

How to Pick a Stage Name

Stage names are used by all types of performers, from musicians, actors and roller derby athletes to burlesque dancers, belly dancers, and exotic dancers. A stage name can help a performer craft and reflect their public persona, or connect...

Method 1 of 4:

Choosing a Stage Name



Understand what a stage name can do for you. A stage name can help you accomplish a number of things, which all can influence how you decide on your name.

1. **Branding:** A stage name can help you brand your performance persona, giving you a separate identity to develop as a brand.
2. **Separation of personal and professional life:** A stage name will be a very public name, possibly a household name. While some people might still know your real name, keeping your real name separate from your stage name can afford you some level of privacy.
3. **Differentiation:** If your real name is very common, a stage name can help you stand out and be more memorable.
4. **Prejudice considerations:** Some people have used stage names in the past in order to decrease immediate reactions of racism, anti-Semitism or other forms of prejudice. Luckily, this is less often the case today. Similarly, some women may have avoided a hyphenated name because it might indicate they're married, which unfortunately some consider to be detrimental to their careers.

2.



Choose a name that reflects your persona. Your stage name is a way to express yourself. What do you want your name to signify? Think about how a stage name might be able to channel your performance persona.

3.



Have a story behind your name. Whatever your stage name, people will likely want to know how you decided to call yourself that. If it's an uninteresting story, then perhaps think about making up a more exciting story to go with your name.^[1]

4.

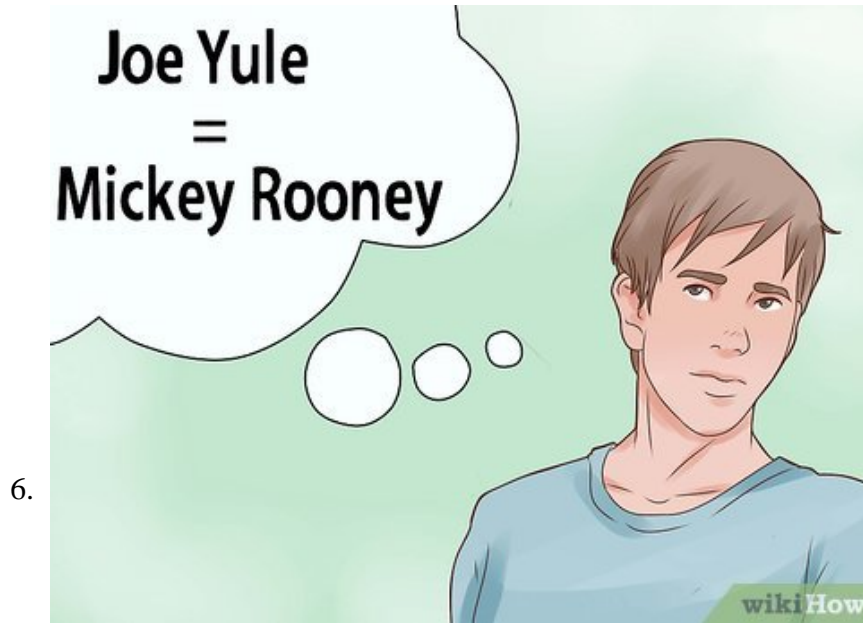


Do research about your name. Look online and in name books to learn the meaning of the name you've chosen. Learn the history of the name. Does the name's meaning and history reflect what you want it to mean?

5.



Choose a searchable name. Think about how people can find your name through search engines like Google. If you use very common words, especially single words like Trouble or Heart, it may be hard for fans to find you online.



Choose a name that will grow with you. There can be the appeal of choosing a name that reflects the moment, where you might follow a fad. Also consider where you want to be in 10 or 20 years. Does your stage name suit an older performer just as well as a younger one?

