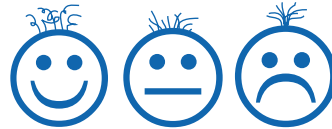


# Chapter 1

## Fussin' about the Perfect Name for Your Baby



### In This Chapter

- ☺ Understanding the importance of a name
- ☺ Discovering tips for naming your children
- ☺ Avoiding baby-naming pitfalls

**W**illiam Shakespeare once wrote, "What's in a name? That which we call a rose/By any other name would smell as sweet." And though he certainly had a point, you have to admit that if a rose were actually called a foot, you'd probably have a different opinion of how it smells!

That's something to keep in mind when thinking of names for your children. You may have the sweetest little boy in the world, but if you name him Adolf, it simply won't matter how sweet he is. The negative historical significance of that name will follow your child for the rest of his life. At the very least, you may get quizzical looks from other parents when you introduce him; at worst, he'll be teased until he can't stand it anymore, especially in history class.

Naming children comes down to two things: common sense and a little forethought. In this chapter, you discover some common-sense advice for naming your children, as well as what to keep in mind when making your decision.

## Parent's Success Guide to Baby Names



### First Things First: Using This Book

As a parent-to-be, you may think that the typical 40-week pregnancy seems like a *long* time — but as many parents will tell you, that time goes fast! Soon-to-be parents have many things to take care of before Baby arrives, one of the most important being to select a name. With hundreds and hundreds of names to choose from, this task may seem overwhelming. That's where this book comes in!

This book is part of a series called The Parent's Success Guide™. Its main purpose is to help you, a busy, multitasking mom (or dad!), make some positive changes in your life as a parent — in a minimum amount of time.

Brought to you by the makers of the world-famous *For Dummies* series, this book provides straightforward advice, hands-on information, and helpful, practical tips about baby names. The goal is to give you the information you need to make your decision *without* requiring a considerable amount of your valuable time.

Keep the following points in mind as you use this book:

- ✿ For each name, we list the origin and then the meaning, unless the history of the name is so vague and convoluted that it's just impossible to tell. In these cases, we venture a hypothesis if a reasonable one exists; otherwise, we simply say "Origin and meaning unknown."
- ✿ For some names, we list derivatives, variations, and similar-sounding names that might also appeal to you in bold type.
- ✿ When another name relates to the name at hand, we put it in all capital letters so you'll know that you can look up its entry for more information.
- ✿ Our primary source of information about names' popularity is the Social Security Administration, which publishes lists of the 1,000 most common names for baby girls and boys from 1991 to the present, according to applications for Social Security cards. To search the lists for yourself, make your way to [www.ssa.gov/OACT/babynames/](http://www.ssa.gov/OACT/babynames/).

While reading this book, you'll see these icons sprinkled here and there:



This icon points out advice that saves time, requires less effort, achieves a quick result, or helps make a task easier.



This icon signifies information that's important to keep in mind.

## Chapter 1: Fussin' about the Perfect Name for Your Baby



This icon alerts you to areas of caution or danger – negative information you need to be aware of.

### Knowing a Name's Importance

There are no rules for naming a baby; in fact, you can name your children pretty much anything you want. But if there were any rules, the most important one would probably be this: "Remember that your children have to live with their names for the rest of their lives." And that's a long time.

So try not to be cavalier in choosing your children's names. For example, don't give your child a particular name simply because you like it or because it's the latest fad. Your taste in names may change or the name may go out of fashion – and then you (and your kid) are stuck with a name you no longer like or that's no longer popular. And by all means, steer clear of names that you think are funny, because your child probably won't find the humor in it.



Your child's name will become part of his or her identity, part of who he or she will become. So do yourself and your child a favor – choose a name that has some significance to you and your family and will have significance to your child.

### Mulling over the origin and meaning

Most names have an origin and a meaning that often date back centuries. The *origin* is simply the language or dialect in which the name was probably heard first. For example, older names that you may think of as Italian or French in origin may actually come from Latin – the root of many western European languages. Most names have origins deep in some ancient language while wearing a much more recent form. A good example is Shane – an English form of an Irish borrowing of an English borrowing of a French borrowing of a Latin borrowing of a Hebrew name.

On the other hand, some names that are popular today haven't always been used as names. People find names in places, such as America or Madison, and even in words that have pleasant meanings, like Summer and Precious.

The *meaning* of a name often signifies from what or where the name came. For example, the meaning of the name Ashton is "from the ash tree." Almost anything or any place can serve as the basis for a name.

