

## New Baby Names



Choosing a baby name will be one of the most important things you decide for your baby. It will be with them all of their life. Its one of the first challenges you will face in parenthood. W.H. Auden said "proper names are poetry in the raw".

Many people think that popular names are the best choice for a child. Some people want a unique name for their baby so that they will feel confident and special. Americans today have some pretty amusing ways of naming their children. They are named for prized possessions. In 2000, birth certificates revealed that there were 298 Armanis, 269 Chanel's, 49 Canons, 6 Timberlands, 5 Jaguars and 353 girls named Lexus in the United States! So if the US is naming their children after cars, ever wonder how people in other countries or throughout history have chosen names for their children?

In Elizabethan England they named their children at the baptism, a few days after the birth. Like many other newborns of the time, they were named after one of your godparents. The names that were considered acceptable during this time were considerably smaller than what we are used to today. Elizabeth, Anne, Joan, Margaret, Alice, Mary, and Agnes accounted for approximately sixty-five percent of all girls' names. John, Thomas, William, Richard, and Robert accounted for approximately sixty percent of male names. Naming baby in old England was fairly simple but pretty boring.

The Chinese wouldn't dare name a child before it is born. They give the child a fake or "milk" name that is something very unpleasant like "mud face" or "excrement," this is believed to trick evil spirits and make them stay away from the child. After the child is born, when the baby is about a month old they throw a baby naming party called a red egg and ginger party. The egg represents fertility and is dyed red for good luck, there is a huge feast where the baby's hair is shaved and gifts are given.

Muslim parents name their child on his or her birthday or at an "Aqeeqah." Held on the seventh day after baby's birth, a sacrifice of a goat or sheep is given at the ceremony (two for a boy, one for a girl). The infant's head is then shaved and covered with saffron. It is important to Muslims to give their child a good name, determined by its meanings, which should be beautiful.

In many regions of Africa, naming ceremonies are extensive and elaborate, with special prayers recited by an appointed religious teacher. Usually, animals are sacrificed during these proceedings. Africans mostly choose names that denote the time ("Abena"-born on Thursday), something that represents the times ("Iniko"-born during troubled times), a physical characteristic ("Hassain"-handsome), or the child's position within the family ("Delu"-the only girl).

In the state of Maharashtra, India you will walk in on a beautiful image of a baby in the cradle, decorated with flower garlands and surrounded by women singing hymns and gently rocking the cradle. The mother or a grandmother then enters the room with a lit silver lamp and a small gold jewel for the child. Afterwards, the baby is blessed with rice and a small dot of vermilion is placed on her forehead. Blessings are said again, and the ceremony ends with the mother whispering the gods' names and then whispering the child's name in her ear. Finally, the name is announced to the guests.

Hopefully, these naming traditions have inspired you to begin your own naming traditions. The closest thing that Americans have today as a naming tradition is the mailing of the birth certificate. Think of a fun way to celebrate the naming of your child and start planning.