



Home Office

## Annex A: use of names in passports

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## 1 Introduction

1.1 The name by which a person wishes to be known is a matter for the individual. Where possible, we should respect their choice whilst recognising that the passport is a document issued on behalf of the Crown and must maintain an acceptable standard. The purpose of this guidance is to determine whether the name provided by the applicant is suitable for use in the biographical and/ or observation page of the British passport.

## 2 Unacceptable Names

2.1 A name can be unacceptable on grounds of public offence, on technical grounds, or for trademark or copyright reasons. The latter two categories are objective and the aim is to achieve a similar approach to names, which may cause public concern or offence. By their very nature, a level of discretion or subjectivity will be applied and the following outlines the approach, which should be adopted for each category:

### Public offence

#### 2.2 Names that may cause outrage or offence

This includes the use of swear words; sexually explicit references; inappropriate religious connotation; is vulgar, offensive, or libellous to an individual; makes use of a name of a person living or dead which may cause public concern. This applies to phonetic, as well as actual use of words comprising of part or the entire name.

#### 2.3 Names promoting unlawful activity

This includes names associated with criminal gangs or extremist organisations; names promoting, encouraging or inciting crime or anti-social behaviour; and reference to any past, present or future activity, which may cause public offence. This applies to phonetic, as well as actual use of words comprising of part or the entire name.

2.4 Invariably, applicants who change their name know whether the change would be acceptable to the public or not. That is their choice but the passport is not an appropriate vehicle to carry names which may be offensive, vulgar or incite criminal or anti-social behaviour. Where an application falls within this category, the passport should be refused on the grounds that:

“The passport application submitted by you on [ ] does not meet the criteria published by HM Passport Office on the use of names. Your application is deemed to contain a name, which if used in whole or in part may [cause offence to individuals and to the wider public] [result in legal action] [incite criminal activity] [reduce public confidence in the integrity of the passport]. Guidance is set out at: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).”

### Trademark and copyright

2.5 The use of the name in the passport to promote or advertise goods or services is in itself extremely unlikely. However, the use of the passport as a means by the passport holder to indicate Crown acceptance of a name, which may be subject to copyright or trademark restrictions is not an acceptable use of Crown property. An application using an existing trade or commercial name will require the applicant to provide written confirmation from the owner of that trademark or copyright that they consent to the use of that name or confirmation that the

name in the public domain is not subject to any copyright or trademark restrictions. Where an application falls within this category, the passport should be refused on the grounds that:

“The passport application submitted by you on [ ] does not meet the criteria published by HM Passport Office on the use of names. Your application contains a name, which may relate to a trademark or copyright and you have failed to provide confirmation that the owner of that trademark or copyright is content for you to make use of the proposed name or confirmation from the person or organisation using that name, which is in the public domain it is not subject to any copyright or trademark provisions. Guidance is set out at: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).”

2.6 Where a name meets any of the unacceptable criteria set out in sections 2.2 to 2.5 the decision to accept or refuse should be taken at HEO Level.

## Technical Criteria

### Numbers and Symbols

2.7 This includes names containing numbers, symbols and punctuation marks (Diacritical characters and accent characters). Due to IT considerations, the British passport will not be issued with a name using numbers, symbols or punctuation marks other than hyphens or apostrophes; or any diacritical marks such as accents.

2.8 Our specifications meet the passport standard set by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO). There are alternative spellings of names to take this into account, known as transliterations. See the [acceptable list of transliterations](#) as agreed by the ICAO.

2.9 Prior to 1 April 2014, UK passports issued overseas were issued with diacritical characters. These are stored on Main Index and the diacritical characters were transliterated during the data transfer process to plain text. Therefore, examining staff will see passports showing diacritical characters which will not be shown on the main index.

2.10 Where an applicant has a name including the diacritical characters listed above, the system must be updated to show the transliteration and a case note must be added to explain the change. Similarly, if an applicant completes their application form with any diacritical characters in the name transliterated as above, but their documents show the corresponding diacritical character, this should be accepted without any supporting evidence. This information is published on our website so there will be no requirement to inform the applicant prior to issue.