## Parent's Success Guide to Baby Names



Sometimes, especially in the case of names from biblical or mythological sources, the meaning may actually be a description of the first-known person or character to carry the name. Here are a couple of examples:

- ❁ **Marcus:** Derived from Mars, the Roman god of war, so the meaning of Marcus is “warlike.”
- ❁ **Raphael:** Means “God has healed,” which relates to the biblical story of how the archangel Raphael had the power to heal.

When choosing a name for your child, paying attention to the name’s origin and meaning isn’t a bad idea. If you want your child’s name to be an indication of your family’s ethnic roots, you may want to restrict your selections to names with a particular origin, such as Irish/Gaelic or Russian. When considering the meaning, you may want to choose a name with a meaning that has some significance to you. Granted, it’s impossible to tell what kind of person your child will grow up to be, but that doesn’t mean that you can’t engage in some old-fashioned wishful thinking.

### Sounding out the name

This may sound like a no-brainer, but you may want to keep in mind that you, your child, your child’s teachers, and everyone else should be able to say your child’s name without difficulty. If, for example, you name your child Aloysius — fine name that it is — most people will probably have trouble spelling or saying the name. Aloysius is not spelled like it’s pronounced (al-lo-WISH-us). Some people may try to pronounce it as it’s spelled, as in “al-LOY-see-us.” This mispronunciation may lead to some embarrassing moments for your child!



If you have a fairly simple last name, like Brown or Smith, you’re better able to “get away with” using a more complicated name. If your last name is long and tricky to pronounce, do your child a favor and choose a simple first name to offset it.

Another important step is to practice saying the name with your last name. There should be a rhythm to it; it should roll off the tongue effortlessly. After all, you’ll be using your child’s full name when he or she gets into trouble, right? As in “John Wesley Smith, clean up that mess. Now!” You don’t want to be stumbling over “Aloysius Maynard Hazelton,” do you?



Be careful when putting together a first name that ends with the letter with which the last name begins, as in Pam Matthews. The repeated consonant can sound muddy when run together.



## Chapter 1: Fussin' about the Perfect Name for Your Baby



Finally, keep in mind that a single name can have multiple pronunciations. For example, Eva can be pronounced EVE-ah or AY-vah. If you choose one of these variable names, your child may find herself correcting others when they pronounce her name the wrong way.

### Deciding on a common or unique name

Choosing a common name versus a unique name often means a choice between a traditional name with historical significance and a modern name that hasn't quite caught on. Both options have advantages and disadvantages:

- 
**Common names:** These names can often be found in the Bible, in mythology, or in classic works of literature. For example, the common — and immediately recognizable — names James, Matthew, and Mark draw added significance from their use in the Bible. Common names are also less likely to become super-popular and then go out of style. The disadvantage of using common names is that they can be seen as unoriginal or just plain “been there, done that.”
- 
**Unique names:** Often, these names are derived from objects or locations, such as Paris or Robin. The advantage is that it sets your child apart from others, and the name gains added significance by having a well-known association. The disadvantage is that the name probably won't have much historical significance and may become trendy, which makes them anything *but* unique. For example, Madison, which hasn't been around very long, has climbed to the No. 2 spot in popularity. You may not want your daughter to have the same name as three other girls in her class!



A way to have the best of both worlds is to choose a common last name with a great deal of significance and use it as your child's first name. Last names of historical figures — such as Lincoln and Truman — carry with them the prestige of those historical figures but have the virtue of not being used very often as first names.

### Contemplating the spelling of the name

Some names come with a variety of spellings — often due to how the name appears in different languages or because a parent long ago wanted to distinguish her child's name from the common form. For example, Megan is also spelled Meagan or Meghan. Marcy may also be spelled Marci, Marcee, or Marcie.

## Parent's Success Guide to Baby Names



Choosing among different spellings of a single name is really a matter of aesthetics, unless the different spellings denote differences in the name's origin. For example, Alain is the French spelling of Alan; if your family doesn't have French roots, you may not want to choose Alain. Or you may find Alain to be unique and beautiful because of those roots.



**A word of caution:** These names can easily be misspelled, especially if you go with a less common form. Megan is the most common spelling of the name. If you choose Meghan instead, rest assured that others will drop the *h* a good portion of the time. However, the extra letter does make the name distinctive; just keep in mind that Meghan will often have to correct the spelling of her name.

