

Do's & Don'ts in Choosing an English Name

Most English names are not words for everyday things. They generally do not have a recognized meaning. They do, however, having a historical meaning. If you look up my name "Nicole", you will find that it comes from French and meant victory somewhere back in history. It's related to Nike (the shoes), the goddess of victory. There are a limited amount of names that have a current meaning. Examples include Lily, Rose, April or Ivy.

Therefore, you will usually not find names such as Happy, Sunny, Shine, Sunlight, Snowy or Lucky, although Lucky and maybe Snowy are sometimes heard as dog's names.

Nor will you hear food names like Cherry, Vanilla, Watermelon, Lemon, Cola or Cheese. These are names for food, not people. If we here someone with this name, we will probably laugh.

Careful not to choose a name that is inappropriate to your age. You would only hear old ladies named Shirley, Mabel or Harriet. Men's names tend to be more timeless, so you will often here the same names for grandfather and grandson. But there are still men's names that you rarely hear among the young. For example: Larry, Walter, Harold, Carl, Arthur.

Avoid names that might sound sexual or obscene: Dick, Bunny, Wench. Similarly, avoid names that are ridiculous: Tinkerbelle, Haha, Sweetie, Horse, Magic. Do not choose the screen name from your video game opponents. They are not necessarily names & may be very negative: Liar, Faker

Similarly, do not choose names from other languages, since you'll just add confusion. (Yico, Ruki, Totoro sound Japanese, Cielo & Jacinta are Spanish. Don't make up your own name: Deft, Badia, Esme, Chercy, Vanya, Maydew, Simy, Al Moran. These confuse people, since they have never been heard before. Some don't even fit the characteristics of English, and we won't know how to pronounce them. Also, pay very close attention to the spelling of the name you choose. Besty is not a name, but Betsy is. By choosing an English name, you trying to improve your communication with native speakers, not add more confusion. If you choose a new name, it should be one that is familiar to and normal for English speakers.

My best advice to you if you already have an English name, confirm that it's an appropriate one. If you want to choose a name, check lists of popular baby names for the year you were born. Make sure to choose the proper sex. Females want girl names, males want boy names.

You might also look up names based on their historical meaning. Be very careful here. Many of the names on these lists are not in modern use. Verify with a few Americans that your choice is appropriate and is truly a name that is recognizable and pronounceable in English. Ask Americans to suggest names for you. You might tell them you want something that sounds like your real name or begins with the same sound. Choose a name that is easy for you to pronounce & not confusing for Americans. If you have trouble pronouncing V, don't choose Evan. If you're not good with final L's, avoid Krystal or Rachel.

So, do you have an English name that's different from your birth name? How did you choose it? Do you want an English name and need help selecting one. Please post your answer in the comments.