

ANNEX G

GUIDELINES FOR THE REARRANGEMENT OF MAIN GROUPS

After a complete review of each subclass scheme and definitions, classifiers should successively use the following steps to arrange the main groups of schemes that do not follow a general priority rule (i.e., schemes using the common rule) into a top-down sequence:

1. Subclass Title is Multi-Part

Determine if the subclass title is of the multi-part type (i.e., the title consists of two or more distinct parts that are separated by a semicolon) in which each part may be interpreted as if it “stood alone” (i.e., could be used as the title of its own subclass). [Utilization of this step is encouraged when appropriate, but optional.]

(a) If there is essential overlap between the subject matter covered by the distinct parts (i.e., the distinct parts of the title share an essential purpose or structure, as shown for example by a main group covering common subject matter for the multiple parts), then go to Step 2.

(b) If there is no essential overlap between the subject matter covered by the distinct parts of the subclass title, and each main group relates to only a specific part of the subclass title (except for those types of main groups covered by Steps 9 and 10), then the related main groups for each part are collected together within the top-down sequence (i.e., the sequence is divided into specific regions for each collection). Temporary explanatory “headings” may be used to show the division of the sequence into its distinct parts, but these headings are removed from the official rearrangement of main groups.

(c) The collections of main groups for each part of the subclass title are positioned separately in the scheme, with the most complex part’s collection at the top and the least complex part’s collection at the bottom. Complexity here may be based on purpose or structure.

(d) The main groups within each separate collection (i.e., the groups representing a part of the multi-part title) are arranged according to the guidelines below (Steps 2 to 10).

2. Main Groups Cover Different Categories of subject matter (Device, Method of Making, etc.)

Determine if the main groups of the scheme cover the same or different categories of subject matter. The categories of subject matter are: Method of Use (of Product), Product (of Manufacture), Processes of Making a Product, Apparatus (to make the product or perform the method of making), and Material used to make the product. It should be noted that main groups sometimes also cover categories of subject matter that are not explicitly mentioned in their titles, as described in paragraphs 92 and 95 to 97 of the Guide to the IPC. [Utilization of this step is encouraged when appropriate, but optional.]

(a) If all of the main groups cover the same, or at least one common, category or categories of subject matter, then go to Step 3.

(b) If some of the main groups do not cover a common category of subject matter, divide these groups into distinct categories of subject matter collections (i.e., separate into collections that do not share a common category or categories of subject matter). Collect main groups together that cover at least one common category of subject matter within the top-down sequence or the appropriate segment of the sequence for their specific part of a multipart title (e.g., groups for products followed by groups for methods of making the products in the sequence).

(c) Position the categories of subject matter that are covered by a subclass in the top-down sequence, or their part's segment of the sequence, in descending order normally as listed above for categories of subject matter. For example, in E01D the methods and apparatus for building or repairing bridges are located below the various types of bridges in the top-down sequence of main groups for the scheme.

(d) If a single main group covers two or more categories of subject matter (e.g., slide fasteners, making slide fasteners), then the main group is positioned in the highest relevant portion of the top-down sequence providing for one of its categories (e.g., slide fasteners).

(e) Main groups covering the same category or categories of subject matter are arranged according to the Steps 3 to ten below.

3. Main Group Title is Multi-Part

Determine if one or more of the main group titles has multiple distinct parts of different complexity or level of specialization. [Utilization of subsection (b) is encouraged when appropriate, but optional.]

(a) Groups having multiple distinct parts are usually positioned in the relevant portion of the top-down sequence based upon the part of their title that covers the most complex or highly specialized subject matter.

(b) If it is beneficial to split, and locate in different portions of the sequence, the subject matter covered by a main group title having distinct parts of different complexity or level of specialization: the main group can be split in special situations. It is considered appropriate to split the subject matter of a main group when there is no essential overlap between the subject matter covered by the distinct parts of the main group title and one or more of the one-dot indentation level subgroups completely and separately covers the subject matter for a distinct part of its main group title. When this happens, the distinct part(s) of the main group title may be separately located in the sequence based on Steps 4 to 9 below. The classification symbol of the main group (e.g., 15/00) is used to locate the residue parts of the title and the appropriate one-dot indentation level subgroup symbol(s) (e.g., 15/14) is used to locate the separated out part of the title.

4. Main Group is for Highly Specialized Subject Matter (Subject Matter)

Determine if any main group contains subject matter that is “highly specialized” and place it at the top of the appropriate relevant portion of the sequence. Highly specialized subject matter accomplishes a function that is not inherent or common for the subject matter of the subclass. For example, main groups A61G 10/00 and 11/00 include highly specialized life supporting or sustaining accommodations that are not common within the “accommodations for patients” normally covered by the subclass title.

