

# Name Trends: What's New and What's Next



Why should you care about trends? You're picking a name because you love it, not because of what everybody else thinks. In fact, you're determined to buck the trends and pick a name off the beaten track! Well if so, you're smack dab in the middle of the hottest naming trend of the twenty-first century.

Each year, hundreds of American babies are named Unique. It reflects a society where individuality has become a cherished virtue. Remember, as a kid, looking for souvenir license plates with your name printed on them? It's tough times now for the souvenir manufacturers, with every family in town inventing its own spelling of names like Alysha and Kayden.

In the 1950s, the top-ten names for boys and girls accounted for a quarter of all babies. Today, it's less than a tenth. Even parents who opt for familiar classics are rejecting the once-standard nicknames. James sounds distinguished; Jim too "ordinary." And "ordinary" is becoming an endangered species: Names like Fred and Joan have completely disappeared.

So how do you stay truly distinctive in a sea of distinctive names? And how do you make sure you're not crossing the line from creative to just plain weird? Your child will be an individual, but you still want him to fit in.

The best way to find your perfect balance is to understand the trends that shape name style. As you read this book, you may end up rethinking whether Madison is really more individual than Martha, and Summer more creative than June. Or you may be emboldened to use a name your parents would never have dreamed of.

To get you started, here are the five most influential trends for the names of the coming generation. Each takes a different path toward indi-

viduality. The first four tap existing sources—the past, foreign languages, surnames, and common words—for names that are fresh but familiar. The fifth breaks new ground with completely modern inventions. For each trend you’ll find examples that illustrate the current height of fashion, as well as suggestions of undiscovered names that could hit the same style bull’s-eye.

## Antique Revivals

Some of the hottest “new” names today are the ones that sound oldest. Parents are going hunting for antiques, plucking forgotten gems from the world of candlelight and horse-drawn carriages. These throwbacks come in two flavors: rough-hewn pioneers and refined ladies and gentlemen. On the pioneer side, Old Testament graybeard names like Zachariah and Levi are surprise hits. For the ladies and gents, nineteenth-century favorites like Julian and Annabel are regaining their luster, especially among the new generation of urban sophisticates.

### FASHION FAVORITES

Girls: Hannah, Abigail, Madeline, Sophia

Boys: Elijah, Caleb, Oliver, Sebastian

### FRESH OPTIONS

Girls: Susannah, Rafaela, Beatrice, Lavinia

Boys: Japheth, Matthias, Phineas, Benedict

*See more under: Antique Charm, Biblical, Exotic Traditionals, Ladies and Gentlemen*

## Foreign Imports

Americans are now selecting from a global smorgasbord of names. In the past, most foreign-born hits were twists on familiar English names, such as the French Danielle and Paulette. Today, exotic roots are a plus. Celtic traditions are the top source of new hits for boys, such as the Irish name Aidan, the Scottish Cameron, and Welsh Dylan. (What’s more, Celtic boys’ names are equally hot for *girls*: consider Morgan, Brynn, and Kennedy.) Other hot linguistic sources include Arabic, Greek, Italian, Russian, and Swahili.

#### FASHION FAVORITES

Girls: Caitlin, Tatiana, Aaliyah, Gianna

Boys: Cameron, Logan, Amani, Giovanni

#### FRESH OPTIONS

Girls: Emlyn, Katia, Akilah, Chiara

Boys: Cormac, Nikos, Bakari, Dario

*See more under: African, Celtic, Greek, Italian, Muslim, Slavic*

## Surnames

Surnames are now a top source for first names, in a style that recalls the 1900s heyday of names like Ellsworth, Palmer, and Jennings. Unlike that earlier generation, though, today's surnames are used for boys and girls alike. One of the hottest styles for girls is long, masculine-sounding surnames that shorten to familiar girlish nicknames. Emerson (Emmy), Cassidy (Cassie), and Addison (Addie) are all rising. On the flip side, if you're looking for a fresh surname idea for boys that will stay firmly masculine, try rugged tradesman names, or surnames that contract to male nicknames.

#### FASHION FAVORITES

Girls: Madison, Hailey, Mackenzie, Taylor

Boys: Jackson, Colton, Tyler, Hunter

#### FRESH OPTIONS

Girls: Sheridan, Ellery, Connolly, Kimball

Boys: Nicholson, Dennison, Archer, Carver

*See more under: Last Names First*

## Meaning Names

If you want a name that's brand new but still carries meaning, the most direct place to look is your dictionary. Thousands of parents are taking a word or place name with a positive connotation and bestowing it on a child. It's like a name and a dream in one. (The romanticism of the names has made them far more popular for girls than boys.) At their best, these names are alive with energy. At their worst, they pigeonhole a child

with narrow or unrealistic expectations. If you're browsing your own dictionary, look for choices flexible enough to inspire your child toward a wide world of different dreams.

#### FASHION FAVORITES

Girls: Destiny, Trinity, Autumn, Sierra

Boys: Chance, Zion, Justice, Dakota

#### FRESH OPTIONS

Girls: Amity, Lark, Mercy, Arcadia

Boys: Price, Canyon, Merit, Everest

*See more under: Charms and Graces, Modern Meanings, Place Names*

## Kay-lees

The ultimate in individuality, of course, is to invent a whole new name. Each year, more and more parents tweak sounds and spellings for a custom-crafted product. Even these names, though, make up a distinct style. The sounds that name inventors favor are remarkably consistent: Vigorous starts, long, bright vowels, and smooth endings. Almost any permutation of the top sounds gives you a hit name—Jaden-Kayden-Kayla-Kailey-Jaelyn. If you love these sounds but want deeper roots, promising options include the Irish name Keelin for girls and the Sioux classic Chayton for boys. But if you enjoy mix-and-match creativity, just grab some Scrabble tiles and design your own name, or use the pre-fab building blocks below.

#### FASHION FAVORITES

Girls: Kayla, Jayla, Makayla, Kylie

Boys: Jayden, Jalen, Brayden, Cayden

DO-IT-YOURSELF FRESH OPTIONS

<i>Beginning</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>End</i>
Am	ber	a
Ay	d	ah
Bai	k	ee
Bry	kay	eigh
Cay	l	en
Hay	n	er
Ja	r	in
Jay	s	lin
Ka	t	ly
Kay		on
Ky		y
La		yn
Ma		
Shay		
Ty		

*See more under: Bell Tones, The -ens*