

## Can I choose any name I want?

In general, you can choose any name you want for your company, but there are several regulations that can affect your choice. For example, a company name must end with the words 'Limited', 'Public Limited Company', or 'Limited Liability Partnership' or the appropriate abbreviations LTD, PLC, LLP or Welsh equivalents. Companies limited by guarantee may apply for exemption from using the word Limited.

## Could my choice of name be rejected?

We will always check your name before submitting any application to the Registrar and you can check your choice of name before submitting to us as part of our application process.

A name cannot be used if:

- it is the same as a name already on the index
- it includes the words limited, unlimited, public limited company anywhere except at the end of the name. This applies equally to abbreviations or the Welsh equivalent of the words
- it is offensive
- its use would be a criminal offence

In addition, some names need the approval of the Secretary of State before they can be registered. These include names that contain words prescribed by regulations (see Sensitive Names) and names that suggest a connection with central or local government. If these categories are avoided, you can normally have your choice of name.

## What does 'the same as' mean?

When deciding whether a name is "the same as" another name on the register, the Registrar ignores punctuation, the company's status (unless dissolved), and certain words, symbols or expressions. The following page below explains what is meant by "same as".

## The following are considered the 'same as' when applying to incorporate a new company:

- The words  
    'and company'                      '& company'                      'and co'                      '& co'
- Words and expressions such as  
    biz                      co                      co uk                      com  
    company                      EU                      exports                      group  
    holdings                      imports                      NI                      Northern Ireland  
    UK                      United Kingdom                      Wales                      Cymru  
    net                      GB                      Great Britain                      org  
    org uk                      org.uk                      services                      international  
    and various Welsh language equivalents

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## The following are ignored when considering similarity between names:

- A blank space between or after a word, expression, character, sign or symbol
- Punctuation including a full stop, comma, colon, semi colon, hyphen, apostrophe, bracket, exclamation mark, question mark
- Permitted characters \* = # % + if they are used as one of the first three characters in a name
- 's' at the end of a name
- 'the' and 'www' at the beginning of a name
- any but the first 60 characters in a name

For example, if the name Hands Limited is already registered, then the following would be rejected:

- Hands Public Limited Company (or PLC)
- H and S Limited (or Ltd)
- H and S Public Limited Company (or PLC)
- H & S Limited (or Ltd)
- any of the above, with the addition of Company, Co, & Company, & Co, and Company, and Co

While a company name may be sufficiently different from a name already on the Index to allow it to be registered, this might not be enough to avoid the two names being considered too similar to each other if an objection is lodged after the second company has been incorporated. In such cases, your company could be directed to change its name.

You should be aware that if you adopt a name that misleads the public into believing that your business is or could be that of another business you could face legal action for 'passing off' by the person whose business you have affected. Also where you knowingly or unwittingly infringe a registered Trademark, you could be instructed to change your company name. Registration of a name by Companies House is no guarantee that you are safe from such an action.

## Exceptions to "same as" rules

Where two or more companies are in the same group, they may have names that differ only by certain specified words and expressions (such as biz, co, co uk, co.uk, com, company, UK, United Kingdom, Wales, Cymru, net, GB, Great Britain, org.uk, services, international). This is permitted only where a the member of the group whose name is already on the Registrar's Index of company names gives its consent to the other company adopting the name that differs from its own in this way. The application for the proposed name must include a copy of a statement in which the existing company consents to the other company adopting the proposed name and confirms it will be part of the same group.