## Combining a First and Middle Name (or Two)

The truth is, you do *not* have to give your child a middle name. No law says that you have to, and no one is going to haul you off to jail if you don't. But giving your child a middle name (or two — there's no limit) can add significance to your child's name. And your child may end up with a name he or she would be proud to put on the cover of the next Great American Novel!

For example, consider Edgar Allan Poe — he wouldn't be the same if he had been just Edgar Poe. Or Ed Poe, for that matter. Or how about Louisa May Alcott? Louisa Alcott seems a little plain, doesn't it?

A middle name has another advantage: If your child ends up hating the first name, he or she has a second option. Using an initial for the first name along with the middle name looks pretty cool, too! It worked for J. Edgar Hoover, didn't it?

Here are a few hints for giving your child a middle name — and making it work with the rest of his or her name:

- ❁ **Make the middle name more unique.** Because middle names don't get used every day, they can be a great way to get creative without giving your child a lifelong burden to bear.
- ❁ **Honor the mother's family by using her maiden name.** Not only does this add to the uniqueness of your child's name, but it will also endear you to the mother's family!
- ❁ **Consider either parent's first or middle name.** This is a great way to pass along a little bit of yourself, without the apparent egotism that some perceive in naming your child directly after yourself.

## Chapter 1: Fussin' about the Perfect Name for Your Baby



- ✿ **Think about initials.** Patrick Ian Garnett may sound just dandy to you, but you don't want your son to have to suffer through grade school with the initials P.I.G.

Of course, the same advice for matching up a first name and a last name applies here: Sound out the full name to make sure that it flows nicely.

## Naming Your Baby after You or Someone Else

Although you risk being called a copycat, naming your child after someone else has distinct advantages — and disadvantages.

### A junior dilemma

There's absolutely nothing wrong with giving your baby your name or your spouse's name and sticking a "Jr." at the end of it. The passing down of names to sons indicates a strong family tradition. (Generally, only boys are given their fathers' names and become Juniors.) However, be prepared for some criticism, whether it's overt or not. Keep these points in mind when you're considering the "Jr." option:

- ✿ **Others may view you as unoriginal.** They may think that you couldn't come up with an original name. But don't let this deter you from making your child a Junior; just be prepared for this kind of attitude.
- ✿ **Your child will be called "Junior" at some point in his life.** Some kids don't mind; others hate it. Remember how Indiana Jones got his first name: The young Henry Jones, Jr., hated being called Junior by his father so much that he started calling himself Indiana — after the family dog.
- ✿ **Your child may be ridiculed.** If his schoolmates ever find out that he's a Junior, watch out! Relentless teasing will ensue!
- ✿ **It can create confusion.** Some Jrs., IIs, and IIIs report that their records get mixed up with their fathers' and grandfathers'. In this electronic age, documents like credit histories are often based on names, and same names can cause trouble.



One way to avoid the Junior issue is to nickname the child something else, perhaps a shortened form of his middle name. For example, if a father and son are both named James Theodore and the father goes by Jim, the son's nickname can be Ted. Then no one will ever know your child's deep, dark secret!

## Parent's Success Guide to Baby Names



### Negative associations

Naming your child after yourself or a family member is a pretty safe choice, unless that family member happens to be one of those skeletons in the family closet. Naming your child after a famous celebrity or historical figure, however, is another matter entirely and can have a negative impact on how others view your child.

Of course, for nearly every given name out there, you can find a famous person with that name; avoiding associations with the famous people who carry your child's name will be nearly impossible. Often, these associations are positive — movie stars, athletes, political figures, famous authors, and so on. You really can't go wrong with a name like Harrison (after actor Harrison Ford or President Benjamin Harrison) or Margaret (after former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher or author Margaret Mitchell).



A few names have gained such negative significance that you really want to shy away from them. Adolf is one such name. Another example may be to avoid a combination of first and middle names that result in the initials O.J. However, these are really rare cases; you shouldn't avoid good, strong names like Jack or Jeffrey simply because they were the first names of the two of the most notorious serial murderers in history. The best advice: Just be aware of the associations and use your best judgment.

If your last name is the same as a famous person's, you may want to avoid giving your child the first name of that famous person, too. You may think it's cute, but your child may not feel the same way. If your last name is Kennedy and you name your son John, he will go through life as John Kennedy. That may be fine for you, but your son may not care for that association, especially if he grows up to be a Republican!

