

# Name or shame?

## WHAT TO CALL BABY...

PONDERING WHAT TO CALL YOUR PRECIOUS NEWBORN? **SCARLETT BRADY** AND **KAREN GLASER** ARE ON HAND TO HELP

Whatever name you choose for your child, let's face it, it's probably going to say as much about you as them for the foreseeable. As parents, we pick names that resonate with us and we keep our fingers crossed that our little treasures will not only grow into them, but also learn to love our choices. Our parents mostly opted for the familiar and the unexceptional, but in today's global village many of us are looking for something with a bit more 'stand-out'. And as the number of baby-naming books illustrates, the possibilities are thrillingly endless. But remember, while picking names is fun, your offspring will often ask you to justify your choice, so you might like to consider the following before making a final decision.



Little Livia investigates what else Mummy might have called her

### BEWARE CELEBRITY FADS

Be wary of celebrity names with their inbuilt shelf life. If you must emulate a celeb, at least try and pick one who isn't likely to end up as tabloid fodder of the year. Seriously, who wants to be a Ryan, a Cameron or a Jordan in 2011? For the hero-obsessed it's a much safer bet to opt for a dead, or better still, a fictional one instead. Popular choices include Benjamin or Jessica (as in Rabbit), Holly (Golightly) or Angelina (Ballerina). You may be Dizzee or Beyoncé's number one fan, but chances are 20 years down the line, your child won't be, so it's a 'not really' to those. Celebrities influence

### BABY'S FIRST CALLING CARD

One compelling reason to get your child's name right is because it's destined to appear on their business card. Are all the Buddy Bears out there going to feel comfy at reception or in the boardroom, and are the next generation of Harper Sevens going to be happy anywhere other than a space station? Fast forward a couple of decades and imagine their name through the eyes of a prospective employer. How many Fifi Trixibelle's or Heavenly Hiraani's do you know where you work? Consider their school days, too: will a Lark Song (Mia Farrow's daughter) be taken as

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us all, but needless to say, they don't always get it right (yes, Nicole Richie, mum to Sparrow, we mean you). But who's laughing at Lourdes, Rocco, Shiloh or Knox now? Indeed names that once sounded pretty wacky are potential playground favourites of the future.

Of course the rich and famous have always had a tendency to give their babies unconventional names. The fruit brigade, headed by one Peaches Geldof, is a case in point. Gwyneth Paltrow gave birth to an Apple – apparently because the fruit is sweet and wholesome, plus the actress liked its biblical connotations. Geri Halliwell also took inspiration from the orchard and named her daughter Bluebell after admiring the spring flowers during her pregnancy. 'But what really clinched it was my mother telling me that the bluebell is increasingly rare, so it's a precious flower, which seems just right for my daughter,' said the singer. Others name their children in their own image. Coco Arquette's moniker comes from the first two letters of mum COurteney COX's first name and surname. So, no, nothing to do with Coco Chanel – or a hot beverage.

seriously as a Lara? And are you risking playground bullying with a Satchel – Spike Lee, what were you thinking?

### ESTABLISHED CHOICES

For every flamboyant name designed to jump the queue at an *X Factor* audition, there's an equal amount guaranteed to open more gentrified doors. When the Middletons chose to name their first-born Catherine Elizabeth could they have picked anything more appealing to the British establishment? Can't imagine William having had much luck introducing a Chantelle or a Chardonnay at the Palace can you? And as for Chelsy – well, even Harry couldn't pull that one off. Time-honoured names (like George, Thomas, Emily or Sophie) can always be reworked for a new generation. Think Lulu for

◆ Researching the meaning of your chosen name can save lots of recrimination and embarrassment in years to come. Did you know, for example that: Calvin means 'little bald one'; Obama, 'crooked'; Cecily, 'blind' and Leah, 'weary'? There are ethnic and cultural reasons for doing your homework, too. We have, for example, a black colleague who cannot for the life of her understand why she was given the name Bianca.

◆ Think carefully before opting for the truly original. You may not want a common-or-garden name for your little one, but that doesn't mean you need give one that is totally 'out there' either. Pharaoh, Crabby, Montayah, Nibbler, Jyqueel and Malteser are just a handful of the monikers the nation's parents chose for their new arrivals last year. Question: how will Wotsit feel when he announces himself at a check-in desk or is called for over a Tannoy?

◆ For the hottest baby-naming site, head to [nameberry.com](http://nameberry.com). It's a wonder of inspiring possibilities, although it's worth remembering that every other mum is probably checking it out too – which is fine, as long as you don't mind your child's name being in a top fifty list by 2015.

### Novel thoughts

Be careful about ascribing either physical or personal attributes to your children before you know whether they possess them. Grace and Bella are increasingly popular names, but their owners have a lot to live up to. As do Angel, Dolly and Princess. Knowing how awful this can be for youngsters, the brilliant children's novelist Jacqueline Wilson writes about the phenomenon in her book *Cookie*: Beauty Cookson is plain and timid and all the super-confident girls at school think her name is ridiculous and tease her horribly...

Louise, Alfie for Alfred, Trix for Beatrice or Ace for Alastair. There is a good reason why traditional names have stood the test of time: solid and serious, they are the exact opposite of fashionable and frivolous. We know one mum who fell in love with Matilda and Charlotte, but neither name appeared on her husband's top ten. The result? She got her way on the birth certificates, but her twin girls are known as Tilly and Lottie because that was the only way to win over dad's objections. Now there's a happy compromise. That said, don't go crazy with the spelling. You might think Sharlot looks dynamic on the page, but you are sentencing her to a lifetime of: 'that's spelt s-h-a... For which Sharlot will not thank you one bit. Take it from Caryn and Karren.