2.11 Where an applicant's name includes a diacritical character not listed in the link above, evidence will be required of the alternative spelling. The applicant should be asked to provide an official document showing the correct transliteration; or a letter from a governmental authority in the country of origin of the name; or a letter from the relevant Embassy or High Commission in the UK.

2.12 Where an application falls within this category, the passport should be refused on the grounds that:

“The passport application submitted by you on [ ] does not meet the criteria published by HM Passport Office on the use of names. Your application contains a [number] [symbol] which does not accord with the standards required to use as name in the British passport. Guidance is set out at: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).”

## Too many characters in Forenames/Surname

2.13 The personal details section on a passport can only include up to 30 characters (including spaces) for first and middle names, and a further 30 characters for surnames. If an applicant has too many forenames to fit into the passport or their surname is too long, they must be asked to shorten their names in the way they want them to be shown on the passport and then write their full name in the other information section of the application. The full name should be added as an observation, evidenced by their supporting documents, in line with normal policy.

2.14 Where an applicant refuses or fails to provide a shortened name, the application should be refused on the grounds that:

“The passport application submitted by you on [ ] does not meet the criteria published by HM Passport Office on the use of names. The name provided in your application contains too many characters for inclusion in the passport and you have [failed] [refused] to provide an acceptable shortened version. Guidance is set out at: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).”

## 3 Applicants using birth names

3.1 A passport applicant who has official and verifiable documentation confirming their birth name should normally be issued with a passport in that name, subject to technical considerations at paragraphs 2.6 -2.13 above. Where the name meets any of the other criteria at paragraphs 2.2 – 2.5 above, the decision to accept or refuse a birth name falling into this category should be taken at HEO level. If the deciding officer considers that the application should be refused because of the offensive nature of the name, a query should be raised via the Policy Network Group, where further escalation will be made to the Head of Passport Identity Policy who will liaise with the Government Legal Service.

## 4 Change of name

4.1 A passport applicant in the UK must provide evidence to show that they have changed their name and that they are using the name for all official purposes i.e. the name is part of their everyday life and there is a clear link between the former name and the new name. The applicant should provide at least one piece of evidence to show change of name and one piece of evidence demonstrating use of name:-

Change of name evidence:

- marriage certificate
- civil partnership certificate
- Gender Recognition certificate
- enrolled deed poll
- change of name deed
- unenrolled deed poll
- adoption order/certificate
- act of Parliament
- certificate of naturalisation or registration
- statutory declaration/affidavit
- birth certificate (upon re-registration)
- certificate from the court of the Lord Lyon of Scotland

Use of name evidence:

- tax record (such as a letter from tax authority)

- employment record (such as an official letter from employer)
- educational record (such as a school report)
- letter from central, regional or local government department
- driving licence (UK or overseas)
- national ID card or equivalent
- visa or residence permit
- medical/health card
- voters card
- bank statement (UK applications only)
- baptismal/confirmation certificate

Name changes on marriage/civil partnership or Gender Recognition require change of name evidence only in the form of a marriage, civil partnership or Gender Recognition certificate. Use of name evidence is not required unless doubt exists regarding the name being used for all official purposes

For International applications, additional documentation will be required, depending on the location of the applicant and place of issue of supporting documentation.

See guidance on [handling child change of names applications](#).

## **Change of Name by marriage/civil partnership**

4.2 A marriage/civil partnership certificate that records the applicant's current and previous names may be accepted as evidence on its own for a change of name, provided it shows the link between the current name and the name on the source document.

## **5 Minor changes to forenames or surnames**

5.1 Minor changes to forenames can be accepted when the applicant provides two pieces of documentary evidence to show the name is used for all purposes, these can be selected from the document lists contained within 4.1.

5.2 When someone is adding a forename, then evidence of change of name is needed. Where an applicant has removed/added a hyphen in cases of double barrelled surname, this can be accepted without documentary evidence providing the spelling and the order of the names remains the same.

5.3 In all cases, any change to forenames or surnames or both will be checked to ensure that an existing or expired passport is not currently being or has not been held in the previous version of the name.

