



FREE HANDBOOK · OCTOBER 2026

Name Your Business

A plain-English method for finding a name people remember, that you can own, and that fits the business you really run. With free checks, a worksheet and the mistakes to skip.

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40 years in brand building and retail
sparkmyname.com · Free to read, print and share

What's inside

Most people name a business in one of two ways: they fall in love with the first clever idea, or they stall for weeks. This handbook sits in between. Follow it in order and you can have a name you trust, checked, in an afternoon.

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A note on honesty. This is general information, not legal advice. Rules differ by country and state, and they change. For a name you will spend real money on, a trademark attorney is worth the fee. Every fee in this handbook was checked on the official site in October 2026.

Write the one-sentence brief

Before you brainstorm a single word, write one sentence about the business. It is the yardstick for every name you will consider.

Use this shape: **who it serves, what it does, and how it should feel.**

"A mobile dog-grooming van for busy families in Tampa, warm and dependable."

"Small-batch soy candles sold on Etsy to people who love calm, natural homes."

"Bookkeeping for food trucks and small restaurants, clear and no-nonsense."

Notice what the sentence does. "Warm and dependable" rules out a jokey pun. "Calm, natural homes" points toward soft, earthy words. "Clear and no-nonsense" rules out anything cute. Half the naming work is done before you start, because you now know what to throw away.

Three questions that sharpen the brief

1. **Who is the one customer you most want?** Not "everyone". The name should feel right to that person.
2. **What price do you charge, compared with others?** A budget name and a premium name sound different. Match the name to the price.
3. **Where could this be in five years?** If you might add products, places or services, the name needs room.

The three jobs every name has

Most weak names fail because they only do one of these jobs. Clever is optional. These three are not.

1. Sayable

A stranger hears it once, over the phone or across a noisy room, and can type it into a search bar. If you have to spell it out, word of mouth breaks. Most new businesses grow on word of mouth.

2. Ownable

You can actually hold it: the .com (or your country's main ending) is available or affordable, the social handles are free, and no one in your field already uses it or holds a trademark on it. A name you cannot own is a name someone else can take away.

3. True

It sounds like the business you really run, at the price you really charge, for the customer you really want. A luxury name on a budget service confuses people. So does a playful name on a serious service.

Quick score: rate each name 1 to 3 on each job. Anything under 7 out of 9 goes. Anything with a 1 anywhere goes, however much you like it.

Five patterns behind most good names

Across the 100-plus industry naming guides on sparkmyname.com, the same five patterns keep producing the strongest names. You need the one that fits your brief, not all five.

1. Descriptive with a twist

Say what you do, then add one word with feeling. *Gentle Paws Grooming*. *True Line Construction*. *Steady Books*. Easy to search and easy to trust. On its own a plain description is hard to protect, so the twist word matters.

2. Founder or family

Your surname plus the trade. *Halvorsen Heating & Air*. *Rivera Family Bakery*. Feels established and personal. Less good if you plan to sell the business one day, or if your surname is hard to spell.

3. Place and landmark

A ridge, river, street or local nickname. *Riverbend Hall*. *North Fork HVAC*. *Banyan Street Coffee*. Strong for local search and local pride. It can hold you back if you expand far beyond that place.

4. One vivid image

One concrete thing that carries the feeling. *Paper Lantern*. *Ironwood Builders*. *Saltwater Supply*. The most memorable pattern and the easiest to build a logo around, as long as the image fits the business.

5. Coined or blended

A made-up or fused word. *Groomly*. *Haulwell*. *Lumaro*. Usually the easiest to own and to get a .com for. The risk: it can sound like a phone app when you didn't want that, and it needs more marketing to mean something.

Example names in this handbook are illustrations, not cleared names. Some may already be in use. Always run your own checks (Chapter 6).

The afternoon method: from 20 words to 5 names

Set a timer for each step. Speed stops you falling in love too early.

1. **Write the brief** (Chapter 1). 5 minutes.
2. **Build a word bank of 20 words** the business owns: materials, tools, feelings, places, results, the customer's own words. For the candle shop: wick, ember, linen, hearth, moss, dusk, soy, quiet, glow, cedar, pour, flicker, haven, slow, amber, still, nook, lantern, bloom, ash. 15 minutes.
3. **Make 30 candidates without judging.** Combine word-bank words, try each of the five patterns, add a twist word. Quantity first. 30 minutes.
4. **Say every one out loud**, as if answering the phone: "Good morning, Ember & Moss." Cross out anything you stumbled on. 10 minutes.
5. **Cut hard.** Cut any name that names one product you will outgrow. Cut any name that sounds like a big brand or a direct competitor. Cut any name with numbers, hyphens or odd spellings. 15 minutes.
6. **Score the rest** on the three jobs (Chapter 2). Keep the top five or six. 10 minutes.