5. Main Group covers External Combination (Subject Matter Outside the Subclass)

Determine if any main groups provide for combinations of “basic subject matter” (i.e., those “things” that by themselves accomplish the primary purposes or functions stated in the subclass title and definition statement) with subject matter proper for another subclass (i.e., a larger or more extensive system than is commonly found in the subclass).

(a) If this type of combination main group exists, it is placed in its relevant portion of the sequence directly after any groups having highly specialized subject matter.

(b) If there are two or more of these main groups and there is no overlap or precedence reference between them, the main group covering the larger system is placed before the other(s).

(c) If there are two or more of these main groups and there is potential overlap between them, the most specialized main group is placed before the other(s) unless a precedence reference exists. When a precedence reference exists, the preferred order is altered to show the precedence (i.e., the group having precedence comes first in the sequence) and the precedence reference is shown with the group’s title. If this is impractical, then the precedence reference is merely shown with the group’s title.

6. Main Group Covers Internal Combination (Subject Matter Within the Subclass)

Determine if any main groups explicitly provide for combinations of the basic subject matter specified in other main groups within the subclass.

(a) If such a main group exists, it is placed in its relevant portion of the sequence directly after the groups already placed in the preceding steps.

(b) If there are two or more of these main groups and there is no possible overlap or precedence reference between them, the main group covering the larger system is placed before the other(s).

(c) If there are two or more of these main groups and there is potential overlap between them, the most specialized or largest system main group is placed before the other(s) unless a precedence reference exists. When a precedence reference exists, the preferred order is altered to show the precedence (i.e., the group having precedence comes first in the sequence) and the precedence reference is shown with the group’s title. If this is impractical, then the precedence reference is merely shown with the group’s title.

7. Main Group Covers Basic Subject Matter (Subject matter)

Determine the main groups that provide for the basic inventive information of the subclass.

(a) If such main groups exist, the main groups covering the basic subject matter of the subclass are placed in the relevant portion of the sequence directly after the groups already placed in the preceding steps.

(b) If the main groups cover different functions, the main group covering the most specialized or complex function is placed before the others unless a precedence reference exists. When a precedence reference exists, the preferred order is altered to show the precedence (i.e., the group having precedence comes first in the sequence) and the precedence reference is shown with the group's title. If this is impractical, then the precedence reference is merely shown with the group's title.

(c) If main groups that cover the same function, they are collected together and arranged so that the main group having the most specialized structure or largest system is placed before the other(s) unless a precedence reference exists. When a precedence reference exists, the preferred order is altered to show the precedence (i.e., the group having precedence comes first in the sequence) and the precedence reference is shown with the group's title. If this is impractical, then the precedence reference is merely shown with the group's title.

8. Main Group Relates to Only One Part of the Subclass Multi-Part Title, and Covers That Section's Details, Components, Accessories, Ancillary Devices, or Residual Subject Matter

Determine if there are detail main groups, component main groups, accessories or ancillary device main groups, or "residual subject matter" main groups that are related to only one of the distinct sections of the subclass title.

(a) If such main groups exist, these main groups are placed directly after the main groups already placed in the preceding steps for which they collect specialized details, components, accessories, ancillary devices, or provide for residual subject matter. If there are main groups of two or more of the types specified, they are ordered as they are listed in the introduction of this step with detail main groups first and the most residual main group last.

(b) The main groups for the same purpose (e.g., they all cover components) are then arranged so that the main group having the most specialized structure or largest system is placed before the other(s) unless a precedence reference exists. When a precedence reference exists, the preferred order is altered to show the precedence (i.e., the group having precedence comes first in the sequence) and the precedence reference is shown with the group's title. If this is impractical, then the precedence reference is merely shown with the group's title.

9. Main Group Relates to All or Several Main Groups, and Covers the Details, Components, Accessories, Ancillary Devices, or Residual Subject Matter for all or Several Sections

Determine if there are detail main groups, component main groups, accessories or ancillary device main groups, or “residual subject matter” main groups that are related to all or several of the main groups already placed in the preceding steps.

(a) If such main groups exist, these main groups are placed in the sequence directly after the groups already placed in the preceding steps. They should be ordered as they are listed in the introduction of this step with the most residual main group always at the bottom of the top-down sequence.

(b) The main groups for the same purpose (e.g., they all cover components) are then arranged so that the main group having the most specialized structure or largest system is placed before the other(s) unless a precedence reference exists. When a precedence reference exists, the preferred order is altered to show the precedence (i.e., the group having precedence comes first in the sequence) and the precedence reference is shown with the group’s title. If this is impractical, then the precedence reference is merely shown with the group’s title.

10. New Residual Main Group is Suggested

If there is additional subject matter that is potentially within the coverage of the subclass title that is not covered by an existing main group, a new main group residual to the subclass should be created. It should be noted that main groups sometimes also cover categories of subject matter that are not explicitly mentioned in their titles, as described in paragraphs 92 and 95 to 97 of the Guide to the IPC.

[Annex H follows]