

Names lesson
Part One: Vocabulary

What is missing from each of the lists below? What do all three lists have in common?

- First/ Last/ Family/ Given/ Christian/ Middle/ Pet/ Full/ Maiden/ Professional/ Pen/ Change your/ Take someone's/ Stage/ Screen/ Assume a/ Unisex/ Biblical/ Real/ Go by a/ Rude _____
- Ano____ous/ Epo____ous/ Pseudo_____
- _____ de plume/ de guerre

Check with these cards, then ask your partner and then teacher about any expressions you don't understand.

Surname/ Family name/ Last name	Given name(s)/ First name/ Christian name	Full name	Full name and title
Initial(s)	Middle name	Middle initial	(Mother's) maiden name
Jnr	The Third	Professional name	Pen name/ Nom de plume
Nom de guerre	Take someone's name	Deed poll	(Affectionate/ Insulting) nickname
Shortened name/ Short form of a name	Title	Letters after your name	Named after...
Pet name	Pseudonym	Unisex names	Stage names
Patron saint	Biblical name	Anon/ Anonymous	Handle
Screen name	Assume a name	Middle initial	Mispronounce someone's name
Go by the name...	Rude names/ Call someone names	Common name	Popular name
Née	Eponymous	Double-barrelled (sur)name	

Choose one of the cards above and talk about that topic for as long as you can.

What cultural differences can you think of about the things above?

Are any of the things in the following list true for your country?

1. The names of famous people are often shortened, e.g. Bra Pi for Brad Pitt
2. People are often given another name after they die
3. The King or Emperor is rarely referred to by their actual name
4. People put their surname before their given name, sometimes with the family name in capitals so that foreigners can see which is which.
5. It is old-fashioned, but you still see letters addressed to wives with their husband's name, e.g. "Mr and Mrs Egbert Case" or "Mrs Egbert Case"
6. You can sometimes tell the class of someone's family by their family name
7. Having many middle names often means an aristocratic background
8. You can often tell which part of the country someone comes from their family name
9. Insisting on people using the full form of your name can seem unfriendly
10. A French family name often means an aristocratic background
11. Mohammed is one of the most popular boys' names
12. Because the language has tones, it is very easy to accidentally change someone's name into an insult by mispronouncing it
13. People are often given Western names in their school English classes, and often continue using them when they interact with foreigners when they grow up
14. It is bad luck to write someone's name in red ink
15. 45% percent of people in the country have the same three family names
16. Most people are named after a Saint, and that person's Saint's Day is more important than their birthday
17. Most people take both their mother's surname and father's surname
18. Short versions of first names can often be unrecognisable, e.g. Pepe for Jose
19. Until recently, all baby names had to be from the bible or the names of saints
20. People are usually given negative nicknames like "Chicken" or "Little" when they are born to avoid the attention of evil spirits, and those names are often used in adulthood too.
21. Women take their mother's name as a surname.
22. A word meaning "of" (such as "de" or "Von") often means an aristocratic background

What other countries might they be true for?

The list is divided into sections by country or region. Which country do these groups of numbers refer to?

1-4

5-11

12

13-15

16-18

19

20

21

22



The names in each item in the following list are related to each other in some way, e.g. refer to things in the vocabulary and/ or cultural differences sections above. What is the connection each time?