Stuck at step 3? Write the brief as a single sentence into Spark's free name generator at sparkmyname.com/name-generator.html. It gives three starting points with the .com already checked. Use them as sparks, not answers.

CHAPTER 5

Six quick tests before you check anything

These cost nothing and take minutes. Do them on your shortlist before the formal checks.

Test	How to do it	It fails if...
Phone test	Call a friend, say the name once, ask them to text it back to you.	They spell it wrong.
Noisy room test	Say it across a room with music on.	They ask "what?" twice.
First picture test	Ask three people what kind of business they imagine.	None of them guess close.
Price test	Ask: cheap, middle or expensive?	The answer doesn't match your prices.
Small size test	Type it in small print, like on a phone screen or a shipping label.	It is hard to read, or too long to fit.
Five-year test	Imagine your biggest realistic growth.	The name no longer fits.

Ask people who are like your customers when you can. Friends are kind. Strangers are honest.

Five free checks: is the name taken?

Do them in this order, cheapest and fastest first. Ten minutes per name catches most problems while changing course still costs nothing.

1. Search Google and Maps

Search the name in quotes, then the name plus your city and your trade. Check Google Maps. If a business nearby already uses it, or a big brand owns it, keep looking. Customers mixing you up is exactly what trademark law cares about.

2. Check the domain

Type the .com into any domain company's search, or use Spark's free name check at sparkmyname.com/name-check.html, which checks the .com live. Many people type .com by habit.

3. Search the business registry

In the U.S., every state has a free business name search, usually from the Secretary of State. It shows whether an LLC or corporation with the same or nearly the same name already exists in that state.

4. Search trademarks

In the U.S., use the free USPTO trademark search at uspto.gov. Look beyond exact matches. Names that sound alike, look alike or mean the same can clash when they sell similar things. A clash in an unrelated field (a bakery and a software company) is usually less of a problem.

5. Check social handles

Look for the name on the platforms you will really use: Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, X, LinkedIn. Same handle everywhere, or close to it, is the goal.

Outside the U.S. The same five checks work everywhere; only the registries change. United Kingdom: Companies House name checker and the UK trade mark search. Canada: NUANS name search. Philippines: DTI's business name system. European Union: TMview. Anywhere: the WIPO Global Brand Database searches trademarks from many countries at once.

A free search is a first look, not legal clearance. Before you spend real money on a name, ask a trademark attorney for a full search.

When the .com is taken

A taken .com is a real reason to keep looking, but not always a reason to give up a name you love. Here is how to decide.

First, see who has it

Visit the address. If a live business in your field uses it, move on: you would be sending them customers. If it is parked, for sale or empty, the name may still be usable, but the domain will cost more and some customers will land on the wrong page.

Then try a short add-on

- **Add what you do:** embermoss.com taken → embermosscandles.com
- **Add your place:** northforkhvac.com → northforkhvactampa.com
- **Add a friendly verb:** get, try, shop, hello (gethaulwell.com). Fine for apps and online shops; weaker for local trades.

Avoid these fixes

- **Hyphens** (ember-moss.com): people forget them and land on the other site.
- **Swapped spellings** (embermos.com): every spoken mention sends traffic elsewhere.
- **An unusual ending** when the .com belongs to a business like yours: people will still type .com.

Your country's own ending (.co.uk, .ca, .com.au, .ph) is a sound choice if you only sell at home.

Mistakes that cost real money later

Each of these looks harmless on day one and gets expensive once the name is on signs, labels, a van and a website.

- **Initials.** “JMK Services” can’t be searched, remembered or easily protected, and it tells no one what you do.
- **The pun everyone else made.** If the joke came to you in ten seconds, it came to a thousand other founders. Search before you fall in love.
- **A place you will leave.** “Austin” in the name is a gift until the second location is in San Antonio.
- **Borrowed fame.** Anything that echoes a famous brand invites confusion and, sooner or later, a lawyer’s letter.
- **One product in the name.** “Cupcake Corner” struggles when you start selling cakes and cookies.
- **Buying the domain last.** It is the cheapest check and the one people skip. Buy it before you print anything.
- **Choosing alone.** Your own ear gets used to a name in a day. Run the tests in Chapter 5 with real people.
- **Waiting for perfect.** A good, ownable name used well beats a perfect name chosen six months late.

