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Baby Names – Choosing Trendy or Traditional

By Barbara Freedman-De Vito

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Lists of baby names are always fun to look at, whether you're seeking a name for your soon-to-be-born baby boy or baby girl, wondering about the popularity of your own first name, or just curious about what baby names are currently hot.

What I find particularly interesting is tracking the popularity of baby names over the decades. In looking through U.S. government baby name lists from 1880 to the present, some amusing patterns emerge, particularly in regards to baby names for girls.

For example, in Victorian times Biblical names, such as Mary, Sarah and Ruth were very popular for baby girls. There were also many baby names that sounded very old-fashioned to me, as a kid growing up in the 1960s, including names like Martha, Alice, Bertha and Minnie.

From the 1920s to the 1950s certain baby names rose in popularity. For example, I went to school with many Susans, Debbies, Patricias, and Lindas. All of these baby names have since waned, to be replaced, by the 1980s, with fancier names such as Jennifer, Jessica and Nicole. When I was a children's librarian in the 1980s my preschool storyhours were populated with little girls named Lauren and Jenny, and little boys named Alex and Matthew.

More recently there's been a lot of renewed interest in more "old-fashioned" baby names like Hannah, Abigail and Ethan, plus many Biblical names such as Sarah, Rachel, Joshua, Jacob, and Samuel. There's also been a surge in nontraditional baby names including Madison, Ashley and Brianna for baby girls, and Brandon and Logan for baby boys.

It's interesting to consider the whys and wherefores of such developments. Sometimes, I suspect, the popularity of a specific actor or fictional character might result in many babies with a particular name. For example, were some of the Lauras born in the 1970s and 1980s given a name suggested by older brothers and sisters who were growing up watching "Little House on the Prairie ?" Were some attributable to the super popular Laura of "General Hospital" fame ?

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Today Madison is a very highly ranked baby name for girls (ranking number 3 in 2003) but, when the film "Splash" came out in 1984, Tom Hanks' character told Daryl Hannah's character that Madison was not a bona fide first name.

While baby girls' names seem quite subject to the whims of fashion and the top ten lists can change radically over time, I've noticed that, in general, the top baby names for boys remain far more stable. Names like John, William and James are perennials, perhaps because baby boys are often named for their fathers, perpetuating the popularity of certain baby names from generation to generation. The "Junior" factor aside, baby boys are also less apt to be given fanciful names.

A comparison of the changing fortunes of my own first name, Barbara, with those of my husband's name, Robert, gives a good illustration of the difference in stability between baby girl names and baby

boy names over time.

My name grew in popularity in the 1930s, '40s and '50s, peaking at the number 2 position in baby name popularity, which it tenaciously held from 1937 to 1944. When I attended grad school, of a class of approximately forty students, there were no less than three baby boomers named Barbara. Should I thank the actress Barbara Stanwyck for this? Alas, my first name later suffered a slow, steady decline and placed at a pitiful number 628 position on the baby names popularity list for the U.S. in 2003.

Robert, on the other hand, has survived the vicissitudes of baby name popularity. It held a coveted spot on the top ten most popular baby names list every year from 1896 to the late 1980s, often peaking at number 1 between the 1920s and the 1950s. It has gradually slipped since the 1990s, but still managed to hold the respectable slot of number 35 in 2003.

When naming a baby there are, of course, many other points to consider besides how popular or unique a name is. Here are some helpful tips that you can use with your other children to get them involved in choosing a name for the new baby and to make the process fun:

1. Baby names need to go nicely with the sound of your last name. Also, pick a first name and a middle name that go together well. (So maybe not something like Erasmus Beelzebub Smith !)
2. When your family finds a name you all like, look at the initials to be sure that you don't give the new baby a name with initials that will make people laugh. (So maybe not Pamela Iris Green, which equals P.I.G. !)
3. You might not want a baby name that is so unusual that the other kids will make fun of your little brother or sister as he or she grows up. (So maybe not Rosebud or Molasses !)
4. You also might not want a baby name that is so trendy that it will sound funny by the time the baby is ten years old. (So maybe not Sunshine !)
5. You probably shouldn't pick a name that's really cute for an adorable little baby but will sound silly when the baby grows up. (So maybe not Dimples !)