### DO SPELL IT OUT

While we're on the subject of spelling, always write out the initials of your child's full name to make sure they don't spell something unfortunate. You may, for example, have fallen deeply in love with the names Benedict and Oliver, but if your surname is Gardner you'll have to go back to the drawing board: no one wants the nickname 'BOG'. We know a mum who didn't take this crucial spelling test and whose daughter's initials spell 'OMG'. Quite.

### CLAIRE WHO?

Beware of some naming trends. If your name is Melanie, Susan or Tracy, you'll have met your namesake hundreds of times over: they were Britain's most popular baby names back in the Seventies. Today's on-trend equivalents include Olivia, Ruby and Lily for her, and Jack, James and Thomas for him. But however much you like the sound of the name, will your daughter thank you for being one of the eight Chloes in her class? Check with yesterday's Claire first.

### FINAL THOUGHT

For a truly personalised name that resonates with you and your partner you could do a lot worse than start a game of word association inspired by your favourite things: colour? Grey, Blue, Violet; word? Love, Hope, True; Tree? Willow, Blossom, Oak; Heroine? Brontë, Guinevere, Bonnie... you can see where we're going with this. Good luck!

## Coming to a playground near you?

◆ Lola, Lyra, Landon, Lenore, Lennon and Logan – the most fashionable consonant right now is 'L'. And as for vowels, nothing beats 'O' – just ask Oliver, Olivia, Otto, Oscar, Ophelia, and the little Irish lad, Oisín (pronounced Oo-sheen).

◆ There are lots of name trends afoot. One of the biggest is the descent of so-called 'Twilight' names such as Cullen, Carlisle, Carmen, Dante, Emmett,

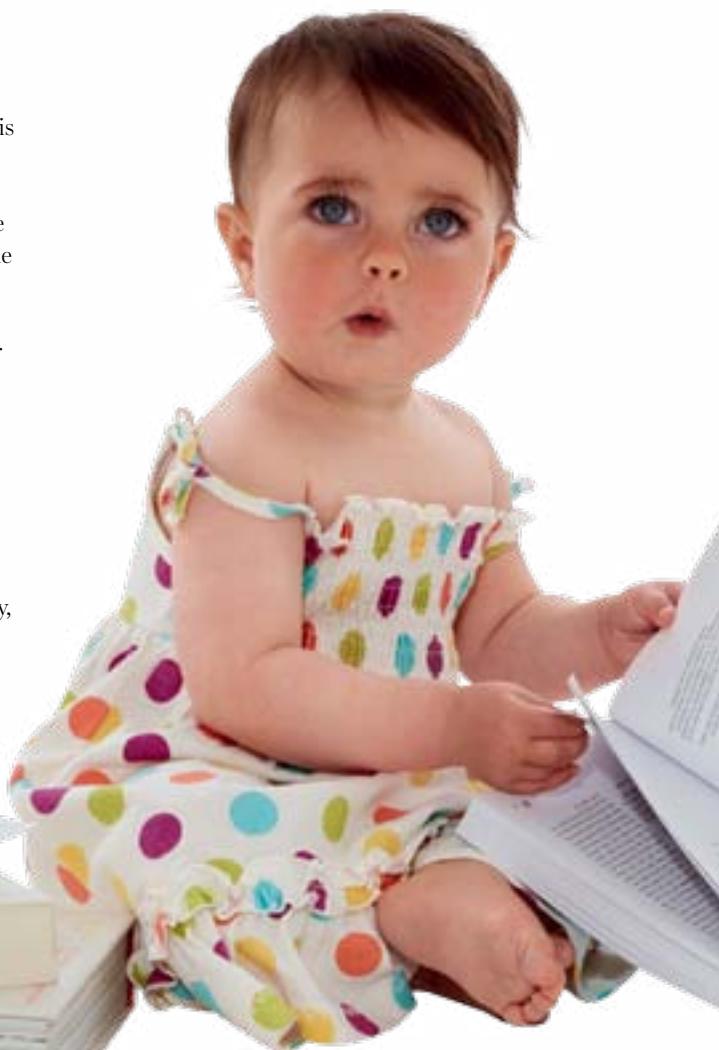
Edward, Garrett and Luna – inspired by the plethora of vampire books currently enjoying huge popularity.

◆ Equally hot is the unisex surname-turned-first-name phenomenon: Bailey, Fraser, Lennox, Mackenzie and Peyton. Using surnames as Christian names is big in many cultures, but it's a relatively new trend in the UK. It's easy to see the appeal: back in the day all the coolest boys in class

went by their surnames – and what's not to love about a little Smith or Riley? And it's not just boys who are getting in on the act: trendy surnames for girls include Ripley, Blake, Hayden and Madison.

◆ Noticed how many little boys called Arthur, Harvey and Stanley are suddenly running around? With sisters called Edith, Florence and Martha? Their parents are part of the retro name-trend.

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### Still struggling?

**VISIT:** [gurgle.com](http://gurgle.com) where you'll find over 18,000 names to inspire you or use the Random Search Baby Namer if you really can't make up your mind.

**BROWSE:** *10,000 baby names* by Holly Ivins, £5.99; *Baby Names 2012* by Eleanor Turner, £6.99.. [whiteladderpress.co.uk](http://whiteladderpress.co.uk)

**HAVE FUN:** Try the Kick to Pick app, that allows your unborn baby to choose its own name. No, really!