### Creating a Family of Names

If you know that you're going to have a slew of kids or you want to find a visible way to create family unity, you may want to make all your children's names alike in some way. Doing so has the advantage of creating an even tighter bond between your children. Here are a few examples of how you can create a "family of names":

- ✿ **All names start with the same initial or sound.** For example, you can have two boys named Michael and Matthew and two girls named Meredith and Marie. This can be especially fun if you and your spouse have names that begin with that letter or sound as well.
- ✿ **All names come from a single source.** The Bible has always been a popular source for creating this kind of name family. For example, you can name your children for famous biblical personalities:



## Chapter 1: Fussin' about the Perfect Name for Your Baby



Abraham, Isaac, David, and so on. Or you can name your children after your favorite authors, such as James (for James Joyce), John (for John Steinbeck), Elizabeth (for Elizabeth Barrett Browning), and Virginia (for Virginia Woolf).

- ✿ **All names come from your own family.** For example, if you plan to have four children, you could give them the names of all four grandparents. But be aware of the political ramifications: Don't choose names from only one side of your family; mix and match from both sides of the family.



**Beware the twin trap!** Your twins may get badly teased if you name them with cutesy couplets, such as Brad and Chad or Cindy and Mindy. Let them have their own identities – give them unique names. However, you do want them to sound like they're related. Don't give one daughter a traditional name like Sarah and the other a modern name like Trinity.

## Knowing the Sex Beforehand – or Not

Of course, it's your family's personal decision whether you want to know the sex of your baby before it's born. Some parents want to know so that they can plan ahead – such as painting the baby's room pink or blue, buying boy or girl baby clothes, and, yes, even choosing one baby name rather than having to come up with two. Plus, it gives the baby an identity even before he or she is born – instead of just being "it," the baby is Katie or Carter, for example. Other parents want to leave it up to nature and preserve the surprise for the delivery room. This section offers some baby-naming tips for whichever situation you're in.

### Knowing ahead of time

Knowing the sex of your baby before it's born gives you plenty of time to come up with names. You can do research; you can get advice from others; and you can make love-hate lists of names. The advantage is that you're prepared. The disadvantage is that you may be *too* prepared.

Ideally, you can narrow down your choices to two or three beforehand, and when your baby is born, you realize that the choices you made are perfect for the little one you're holding in your arms. However, keep in mind that it doesn't always happen that way. For example:

- ✿ You may look at the little tyke and decide that none of the names seems to fit. Say that you're set on the name Emily. But when you see your little girl for the first time, you say, "She doesn't *look* like an Emily. She looks like a Rachel. But I hate the name Rachel!"

## Parent's Success Guide to Baby Names



Stranger things have happened. Remember, right after your child is born, you and your family will be filled with all sorts of emotions, and the logical, cool decisions you made beforehand may end up going out the window.

- ✿ The doctor may have been wrong in determining the sex of your baby. It's rare, but it does happen. So you spent all that time coming up with the perfect girl's name only to find a little boy in your arms — and it's back to the ol' drawing board!

If you know the sex ahead of time, the best advice is not to get too attached to the name you select and have a few backups just in case. You may even want to plan for the unlikely event that your doctor made a mistake and decide on both a boy's name and a girl's name. You can always use the other one the next time around!

### Waiting for the surprise

A lot of parents want to be surprised. They want to feel that rush of excitement when the doctor exclaims, "It's a (fill in the blank)!"

Waiting for the surprise means that you have double the prep work to do. Instead of one list of names, you make two. You decide on likely candidates for each sex and narrow it down to a few possibilities. But remember, don't get too attached to the names you pick, and have some backup choices just in case.

### Keeping Nicknames in Mind

Like it or not, your child will probably develop a nickname (or several), unless you decide on a very short name. A nickname will likely be a shortened version of the full name, such as Bill or Will for William or Beth or Liz for Elizabeth. This kind of nickname is different from a pet name. (You know how dreadful those can be, especially if your pet name was Princess or Squeaky.)



Your child's friends, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, and teachers — pretty much everybody — will want to call your child by a nickname. Most of the time, a nickname is a sign of endearment, or it indicates the other person's wish to interact on a more familiar level.

## Chapter 1: Fussin' about the Perfect Name for Your Baby



So take nicknames into consideration. You may always call your son Jacob, but plenty of others will want to call him Jake. Exotic Francesca may well turn into the rather ordinary Fran. Also, beware the dreaded adding of a “y” or “i” to the end of a name or nickname. Benjamin, for example, can easily become Benny or (gasp!) Benji.