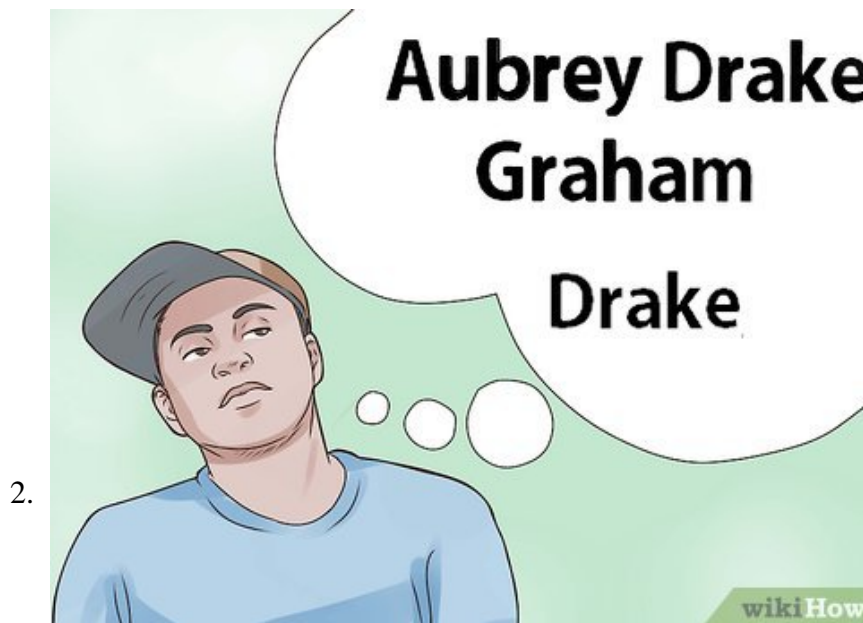
1. Child performers should consider how their names will grow with them as they get older. Joe Yule called himself Mickey Rooney, a good name for a kid actor. But it was less useful as an adult actor. Similarly Lil' Bow Wow had to drop 'Lil' when he grew up.^[2]
2. Choose a name that you won't get tired of quickly. If you think you might hate your stage name in six months, think of a different moniker.

Method 2 of 4:

Using Family Names



Use a childhood nickname. You may have been called something other than your real name throughout childhood, and this nickname might be useful as a stage name. For example, Richard Melville Hall was nicknamed Moby by his parents, and he uses this as his stage name.^[3]



Use your middle name. Go with a singular name that is just your middle name, such as the rapper Drake, whose real name is Aubrey Drake Graham.^[4] Similarly, Angelina Jolie Voight dropped her last name, moving her middle name to the surname position.

3.



Use your family tree as inspiration. Use your great-grandmother's first name or your great-uncle's middle name. This can help you retain a connection to your family with your stage name.^[5]

4.



Use your last name. Some performers use just their last name, dropping their first name because it is hard to pronounce or they've always disliked their name. Liberace, for example, dropped his first name, Wladziu, and just went by one name.

1. Some performers may have started their careers with their full names – or with a stage first and last name. Reinventing your career may involve reinventing your name, but you might still want to hang onto some of the reputation or recognition that you already have. Drop your last name from your stage name and go with just a single name.
2. Alternately, add your last name. If you've been using a single name, consider adding a last name to reinvent yourself.

3. You might also change or alter your last name. Some performers add last names (with or without a hyphen), such as Courtney Cox adding Arquette to her last name when she got married (she dropped Arquette when the marriage ended).



Choose the same last name as your parent's stage last name. If you have performers in your family, you may want to link your stage name with their stage names. These can help you gain a reputation and recognition among fans and employers.

1. For example, Carlos Irwin Estévez became Charlie Sheen in order to match his last name to his actor father Martin Sheen, whose real name is Ramón Antonio Gerardo Estévez. Another son, Emilio, kept the family last name.

Method 3 of 4:

Formatting and Spelling Your Stage Name



Consider changing the spelling of your name. If you have a name that you like, you might fiddle with the spelling to see if alternate letters will make it more interesting. The band Gotye, pronounced 'Go-tee-ay,' is a respelling of the French surname Gaultier.^[6]

1. Sometimes this isn't a good idea, especially if you're adding an extra letter where it is really unnecessary. You might just risk confusing people and making it difficult to pronounce your name.



Avoid symbols in your name. While it may be a hot thing to replace an S in your name with a \$ or an I with a !, these just add confusion and likely mistakes in spelling your name. Even though Ke\$ha and others have done it, you should skip this.

1. The singer Prince changed his name to a symbol in order to get out of his contract with Warner Bros. in 1993. Since the symbol was unpronounceable, he was called The Artist Formerly Known as Prince. This really only works if you already have a well-established reputation and fan following, and ultimately would make things too complicated anyway. Prince reverted to being called Prince

after his contract with Warner Bros. expired.^[7]



Add an exotic element. Some stage names may benefit from exoticizing them. This happens frequently for burlesque and pinup performers. Adding words such as 'von,' 'de,' or 'la' can make your name more exotic or exciting.



