

Although there is no law requiring a name change after marriage, the practice continues to be popular in the United States—and not only for women taking their husbands' last names. More and more men are taking their wives' last names, and in the case of same sex marriages, some couples are deciding that have a single surname is beneficial, especially when children are involved.

Changing your last name after marriage isn't difficult, but it does require some organizational skills and, paperwork, and government offices.

Below we have compiled some basic guidelines on how to change your name after marriage.

Obtain your Marriage License

You will need an original or certified marriage license to change your last name. These must be the version with your new last name and the raised seal.

Get a New Social Security Card

You can either visit your local Social Security Office or their website to fill out the application for a new Social Security Card with your new last name. Don't worry, your number won't be changing though.

Get a New Drivers License

You'll need to visit your local DMV to get a new license. Make sure you bring each form of identification you now have; You're old license, certified marriage license, and your new Social Security Card.

Update Your Bank Accounts

This step is quite important. The quickest way will be to go into your local branch with your new drivers and marriage licenses. You will want to make sure you also go ahead and request new checks along with your new bank cards. If you and your spouse have decide to set up a joint account, go ahead and do that now and save yourself a trip later on.

Once you have your new Drivers License and Social Security Card, other changes can be quite simple. Some may still require a copy of your Marriage License or Social Security Card, but others may only require a phone call. Keep in mind that any name change after marriage means you should also get your name changed on any and all official documents, including but not limited to, the following:

- Passport
- Bank and other financial/investment accounts
- Credit cards
- Mortgages/deeds/leases
- Insurance policies
- Utility bills
- Phone/cable bills
- Student loans
- School/work, including payroll and retirement plans
- Voter registration

- State tax authority (IRS is notified automatically through the SSA)
- Doctor/attorney
- Professional licensing boards/

Why do we change our Surnames after marriage...or...*DO* we?

Historically, a woman in England would assume her new husband's family name (or surname) after marriage, usually compelled to do so under coverture laws. This remains common practice in the United Kingdom today as well as in common law countries and countries where English is spoken, including Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Gibraltar, Falkland Islands, Ireland, India, Philippines, the English-speaking provinces of Canada and the United States

In the lowlands of Scotland in the 16th century, married women did not change their surnames, but today the practice of changing to the husband's family name is the norm.

A 2013 survey of 13,000 brides for the wedding website topknot.com found that the vast majority (80%) of females still choose to take their spouse's last name, although the numbers are falling as more retain their maiden name.

People who keep their own surname after marriage do so for many reasons; objection to inequality of the tradition for example. Some people are the last ones in the family with that surname. Others don't want to bother with the paperwork. Common reasons for maintaining their birth name may also include not wanting to lose their identity, preferring their last name to their spouse's last name, and professional consequences.

It is less common for women, especially in the U.S. and Canada, to combine their spouse's name with their own birth name. About 7% of American women hyphenate their name with their spouse's name upon marriage.

Although even less common than name joining, a growing trend is the blending or meshing of two surnames upon marriage. Meshing originally became popular in the US and has now caught on with couples in the U.K as well.

The practice of women keeping their birth name as a middle name after they marry has quietly taken hold in the U.S., where studies show that 90 to 95 percent of married women take their husbands' last names.

For many, the decision whether to keep or change their birth name is a difficult one. However, men encounter more difficulties in changing their last names. While it is still rare for men to change their names, and common for women to change theirs upon marriage, the trends are changing. In fact, a man's name change is not even considered part of his marriage. Rather, it is a name change, independent of the wedding that is occurring.

Many States require steps and fees for men to change their names. Very few states currently allow either partner to do a change a name under equal conditions when they marry. So, make sure you do your research, so you know what requirements and steps you have in your own state. Here's some information to help you along should you and/or your new spouse decide to change your name to make it as seamless a process as possible.