6. Avoid baby names that might produce insulting nicknames when people shorten them. (So maybe not Smellonius, or Smelly for short !)
7. You and your family might not want a name that is so hard to spell or to pronounce that people will always get it wrong and your poor little brother or sister will have to go through life correcting people. (So maybe not something like Incandescence, or is it Incandessints ?)
8. You and your family might want to pick baby names in honor of favorite relatives or ancestors, or special names that show your family's ethnic roots. You might even find a special name from a book or movie that you love. (Like Harry ?)
9. You might want to look through books of baby names and pick one that has a special meaning that you like – maybe something that means "sweet" or "kind" or "brave." (So maybe not wimp !)
10. You might want to think about names that will go nicely with your name and your other brothers' and sisters' names, so that if mom or dad are calling you all for dinner or signing a birthday card to

grandma it won't sound too crazy.

(So maybe not "Happy Birthday, Grandma ! Love, Joey, Cindy and Dweevo !")

There are hundreds of names waiting for you out there, so good luck on your search for the perfect name !

Barbara Freedman–De Vito, professional storyteller, teacher and artist, has a website with baby clothes, children's clothing and gift items decorated with her colorful and amusing artwork for kids. Visit Baby Bird Productions Children's Clothing and Baby Clothes at <http://www.childrenclothingbabyclothes.com>

Choosing Baby Names for Twins

By Sarah Mitchell

Choosing a baby name for your new born can be quite a stressful decision. With thousands upon thousands of names at your disposal, you may begin to feel a little over whelmed. Well, for twins, you can double the trouble! This article is aimed at helping soon to be moms and dads of twins to choose those perfect baby names.

Using anagrams for naming twins

One way of choosing baby names for twins is to take one name that you like and rearrange the letters to make another name. A few examples of this are: Reva & Vera Ira & Ria Mary & Myra

If you are a fan of traditional baby names, then your choices are slightly limited with this option. But, if you don't mind bending the rules a little, then you can play around with this idea forever.

Using synonyms for naming twins

Another idea for choosing baby names for twins is synonyms! A synonym is a word (or a baby name in our case) that has a similar or exact meaning of another word. So, you might want your twins to both have names that mean 'flower'. An example of this would be: Eve & Zoe Yasmin & Lala Dahlia & Daisy Camellia & Heather

All of these names refer to a flower in general or a particular flower, although they are all quite unique from one another. For example, Heather is an English name, whereas Camellia is a Latin name. If you would like to experiment with this idea some more, visit

. Simply type in a

meaning or part of a meaning and a list of names that correspond to that meaning will appear.

Reversing names for twins

Choosing baby names for twins can sometimes be as easy as spelling a name you like, backwards! As you can imagine, this will only work for a small selection of names, but if you have the time to sit down with a pen, paper and some patients then you will eventually find some that you are fond of. An example of this would be: Aiden & Nadia

Other tips for naming twins

Some other tips for naming twins are to use names beginning with the same letter, use names that rhyme, or even use names that have no connection between them what so ever. Sometimes parents get so wrapped up in trying to choose the perfect names for their twins that they forget the fact they have the option of choosing two names that have no connection at all. Regardless of what option you choose to name your twins, you should take the time to sit down and put some serious thought into your decision. Best of luck to you!

This article was written by Sarah Mitchell from

. Find thousands of baby names,

their meanings, origins and genders at

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What Do You Go For Popular, Unusual Or Unique Baby Names

Choosing Your Baby's Name - A Difficult Task?!

Choosing a Baby Name

Unusual Baby Boy Names – Finding Exotic And Unique Baby Names

Baby's First Year –What Parent Needs To Know

65 Tried and True Traditional Amish Recipes

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