Consider how people will pronounce your name. If you have a very unique name, you may find that people have a lot of trouble pronouncing it. Think about actors Quvenzhané Wallis, Saoirse Ronan or Ralph Fiennes. These are difficult names to pronounce and often require pronunciation guides in news articles. ^[8]

1. Think of alternative spellings of your name that will facilitate people pronouncing it correctly.
2. Once you are well-known, however, you will likely overcome this problem.

5.



Consider your international profile. Will your name travel well with you if you start performing overseas? Since the internet has enabled fans from all over the world to connect with performers, think about how your name resonates with different cultures around the world.

6.



Be consistent with spelling and formatting. If you do choose to use alternative spelling or unique formatting of your name, keep it consistent. Do not fluctuate between using an S and a \$. Choose one and stick to it.

Method 4 of 4:

Using your Stage Name

1.



Try out your name. Your name might sound great to you when you say it out loud in your bedroom. Find out how it sounds when someone else is announcing you. Think of this as market testing your name ^[9]

2.



Don't legally change your name. Unless you are completely abandoning your real name altogether, there is no need to legally change your name. This will help you maintain a distinction between your personal and professional lives.

3.



Register your stage name with a trade guild or union. If you are currently a member of a trade guild, such as the Screen Actors Guild or the American Federation of Musicians, you should update your membership information with your stage name. It's best to ensure that no one else in your guild has the same name as you.^[10]

1. If you are not yet part of a union or guild, you may consider joining one sometime in the future. In this case, keep in mind that you should probably register with your real name and stage name in one membership.

4.



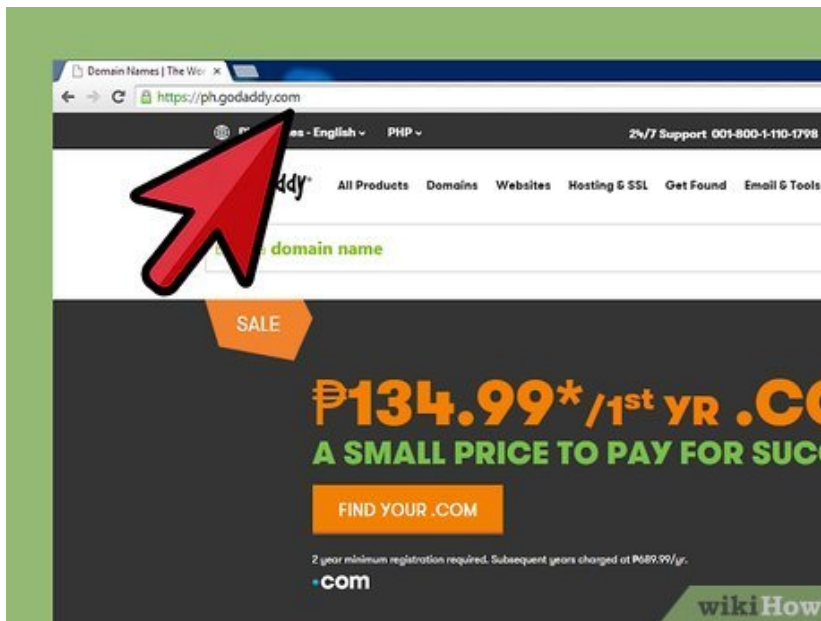
Update your bank account information. You may want to include your stage name on your bank account. This is especially true if you have a business bank account and you are earning money under your stage name. Be sure that the account has both of your names listed to avoid confusion.

5.



Reserve social media accounts with your stage name. Once you've chosen your stage name, make sure you have an online presence with that name. Start a Facebook page that isn't your personal account. Figure out a Twitter ID and start an account.^[11]

6.



Reserve a website domain. Once you've chosen your stage name, reserve a website domain with your name. It's a good idea to reserve a domain name to avoid someone misusing your name or capitalizing on your success for their own gain (known as 'cybersquatting').^[12]

1. Search a domain name registrar such as GoDaddy.com or Dotster.com to make sure your domain name isn't already taken.
2. Register your web name with a name registrar. Choose the length of time you want to reserve the domain name. You can reserve it in year increments for up to 10 years. You will need to pay a fee, which can fluctuate by registrar and by year to year. Typically, these run \$10 to \$15 for the initial registration.^[13]

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