- A) Smith, Potter, Cooper, Mason, Taylor or Tailor, Webb or Weaver, Thatcher, Tyler (from tiler), Slater, Miller, Baker, Cook, Fisher, Shepherd, Carter, Clark or Clarke (from clerk), Skinner, Gardener, Fowler, Waterman, Wheeler, Hooper, Sawyer, Turner, Roper, Hawker, Brewer, Faulkner (from falconer), Walker, Bowyer, Archer, Wright, Cartwright, Foster (from forester), Parker, Coward (from cowherd)
- B) Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky, Carlos the Jackal, Pol Pot
- C) Robinson, Williamson, Benson, Stevenson, Dickson, Robertson, Richardson, Jackson, Wilson, Johnson, Watson. MacDonald, O'Leary
- D) Heath, Wood, Woods, Green, Hill, Brooke, Bush
- E) David Lloyd George, Helena Bonham Carter, Sacha Baron Cohen, Shaun Wright-Philips, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Camilla Parker-Bowles
- F) Little, Small, Strong, Armstrong, Longman, Swift, Steptoe, Wilde, Wise, Young, Black
- G) Rex, Max, Buddy, Rocky, Jake, Cody, Buster, Duke, Lucky, Rusty, Shadow, Gizmo, Bentley, Zeus, Samson, Sparky, Boomer
- H) Deng Xiaoping, Hu Jintao, Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Chiang Kai-shek, Chow Yun-Fat, Yao Ming, Confucius
- I) Senhor, monsieur, Herr, senorita, mademoiselle, Madame, senora, -san
- J) mate, my son, love, dear, whatisname
- K) Kim, Sam, Gabriel, Alex, Sam, Chris, Pat
- L) Lily, Daisy, Poppy, Rosemary, Flora, Heather, Iris, Jasmine, Rose, Violet
- M) Michael and Michelle; Alexander, Alexandra and Alexis; Joe and Jo; Frances and Francis; Carl and Carla, Eric and Erica, Gerald and Geraldine, George and Georgina, Henry and Henrietta, Joseph and Josephine, Martin and Martina, Paul and Paula, Victor and Victoria, Julian and Julia, Oliver and Olive, Louis and Louise, John and Jean, Billy and Billie, Tony and Toni, Terry and Teri
- N) Wally, Willy, Jon, Randy, Fanny, Dick, John Thomas, Bottom, Pratt
- O) Kit, Guy, Art, Clay, Buck, Cliff, Drew, Rod, Stew, Chip, Wade, Will, Rich, Grant, Dean, Lance, Norm, Bud, Pat, Rob, Gene, Ray, Earl, Bill, Chuck, Frank, Dale, Curt, Don, Glen, Walter, Willie, Albert, Harold, Raymond
- P) Margaret, Dorothy, Mildred, Frances, Florence, Lillian, Rose, Ethel, Evelyn, Edna, Gladys
- Q) Lewis Carroll, George Eliot, Yukio Mishima, Natsume Soseki, George Orwell, Pablo Neruda, Mark Twain
- R) Joseph, Paul, Saul, Aaron, Abraham, Adam, Amos, Andrew, Benjamin, Daniel, David, Isaac, Jacob, Jonathon, Joshua, Jude, Luke, Matthew, Mark, John, Peter, Samuel
- S) Bill, Will, Willy, Billy, Willie
- T) Bob, Bobby, Rob, Robbie
- U) Dick, Rich, Richie
- V) Beth, Liz, Betty, Lizzie, Bess, Lilly
- W) Kate, Katie, Cathy, Cath
- X) Lex, Alex, Alec, Sandy
- Y) Al, Fred, Alf, Alfie, Freddie
- Z) Mary, Abigail, Anna, Martha, Deborah, Esther, Eve, Hannah, Judith, Lydia, Naomi, Rachel, Ruth, Sarah, Sharon, Susanna

Answer key

1–4: Japan
5-11: UK
12: China
13-15: South Korea
16-18: Spain
19: Portugal
20: Thailand
21: Iceland
22: Many European countries

- A) Family names which are based on jobs
- B) Noms de guerre
- C) Names that mean “son of...”
- D) Family names that come from geographical features
- E) Famous people with double-barrelled surnames
- F) Family names that are based on appearance
- G) Popular names for dogs
- H) English versions of names of famous Chinese people
- I) Titles from various languages that English-speakers also commonly use when talking to people from those countries
- J) Ways of avoiding names
- K) Unisex names
- L) Women’s names based on flowers
- M) Pairs of male and female names
- N) Names that also have rude meanings
- O) Men’s names that used to be more popular
- P) Women’s names that used to be more popular
- Q) Famous pen names
- R) Male biblical names
- S) Short forms of William
- T) Short forms of Robert
- U) Short forms of Richard
- V) Short forms of Elizabeth
- W) Short forms of Catherine
- X) Short forms of Alexander
- Y) Short forms of Alfred
- Z) Female biblical names