

## Introduction

Download a recording of this article at <http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/magazine/names>

This support pack contains the following materials:

- the article that you can listen to in the podcast
- an optional comprehension activity based on the article
- an optional vocabulary activity based on the article

## Read the article

### Names

by Katherine Bilborough

Shakespeare told us that a rose, by any other name, would smell as sweet. But is that true? Are names important? Are you happy with the name that you were given as a baby? And how do you choose a name for your own children when they come along?

Humans have been using names since prehistoric times but although all cultures use names, the ways that we have of naming our children differ from place to place. In some places people have just a single name while in others the naming process is far more complex. Sometimes our names carry information about our family roots or even, in the case of some African cultures, the order in which each sibling is born. The etymology of names (the linguistic origin or meaning) is a subject which has fascinated us for generations. Another interesting aspect of names is why people choose to give their child one name and not another and why certain names become popular at particular moments in time.

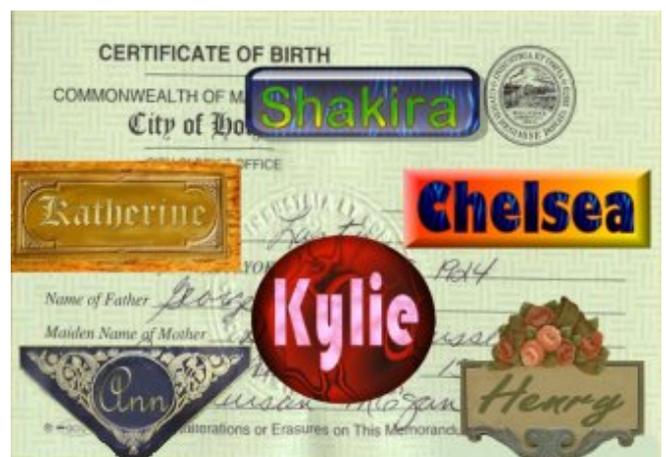
In 2004 the top ten names for girls born in the United Kingdom were:

1. Emily
2. Ellie
3. Chloe
4. Jessica
5. Sophie
6. Megan
7. Lucy
8. Olivia
9. Charlotte
10. Hannah

For boys, the top names were:

1. Jack
2. Joshua
3. Thomas
4. James
5. Daniel
6. Oliver
7. Benjamin
8. Samuel
9. William
10. Joseph

It appears that parents are more adventurous when it comes to naming daughters. Boys names tend to be more traditional and favourites change less frequently. Jack has topped the list for the past nine years and shows no sign of moving.



A fairly recent trend in choosing a name has meant that there are now generations of young people named after musicians, film stars and even designer clothes labels. Kylie is one of the most popular girls names at the moment and last year in the UK alone, 221 babies were named Shakira after the Columbian singer. Following the success of "The Matrix", fans started calling their

children Morpheus and Trinity after the lead characters. And, if that isn't bad enough, there are around three hundred American teenagers called Armani.

Colours have also entered the naming arena with Pink, Ruby and Scarlet popular choices for girls and Blue and Grey for boys. And what about the current craze for calling your child after a town or city? When David Beckham called his child Brooklyn, 105 other parents followed the craze and called their children; boys and girls alike, Brooklyn too. Other "place" names that are popular are Adelaide and Devon.

Beckham is not the only celebrity who has chosen to give his children unusual names. Bono, of U2 fame called his son Elijah Bob Patricius

Guggi, the actor Sean Penn's son is called Hopper and film director Robert Rodriguez has three sons; Rebel, Rocket and Racer. How do you think these children feel? When David Bowie's son Zowie Bowie was old enough, he rebelled against his father's choice of name and changed it to Joey.

There is little to be done about the name you were given as a child but maybe we ought to think more carefully about the names we choose to give future generations. It would be sad to think that names that have been good enough for Kings, Queens, heroes and heroines throughout history will lose out to passing trends or short lived crazes. So, let's have more Georges, Henrys, Katherines and Annes and less Hilfigers, Khakis, Chelseas and Pinks!

## After reading

### Exercise 1

Below are 8 statements about the text. Decide if each one is True or False.

1		Names have been around for thousands of years.
2		Some African names tell us whether the person is a first-born child.
3		In the UK parents are more adventurous when they choose a name for a boy.
4		Jack has become a popular name in the UK in the last year.
5		Hundreds of American boys are named after a fashion designer.
6		Blue is a popular girl's name.
7		There are both boys and girls called Brooklyn.
8		Zowie Bowie was unhappy with his name.

### Exercise 2

In the table are 8 adjectives from the text. Below are the definitions of these adjectives. Match the adjectives and their definitions.

adventurous	complex	current	important
interesting	popular	traditional	unusual

1. keen to try new or exciting things
2. happening or existing now
3. not normal, common or ordinary
4. having a major effect on someone or something
5. related to or based on very old customs, beliefs or stories
6. to describe an activity, place or thing that many people like
7. with a lot of details making it difficult to understand
8. to describe something that makes you want to know more about it

**Answers to comprehension activity:** 1. *True (T)*; 2. *T*; 3. *False (F)*; 4. *F*; 5. *T*; 6. *F*; 7. *T*; 8. *T*

**Answers to vocabulary activity:** 1. *adventurous*; 2. *current*; 3. *unusual*; 4. *important*; 5. *traditional*; 6. *popular*; 7. *complex*; 8. *interesting*

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