## **6 Name for all official purposes**

6.1 The "name for all official purposes" means that the person is using that name for going about their daily lives and they are able to demonstrate that they interact or engage with employers, banks, local authorities, other government departments using that name. The applicant must provide evidence to confirm that they have changed their name for all official purposes by submitting the evidence set out at section 4 above.

6.2 The name and identity of the passport holder is the key element requiring certainty before a passport can be issued. A passport must not be issued where there is any doubt or inconsistency in the name used in supporting documentation submitted by the applicant and the name requested on the passport application.

6.3 In the vast majority of cases, the applicant will be able to, and be expected to align the name they use for all official purposes with that on the British passport application form. This may cause additional effort by the customer and in some cases, inconvenience and cost. These are matters outside of HMPO's control and whilst wishing to minimise the impact on customers, there can be no compromise on meeting the required security standards. However, where there are legal, cultural and social requirements in individual cases which may impact on the ability of the applicant to align the names and these should be taken into account.

6.4 Where an individual declares an expired foreign passport or other core document (such as a birth certificate) in a different name than the one requested as part of the application, HM Passport Office will not issue a British passport unless the name on core documents align as the applicant has the ability to apply for a live foreign passport in a different name. It is not for examiners to determine eligibility for Dual Nationality however, if an application is made and entry into the UK is in doubt as another passport has not been declared, further checks must be made.

## Exceptions

6.5 There are individual categories of applicant who may experience restrictions on their ability to meet the identity requirements of one name for all official purposes. These are primarily people who have dual nationality and who hold, have held or can obtain in the future a passport issued by another country.

6.6 Subject to the applicant being able to satisfy the following requirements, a passport may be issued in the name requested even where it differs from the name on the passport issued by another country. The following categories may be given exceptional consideration:

- i. The law in the applicant's country of origin restricts or prevents a change of name. Where there is such a restriction, the applicant will be required to provide evidence from their country of origin that a change of name is not permissible;
- ii. The country of origin does not permit dual nationality meaning alignment of documentation will not be possible, the applicant will be required to provide confirmation from the country of origin that their citizenship has been cancelled;
- iii. Where there is a requirement for the person to travel to their country of origin in order to change their name, and due to exceptional circumstances in their country of origin, they would be placed at a high level of risk;
- iv. The applicant has changed their name as a result of a change of gender and the law in the applicant's country of origin does not recognise or permit a change of gender;

6.7 In the case of points (i) and (iii) above, a (British) passport may be issued and an observation placed in the passport saying:

"The holder has a [country] passport, number [ ] issued on [date] in the name of [ ]. This passport is due to expire on [date]."

6.8 Consideration should be given to issuing a restricted validity passport on point (iii). This should be done in conjunction with the Operational Delivery Standards and Guidance Team who will consult with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

6.9 In the case of (iii), the requirement to travel to the country of origin in order to change the name of the local passport is a matter for the applicant for a British passport. Country-by-



country information on dual nationality is available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk), although this is not comprehensive. Applicants should contact their own embassy or high commission or use the website provided by individual countries.

6.10 In the case of (iv), the details of any previous passport held should not be disclosed unless it relates to the same gender as the passport to be issued. The applicant will be required to provide the same level of supporting documentation.

6.13 The British passport will not routinely contain an observation of other passports held by a dual national unless by exception (see paragraph 6 above) it is in a different name. It is a matter for the passport applicant to raise at the point of application whether providing details of existing or previous overseas passports causes any particular concern.

6.14 However, HM Passport Office retains the right to use the passport observation page to include any information considered relevant to assist in the identity of the passport holder.

## **7 Married persons / civil partners choice of surname**

7.1 Change of name following marriage or civil partnership is a tradition but not a legal requirement. A couple can choose to retain their own birth surnames (or legal surnames at the time of the ceremony); or create a new name by hyphenating or “double-barrelling” their surnames.

7.2 The marriage certificate is evidence of the event and who participated in it. It provides supporting evidence of request for either party to change their name provided the names being used are contained on the marriage certificate.

7.3 For Dual citizens, provided the name requested on the UK passport application matches exactly the name on any foreign passport, whether valid or expired, the UK passport may be issued in the surname used prior to marriage.

