

NAME VS. NAME

.....

THE TRUTH IN NAMING SERIES
VOLUME 2

.....

BY CAITLIN BARRETT

DOUBLEBIT

**SOME KINDS
OF NAMES
HELP PEOPLE
UNDERSTAND...**



Sword School

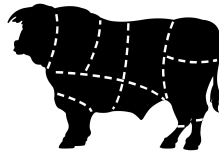
*Local
business
listings*



Basic Buckets



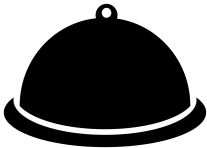
**Calls, Calls, Calls
Call Center**



**Beefly Beef
Butchery**



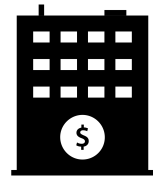
**Robot-Arm
Foundry**



**Food Hiding
Solutions, Inc**



The Small Saloon



**Money Stashing
Headquarters**

**SOME TELL
STORIES THAT
GET STUCK IN
YOUR HEAD...**



**Pointy-End
Academy**

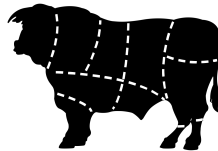
*Local
business
listings*



**The Carriage
House**



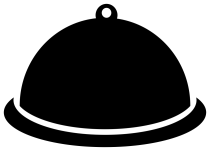
**The Determined
Ones**



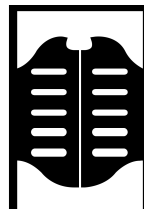
Dotted Lines



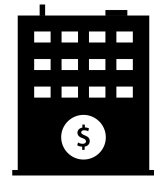
Flex Futures



Silver Bells



Tumbleweed's



Figleaf Financial

**AND OTHERS
GET STRONGER
OVER TIME...**



Stish

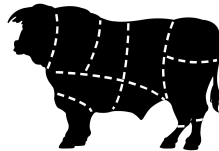
*Local
business
listings*



'Lectrix



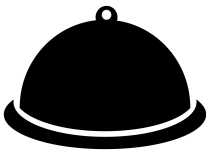
Peels



Saddlestitch



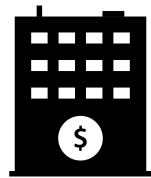
Quinkly



Fin



The Butcher
Shop



Akua Solutions

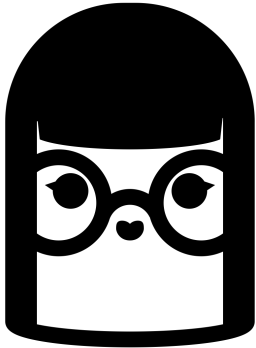
**LET'S MAKE
THEM FIGHT!**

That's right. Fight.

We're pitting different types of names against each other to understand who wins, who loses, and who might get you to the same place—with a different move.

Ready? Let's meet our name styles...

DESCRIPTIVE NAMES



A.K.A.

The Beige Boy of Naming

The Hall to your Oates

The White Noise

The Teller of Like It Is

The First Name

Origin story

Humans have been naming descriptively for as long as they could make words: Hot, Burn-y Stuff That Makes Meat Not Raw; Outer Layer of Bear That Doubles as a Throw Blanket, Goat (come on, they basically say their name).

Strengths

Clarity

Specificity

Not necessary to
register trademark to
use

Weaknesses

Tough to protect

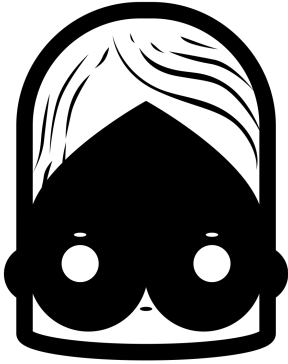
Not that distinctive

Legally speaking

According to the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), a descriptive name describes the thing on which the mark (the name) is used. No trademarks are given for descriptive marks, so while you're free to use your descriptive name, other brands can probably use it too.

Descriptive names can acquire some distinctiveness over time, but it's hard and there are no guarantees, so if you want to own your name, you might want to think about...

SUGGESTIVE NAMES



A.K.A.

The Yarn Spinner

The Cherry on Top

The Character Actor

The Popular Table

Naming's BFF

Origin story

Likely began in 1905 when American apple farmers ran out of descriptive things to call their apples, changing the naming convention from names like “June-Eating” and “Red Delicious” to “Jazz” and “Cameo.”

