinders available today, but the bulk of the unground condiments are being supplied and sold for the consumer market in relatively inexpensive, refillable or disposable, manual grinder-and-container arrangements for ease of storage, use and replacement.

The typical refillable or disposable manual grinder-and-container arrangement consists of a lower container, for housing a condiment in an unground, coarsely or partially ground format, and an upper grinder securable to the container once the container has been filled with the relevant condiment. These grinders and containers are correspondingly dimensioned and removably threaded to each other for multiple-use (in the case of the refillable arrangements) or irremovably secured to each other in a press-fit or snap-fit fashion for single-use (in the case of the disposable arrangements). The containers commonly consist of glass or synthetic plastic material, while the grinders commonly consist of a first, non-rotatable or stagnant component securable to the container, and a second, rotatable component rotatably securable to the first component.

The typical refillable or disposable manual grinder is provided with a conventional grinding mechanism, an intake suitably configured and directed inwardly towards the container and the condiment contained therein, and an opposing outwardly directed discharge for dispensing ground condiment therefrom. In use, when the grinder-and-container arrangement is inverted and the second component is manually rotated relative to the first component, portions of the condiment enter the grinder mechanism via the intake, are ground, and are discharged as freshly ground condiment.

A common feature of the refillable and disposable manual grinding-and-container arrangements is a removable closure (i.e. lid, cap or dust cover) that allows a user to close or seal at least the grinder's discharge end after a suitable amount of the condiment has been ground and discharged so as to prolong the shelf life of the unused condiment.

These closures are typically configured to removably press or snap-fit onto the second, rotatable component of the grinder and are commonly provided with a flange or lip for periodic, relatively easy removal from or attachment to the grinder. An example of such a grinder-and-container arrangement is generally depicted in Figure 1 of Prior Art A.

The inverted grinder-and-container arrangement 10 depicted in Figure 1 of Prior Art A includes grinder-mechanism components 1, 2 and 3, a condiment container 4 and a dust cap 5, with other grinder-mechanism components not relevant to my invention being numbered 11, 12, 22, 23, 25, 33 and 41 respectively.

A common disadvantage of closures such as dust cap 5 is however that they are easily and hence often misplaced, lost, or structurally compromised due to repetitive use and forceful removal, leaving the contained condiment open to exposure to the ambient environment.

Another disadvantage of such grinding-and-container arrangements is that many dried condiments absorb the ambient moisture freely, causing the condiments to: (a) form lumps or dampness that render the condiments unable to be fed under gravity via the intake into the grinder mechanisms; or (b) clog within the grinder mechanisms, rendering the grinder inoperable to the user. In addition, such exposure can lead to contamination of the condiment by airborne, and non-airborne, pollutants and/or pathogens.

It further has become common practice for many restaurants to have such manual grinder-and-container arrangements placed on their patrons' tables, allowing the patrons themselves to add condiments to their food items if and when desired. The continuous touching of the closures by the various patrons substantially increases the risk for contamination.

An improvement is the old faithful, namely the hingedly-attached cap, as shown in Figure 1 of Prior Art B. Unfortunately, a hinged cap still requires manual manipulation and is therefore also susceptible to contamination.

The grinder-and-container arrangement 100 depicted in Figure 1 of Prior

Art B includes a condiment container 102 with thread 118 and a primary condiment compartment 98, a primary dust cap 104 tethered as well as threadedly securable to the container with a primary flexible connecting member 112 and a complementary thread 116, a grinder-mechanism 110 with components 106 and 108, component 108 having a secondary ground-condiment compartment 160 and a secondary dust cap 162 with a secondary flexible connecting member 164, and some other grinder-mechanism components that are not relevant to my invention being numbered 126, 136, 152 and 154 respectively.

My invention applies to both refillable and disposable manual condiment grinder-and-container arrangements and is illustrated in Figures 1 to 7. These Figures show a conventional grinder 1 and a condiment container 3 in the form of a transparent glass bottle, the grinder having a first, static grinder component 2 that either screws or press-fits onto the neck of the bottle, and a second, rotatable grinder component 4 that commonly snap-fits in turn onto the static component.

The static component 2 and the rotatable component 4 of the conventional grinder 1 are rotatable relative to each other about an axis A. The static component 2 has a conical, stepped bore 5, and a first grinding formation in the form of a set of substantially equi-spaced teeth (not shown) protruding inwardly from an inner surface of the bore 5.

The rotatable component 4 comprises an outer sleeve 6 and an internal, stepped cone 7 that fits into the bore 5 when the rotatable component is snap fitted to the static component 2. The cone 7 is closed at its lower end and joined at its upper end to the outer sleeve 6. The cone 7 is provided with a corresponding second, grinding formation in the form of a set of substantially equi-spaced teeth (not shown) protruding outwardly towards the bore 5 in a grinding gap 8.

When the grinder-and-container arrangement and hence the conventional grinder 1 is inverted, unground condiments from the bottle 3 drop under gravity into the grinding gap 8, and when the rotatable component 4 is rotated, the co-operating teeth of the grinder 1 grind and comminute the condiment between them. Once the condiment has been ground fine enough to move through the grinding gap 8, it is dispensed from of the grinder 1 under gravity.

In my invention, the conventional grinder 1 is further provided with a permanently secured closure or dust cap 9, pivotally attached to the

rotatable component 4 by two transversely located, pivotal-type hinges 10 and 11 that allow the secured closure to be displaced pivotally between an open and a closed position. The secured closure 9 is preferably configured to be displaceable angularly through 90° between the open and the closed positions.

The closure 9 is provided with a section 12, with a relatively greater weight, and a section 13, with a relatively lesser weight, wherein the relatively greater weight is provided by an integrated counterweight 14.

In the upright position, the counterweight 14 biases the secured closure 9 towards the closed position. When the grinder 1 is inverted, such as during use, the counterweight 14 biases the closure 9 towards the open position. As illustrated in Figures 2, 4, 5 and 6, the counterweight 14 comprises a protrusion.

Alternatively, and as illustrated in Figure 7, the counterweight 14 could comprise at least one rib, preferably a set of spaced ribs 15 that protrude from the inner surface of the relatively weighted section 12.

The grinder is further provided with a tamper-evident seal 16 that extends between the rotatable component 4 and the secured closure 9 and indicates whether the closure 9 has been moved from an initially sealed, closed position to the opened position.

In use, a user would invert the grinder-and-container arrangement 1, 3 whereby the gravitational bias on the counterweight 14 would cause the closure 9 to move pivotally, automatically into the open position, at 90° relative to the closed position, whereafter the user would rotate the rotatable component 4 relative to the static component 2 and the bottle 3, causing the condiment inside the container to fall under gravity into the grinder, be ground and dispensed from the grinder onto a food item. After a suitable amount of the condiment has been dispensed from the grinder 1, the user would return the grinder to the upright position, whereby the gravitational bias on the counterweight 14 would cause the closure to move automatically, pivotally into the closed position, thereby protecting the grinder and the condiment from ambient air and contamination"

The candidate is required to identify the inventive feature(s) of the above invention, and to draft up to three claims to protect the invention and its primary inventive features.

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