7.4 Other than dual citizens, where a married person or civil partner, wishes to apply for a passport in their married/partners name but wishes to continue to use their birth surname or legal surname prior to the marriage/partnership, the passport observation page should be endorsed:

“The holder is also known as [birth or legal surname]”

7.5 Other than dual citizens where a married person or civil partner indicates that they use both their spouse’s/partners surname and their birth name or legal name at the time of marriage/partnership, the passport observation page should be endorsed:

“The holder is also known as [surname not used on the biographical page]”

7.6 As with all requirements under this guidance, it is for the applicant to provide the necessary level of supporting documentation to obtain an observation in the passport.

7.7 It is important to note the difference in approach to dual citizens who have married and have access to multiple passports. Alignment of passports and use of one name for all official purpose principle is to minimise the risk of multiple names being used and persons having the ability to travel across borders in different identities.

## **8 Failure to disclose a foreign passport**



8.1 The United Kingdom places no restrictions on the ability of a British citizen to hold dual nationality. The passport application gathers information about other passports held for security purposes alone and it does not provide dual citizenship information to the country of origin. Therefore, disclosure of an existing passport or ability to apply for a passport issued by another country is necessary and relevant to the UK passport application and issuing process.

8.2 Being in possession of an existing passport or the ability to obtain a passport from another country is part of the decision making process in considering an application for a British passport. It is an important element of the identity confirmation process.

8.3 Failure to disclose this information during the application process is a criminal offence and may render the applicant subject to criminal prosecution. HMPO will consider whether the matter should be referred for criminal investigation and whether the existing passport should be withdrawn. A withdrawal of the passport would be on the grounds of:

“Passport number [ ] issued to you on [ ] has been withdrawn as you indicated on the passport application form that you have not been included in any sort of passport before. It has come to our attention that you were issued with a passport by [country] on [date].

It is open to you to make a new application for a British passport and this will be considered in the light of all the information available at the time of the application. Any application will need to be accompanied by the appropriate passport fee.”

## **9 One Name**

9.1 Where an applicant has just one name either on their birth certificate or by change of name deed, this should be shown in the surname field with ‘XXX’ shown in the forename field.

## **10 Welsh names**

10.1 Where an applicant wishes to have the ‘ap surname’ (son of) shown as part of their surname on their passport, this should be shown in the surname field provided this is shown on the birth certificate. This is not a common practise and it could be used either in English or Welsh names.

## **11 Irish and Gaelic names**

11.1 Irish and Gaelic forenames will often be different when translated into English. We issue as set out in the birth certificate unless documentary evidence of the change of name has been provided.

11.2 Alternatively, we can issue as the birth certificate with an observation when we know the reason for the difference is because an applicant wishes to have their passport in the translated version of their birth name. For example, Irish BC shows Sean Donnelly and the applicant wishes to have the passport in the name John Donnelly, which is the English translation.

## **12 The prefix/suffix (Jr)**

12.1 If an applicant wishes to have Junior on their passport, this should be shown on the surname field, provided this is shown on the birth certificate. Birth certificates would normally display Junior after the surname.

## **13 Stage, professional and religious names**

13.1 Entertainers may travel in their stage or professional name and also those in religious orders who are known for all purposes by their title. A stage or religious name may be included as an observation:

"The Holder is also known as [ ]"

13.2 It is for the applicant to provide the necessary level of supporting documentation to obtain an observation in the passport.

## **14 Refusal of applications where identity security requirements are not met**

14.1 The security of the passport remains paramount. The guidance sets out above specific areas where a passport may be refused or withdrawn. There is an overriding ground for refusal whereby an applicant has failed to satisfy the identity requirements set out in the Royal Prerogative. Where the standards have not been met, a passport may be refused on the grounds that:

"The passport application submitted by you on [ ] does not meet the required standards to issue a passport. You have failed to provide satisfactory evidence to confirm your identity and accordingly, your application is refused.

[A short explanation of the grounds for refusal will be provided on each individual case.]"

14.2 Cases of suspected fraud will be considered as appropriate in conjunction with the police and other law enforcement agencies.