Strengths

Taps into emotions

Tells a story

Can cover a broad set of characteristics

Trademarkable

Weaknesses

Not instantly understood

Tough to find (good) available trademarks in most classes

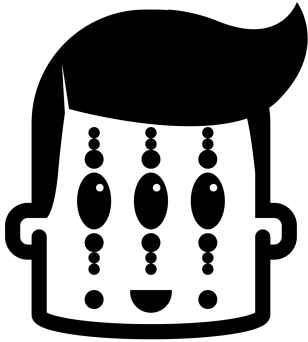
Legally speaking

Suggestive names are marks that *suggest* something about the thing you're naming. They're not as strong as abstract names, but they're a popular style of name because they let you tell a story that people can connect to your product or service, right away.

This is where the art and science of trademark law can come into play: The line between descriptive and suggestive names isn't always totally clear, and you need to craft a really, really good one to land one you can own with confidence..

Or if protecting your name is a top priority...

**ABSTRACT
NAMES**



A.K.A.

The Surrealist

The Art School Kid

The Book You've Always Meant
to Read

The Collector's Item

Origin story

Those of us who know the origins of the abstract name are sworn not to tell it, but be assured it is as horrifying and as beautiful as your mind is capable of grasping.

Strengths

More protectable as
trademarks

More distinctive as
names

Yours to fill with
meaning

Weaknesses

Requires time and
investment to fill
with meaning

Legally speaking

An abstract mark (the USPTO uses the terms “arbitrary” and “fanciful,” but we’ll fold them both into one category for this discussion) relies on the name you choose having ABSOLUTELY NOTHING to do with the actual thing you’re naming.

These names, especially ones you invent for the sole purpose of naming your thing, are easier to protect. But it takes time for their meaning to become clear to everyone.

SCENARIO 1:
A hat

The details:

You need to name a hat. It's a good hat. The stitches are strong and even, it looks nice when worn forward and backward, and it can be taken off easily.

The realities:

You have other products that you sell and you refer to descriptively: A sweater, a shirt, a scarf.

Your budget is limited, and you really just want to make it clear that you're selling a hat now. A really good hat.

Descriptive naming wins!

You called it “Really Good Hat.” Sure, other businesses can design and sell a hat that they feel is really good, and they’re free to call it a really good hat. But you’re not worried about that. Your customers are just happy to learn that you’re carrying a hat (a really good one!).

SCENARIO 2:
A hoverboard
(a real one)

The details:

Hoverboards—ones that actually hover—are a fact and YOU invented them! You want to launch yours with a brand name that defines the market, and establishes you as a leader.

The realities:

Every venture capital firm in the big city invested, so your marketing budget is solid. You're looking to capitalize on the fact that people know about what hoverboards are (thanks, popular culture!), and convey something about the experience of riding one.

Suggestive naming wins!

You called it Aircoast Hovering Boards. Some of us have been waiting our whole lives for these things, and the promise of coasting on air is the thing we crave the most.

You were smart to add a descriptor of “hovering boards” to your name, which borrows from known terminology. When you’re introducing a new category, you often put yourself at risk of genericide. (Remember Rollerblades? Yeah, you do. They should have doubled down on that “in-line skates” descriptor.)

SCENARIO 3:
Teleportation
technology

The details:

NYC to LAX in the blink of an eye: Yep, you've created a matter transporter that doesn't kill people. Every travel brand on the planet wants what you've got.

The realities:

You are the single-best funded start-up in history. Your main objective? Taking something that had been *questionably* possible in the most theoretical sense, and turning into an everyday part of life. Basically, this is uncharted territory, and it's up to you to chart it your way.

Abstract naming wins!

You called it Azel. Oh, it's a reference to an X-Men character called Azazel who could teleport? I mean, that makes sense, but since there's no direct meaning to the technology, it's your story to shape however you see fit. You're sticking with the X-Men story? I see. Well, it's your life's work.

Note: You could have also won with a suggestive name that anchored itself in a familiar term like “tele-” or “trans-” or “-port,” Verseport or Porteles or Transpace...but, you know, the X-Men thing is still...good.

**UNTIL NEXT
TIME, FIGHT THE
GOOD FIGHT...**

**BECAUSE THE
RIGHT NAME
ALWAYS WINS.**

About the author

Caitlin Barrett likes to do creative things. Strategically.



Caitlin Barrett is a writer, namer, and brand strategist based in Brooklyn. As a partner in Doublebit Narrative, she spends all day bossing words around.

In her spare time, she lifts heavy things, restores antique axes, and tells jokes to herself on Twitter @badnewsbarrett.

**For more in Truth in Naming,
go to doublebitnarrative.com**

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