Naming a side hustle you may grow

Millions of people now earn extra money on the side, selling online, offering services or freelancing. A side hustle name has one extra job: it must work small today and still fit if it grows.

- **Pick a name, not just your own name, if you might grow.** “Maria Lopez Design” is fine for freelancing; “Juniper Studio” is easier to grow into a team or sell later.
- **Check the platform rules.** Etsy shop names, for example, must be 4 to 20 characters with no spaces. Your shop name on a platform may need to be shorter than your full business name.
- **Keep your day job out of it.** Avoid names that echo your employer or its clients.
- **Grab the handles early,** even before you launch. They are free and first-come.
- **A tagline can carry the detail.** “Willow & Wick — small-batch candles” says what you sell while the name stays free to grow.

For the numbers behind the side-hustle boom, by country and with sources, see sparkmyname.com/side-hustle-statistics.html.

After you choose: what to lock in, in order

Once a name passes the tests and checks, lock it in quickly. Cheapest and fastest first.

1. **Register the domain** the same day. Usually the cost of a lunch for a year.
2. **Claim the social handles** on every platform you might use, even ones you won't start on yet. Free.
3. **Register the business.** In the U.S., that is forming an LLC or corporation with your state, or filing a DBA ("doing business as") name with your state or county if you trade under a name that isn't your own. Fees vary by state. The U.S. Small Business Administration ([sba.gov](https://www.sba.gov)) explains the options.
4. **Think about a trademark** once the name is earning or you are about to spend real money on it. In the U.S., the USPTO's base filing fee is \$350 per class of goods or services (checked October 2026). Other countries have their own offices and fees. An attorney can tell you whether it is worth it for you.
5. **Make it look like a real brand:** a logo, two or three colors, and one font, used the same way everywhere.

Remember: registering a business name with your state does not give you trademark rights, and owning a domain does not either. Each one does a different job. Chapter 11 explains the words.

Words you will hear, in plain English

Word	What it means
Domain	Your web address, like yourname.com. You rent it by the year from a domain company.
Handle	Your @name on a social platform. First-come, free, and not proof of ownership.
LLC	Limited liability company, a common U.S. business structure filed with a state.
DBA	"Doing business as": a registered trading name that differs from your legal or company name.
Trademark	A legal right in a name, logo or slogan used to sell goods or services. It can stop others in your field from using something confusingly close.
Class	A category of goods or services used in trademark filings. Fees are usually per class.
Likelihood of confusion	The main test for a trademark clash: would customers think two businesses are connected?
Wordmark	A logo made of the name itself in a set font, with no symbol.
Brand identity	The full look: logo, colors, fonts and the way you write, used the same everywhere.
™ and ®	™ can be used to claim a mark you use. ® may only be used once a mark is federally registered.

More plain-English branding words: sparkmyname.com/branding-glossary.html

CHAPTER 12

Your worksheet

Print this page, or copy it into a notebook.

My one-sentence brief

My word bank (20 words)

My shortlist and checks

Name	Score /9	Google	.com	Registry	Trademark	Handles

My chosen name

A fillable version is free online: sparkmyname.com/name-your-business-worksheet.html

KEEP GOING

Free help, whenever you need it

Everything below is free on sparkmyname.com, with no sign-up.

Free tool or guide	What it does
Name check	Checks whether the .com for a name is available, live. sparkmyname.com/name-check.html
Name generator	Turns your one-sentence brief into three starting names with the .com checked. sparkmyname.com/name-generator.html
Naming guides by industry	More than 100 guides, from coffee shops to cleaning businesses, with patterns, example names and mistakes. sparkmyname.com/guides.html
How to check if a name is taken	Chapter 6 in more detail, with links for other countries. sparkmyname.com/how-to-check-if-a-business-name-is-taken.html
Free business tools	Business card, color palette, QR menu, review QR code and email signature makers. sparkmyname.com/free-business-tools.html
Branding words	25 branding words explained simply. sparkmyname.com/branding-glossary.html

Want it done for you?

Tell SparkMyName™ your idea in one sentence and get 6 complete brands to choose from: name, live .com check, logo, colors and brand photo. Founding price \$39 one time for the first 100 customers · regular price \$49 · one payment, no subscription (prices as of October 2026).

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