### Coming Up with a List of Names You Like

Having hundreds of names in this book to choose from may seem overwhelming. To start narrowing down the field a bit, use Table 1-1 to record some of the names that you like. Remember that if you're not planning to find the sex of your baby ahead of time, you should fill out two worksheets — one for a boy and one for a girl. After you complete Table 1-1, try ranking the names in order of preference.



It may be helpful if both you and your spouse or partner fill out Table 1-1 separately and then compare notes. With any luck, you may end up with a couple of common choices between you.

**Table 1-1 Favorite Names**

Name	Nicknames	Origin	Meaning	Pros	Cons

### The Top 100 Names Being Used Today

If you're curious to know which are the most popular names in the United States, the Social Security Administration's Web site, [www.ssa.gov/OACT/babynames/](http://www.ssa.gov/OACT/babynames/), is probably the best resource. At the site, you can pull up lists of the top 1,000 (or 500, 100, 50, or 10) names from every year since 1990. You can also track the popularity of a single name over the years since 1990; review the top five names by state; and find the top names (based on much smaller samples) by year and decade dating back to 1880. The data is based on applications for Social Security cards.

## Parent's Success Guide to Baby Names



Table 1-2 lists the top 100 names from 2002, the most recent year available.

**Table 1-2 Top 100 Names from 2002**

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>
1	Jacob	Emily
2	Michael	Madison
3	Joshua	Hannah
4	Matthew	Emma
5	Ethan	Alexis
6	Joseph	Ashley
7	Andrew	Abigail
8	Christopher	Sarah
9	Daniel	Samantha
10	Nicholas	Olivia
11	William	Elizabeth
12	Anthony	Alyssa
13	David	Lauren
14	Tyler	Isabella
15	Alexander	Grace
16	Ryan	Jessica
17	John	Brianna
18	James	Taylor
19	Zachary	Kayla
20	Brandon	Anna
21	Jonathan	Victoria
22	Justin	Megan
23	Christian	Sydney
24	Dylan	Chloe
25	Samuel	Rachel
26	Austin	Jasmine
27	Jose	Sophia
28	Benjamin	Jennifer

## Chapter 1: Fussin' about the Perfect Name for Your Baby



<i>Rank</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>
29	Nathan	Morgan
30	Logan	Natalie
31	Kevin	Julia
32	Gabriel	Kaitlyn
33	Robert	Hailey
34	Noah	Destiny
35	Caleb	Haley
36	Thomas	Katherine
37	Jordan	Nicole
38	Hunter	Alexandra
39	Cameron	Maria
40	Kyle	Savannah
41	Elijah	Stephanie
42	Jason	Mia
43	Jack	Mackenzie
44	Aaron	Allison
45	Isaiah	Amanda
46	Angel	Jordan
47	Luke	Jenna
48	Connor	Faith
49	Luis	Paige
50	Isaac	Makayla
51	Brian	Andrea
52	Juan	Mary
53	Jackson	Brooke
54	Eric	Katelyn
55	Mason	Rebecca
56	Adam	Madeline
57	Evan	Michelle
58	Carlos	Kaylee
59	Charles	Sara

*continued*

## Parent's Success Guide to Baby Names



**Table 1-1 Top 100 Names from 2002 (continued)**

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>
60	Sean	Kimberly
61	Gavin	Zoe
62	Alex	Kylie
63	Aidan	Aaliyah
64	Bryan	Sierra
65	Nathaniel	Amber
66	Jesus	Caroline
67	Ian	Gabrielle
68	Steven	Vanessa
69	Cole	Alexa
70	Timothy	Trinity
71	Cody	Danielle
72	Adrian	Erin
73	Seth	Autumn
74	Sebastian	Angelina
75	Devin	Shelby
76	Lucas	Gabriella
77	Richard	Riley
78	Blake	Jada
79	Julian	Lily
80	Patrick	Melissa
81	Trevor	Jacqueline
82	Jared	Angela
83	Miguel	Ava
84	Chase	Isabel
85	Dominic	Bailey
86	Antonio	Ariana
87	Xavier	Jade
88	Jeremiah	Melanie
89	Jaden	Courtney

## Chapter 1: Fussin' about the Perfect Name for Your Baby



<i>Rank</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>
90	Alejandro	Leah
91	Jeremy	Maya
92	Jesse	Ella
93	Garrett	Jocelyn
94	Diego	Leslie
95	Mark	Claire
96	Owen	Christina
97	Hayden	Lillian
98	Victor	Evelyn
99	Bryce	Gabriela
100	Riley	Catherine

## Parent's Success Guide to Baby Names

