

# naming rights

Think out all the implications of the surname you will use after the wedding. The options are many but the consequences are not always right, as my confessions prove.

SOME WOMEN CAN'T WAIT TO ASSUME THEIR HUSBAND'S NAME AND BE CALLED MRS; OTHERS PREFER TO SPEND THEIR LIVES KNOWN BY THEIR MAIDEN NAME AND STAY A MS. LEGALLY, YOU CAN CALL YOURSELF ANYTHING YOU LIKE. I HAVE BEEN MARRIED THREE TIMES AND HAVE NAMED MYSELF THREE WAYS. FINALLY I HAVE FOUND THE PERFECT FIT, FOR ME.

After my first wedding, I took my husband's name. I became MRS 'HIS FAMILY' and obviously had the name of his mother. I quite liked it on one hand, it did feel very married, but I felt that I had left my own family behind, and as an only child, that made me a bit sad. I liked the name I was born with and wasn't really happy about letting it go. I even graduated from university under my married name, something I now regret as my degree carries a name with which I now don't feel any affinity.

After my second marriage I thought I would right the emotional niggles and I reverted to my maiden name and obviously became MS. That wasn't really perfect either; I had lost my Mrs, it was a bit disturbing, people didn't immediately classify me as married. Of course you can't be MRS and use your maiden name; that's your own mother.

Socially my husband and I would be invited as MR AND MRS 'HIS NAME', but technically it wasn't my name. I was forever re-introducing myself; I was in the no-man's-land of names. Some knew me under my maiden name, others assumed I had my husband's name. It just didn't work.

When it came to my third marriage, I decided to have it all, the best of both worlds for me; keep my maiden name and add my husband's name. It has turned out to be just right. Luckily both our surnames have a good fit, my European name and his short English one. There are benefits, I am back to being MRS, I still have my own family's identity and my last name matches my husband's, something that is very handy when making airline bookings and checking into overseas hotels. A perfect balance.

My two surnames aren't hyphenated I didn't want to do that because the names are two unique words and were not meant to be joined. It's not a 'family' name that has come down through history, it's my unique, married name.

Things tend to go more smoothly in life when one name is used consistently, this is especially important for ID.

I learnt the ID lesson when at one point quite recently, we were opening a new business bank account and I had to come up with 100 ID points. I had a driver's licence in my maiden name, a passport in the double-barrel-third-wedding version, and a vast assortment of cards in either. For me it was nearly impossible to reach 100 points because of the name mess. Finally I scraped the score together, a humble Medicare card got me over the line. As you can imagine, I immediately changed all my ID to the name I now use, it was a big job.

## ETIQUETTE

There can be awkward moments when you have two names on the go; you do forget under which name you have registered at doctors, dentists and pharmacies. Many times I was asked for my name and had to answer 'I'm not sure'. It's not a good look for a grown woman.

But all the name confusion is behind me now; my life neat, I now know who I am when I'm asked and it all finally feels grown up. I admit my own search for the perfect married name is a bit extreme, but it does show that anything is possible, the choice has to feel right, be practical and consistent.

Some women even keep their former married name; this choice could be comfortable if there are children from the previous marriage for family consistency. It does require a tolerant groom and name complications can arise if there are children from the new marriage.

To make the full change to the groom's family name or to add the married name to the maiden name, the time to do this is after the wedding.

The driver's licence and passport should be the first to correct so that the 100 ID points are in place.

If the honeymoon involves overseas travel; there won't be time to change the name on the passport, so the maiden name should be used on bookings and reservations.

If the overseas travel is delayed, update the driver's licence first as it will be required along with the marriage certificate, with the passport application.

Ultimately, the name decision is emotional, it involves family conventions and attitudes and should meet both your and your husband's needs, hopefully for a long, long time.

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