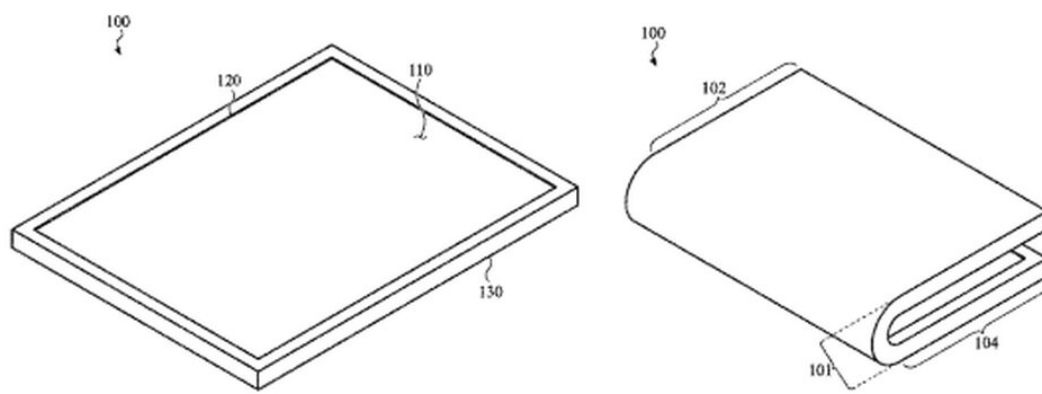


Patent talk: Apple has foldables, durability on its mind

May 31 2019, by Nancy Cohen



Credit: USPTO

Fact of life: Consumers chase the new and shiny, at least enough of them to justify constant trade-ins and barely necessary purchases.

That said, while foldables do offer carrying convenience and some practical screen-adjusting advantages for varied tasks, consumers will also dream of having good conversation pieces and gee-whiz looks from those around them.

Are foldables not only to arrive but remain as hot features in computing

devices?

Earlier this year, Abhimanyu Ghoshal, *The Next Web*, said we cannot be confident with a resounding yes or no.

"It's hard to say right now whether foldables are here to stay, or if they'll just be a [flash](#) in the pan. But history has taught us that it's foolish to trash a new innovation early in the game... We'll have to wait and see how the first lot of these devices are received, and how manufacturers adapt to customers' preferences with future iterations."

Well, we can now play wait and see with the likes of Apple. Latest patent news centers on Apple being granted a patent for a foldable device [display](#). As soon as the *Patently Apple* news broke, tech watchers got busy studying the patent discussion and describing what might materialize as a result, namely whether the foldable idea goes into the phone or some other iDevice.

A May 28 report on *Patently Apple* was looking at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office's published series of [85](#) granted patents for Apple Inc. that day, which included foldable displays for future iDevices.

The patent "Foldable cover and display for an electronic device" was originally filed in January last year. It describes an electronic device with a display and cover that are flexible.

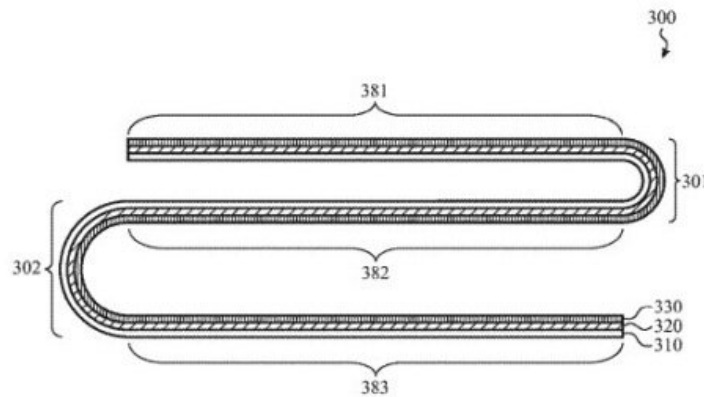


FIG. 3A

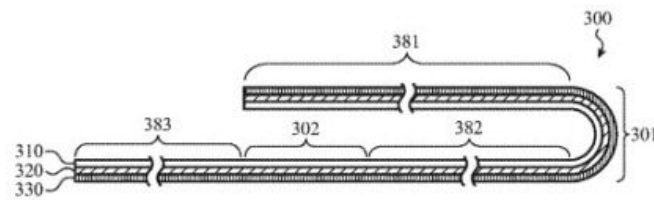


FIG. 3B

Credit: USPTO

The embodiments are directed to "an electronic device having a display layer and a cover layer that are configured to fold or bend along a flexible or bendable region."

Chris Smith in *BGR* found interest not only in the discussion about potential designs for flexible iPhones and iPads but also in talk about how to manufacture flexible covers to ensure they both work as intended, and are [durable](#) enough to protect the screen underneath the flexible glass.

What does Apple have in mind for cover sheets?

According to the patent, "Embodiments described herein relate to techniques for forming flexible cover sheets. In particular, cover sheets may be formed to facilitate localized bending or flexing without producing unacceptable levels of internal stress. The embodiments described herein can be used to manufacture cover sheets formed using glass, sapphire, or other [ceramic materials](#)."

A buzz around smartphones that are flexible has been around for some time—talk and more talk about this next category of smartphone.

So, is this patent targeted for a smartphone or not? Answer: Some reports positioned the patent news as the sign this was all about future phones, while other sites hung loose. The latter wing made the point that it does not definitively mean the concept in the patent is reserved for a folding phone.

As Jesus Diaz said in *Tom's Guide*, "the patent doesn't discuss if this is for a phone, a tablet, or [both](#)." Tom Bedford in *TechRadar* said this patent "could well be for a new iPad Pro, as their large sizes would benefit from additional [portability](#)."

(What's interesting," Smith said, "is that Apple focuses on glass/ceramic for manufacturing the cover sheets rather than other materials, whereas phones like the Galaxy Fold and Mate X do not have glass displays.")

TechRadar's Tom Bedford: "The main difference is a three-tier folded system shown in the patent—while it's a little unclear what this refers to...the sketch in Apple's [patent](#) could indicate a different device that would fold as such, or simply a clasp system to keep the [device](#) shut."

More information: Foldable cover and display for an electronic device, [United States Patent 10,303,218](#)

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