

LBCA Chartered Accountants

Choosing a Company Name

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Rules for naming your limited company or limited liability partnership (LLP)

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> Rules for naming your limited company or
limited liability partnership (LLP)*

Introduction

The name of your limited company or LLP must conform to certain regulations. If you choose a name that does not meet these requirements, you will not be able to use it.

This guide provides guidance on how to choose a name and gives examples of the controls which apply to prescribed and other sensitive words.

Choosing a name for a company or LLP

There are several rules to consider when choosing a name for your company or LLP.

You will need to check that it is not the 'same as' that of an existing company or LLP. A 'same as' name may not be identical to an existing company name, but if it is very similar it could cause confusion. For example, if a company called 'Smith Transport Services Limited' already exists, you could not register 'Smith Transport Services UK Limited', unless the two companies are part of the same group and other conditions are satisfied.

To check whether a company or LLP name is already registered, [use our interactive tool to search for an available company name and trade mark](#).

Required words

Limited companies and LLPs are required to include certain words in their names:

- private limited company names must end with 'Limited or 'Ltd'

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- private unlimited company names may end with 'unlimited' but are not required to do so
- public limited company names must end with 'public limited company' or 'plc', in capital or lower-case with or without full stops
- LLP names must end with 'limited liability partnership' or 'LLP'

The names of limited companies registered in Wales may end with the Welsh equivalent of 'Limited', 'public limited company' or their abbreviations.

When will Companies House refuse to register a company name?

Companies House will not register a name if:

- its use would constitute an offence or is offensive
- it implies a connection with central or local government, or with some public authorities
- it includes a 'sensitive' word or expression - see the page in this guide on [prescribed and sensitive words](#)
- it includes characters, signs, symbols and punctuation which are not permitted
- it is identical to, or the same as, another name appearing on the index of company names
- it uses any of the name endings 'limited', 'ltd', 'unlimited', 'public limited company' or 'plc' in a way that misleads or causes confusion

Objections to company names

Once the name of your company or LLP has been registered, there is usually no need to

change it. However, there are some exceptions. You may need to change your company or LLP name if:

- there is an objection, upheld by the Secretary of State, that the name is 'too like' another business' name
- within five years of registration it is found that misleading information was given at the time of registration
- within five years of registration any conditions attached to the registration - eg the provision of support documentation for a sensitive name - have not been fulfilled
- someone objects that the company or LLP name is the same as one in which they have goodwill and that the reason for registration was 'opportunistic'
- the name is misleading and as a result may cause harm to the public

What is 'too like'?

If a company name is found to be very similar to that of an existing company name - eg if the names differ in a minor way - they are likely to be 'too like'. Most names that are 'too like' could cause some confusion, such as the names A & B Consultants Limited and A & B Consulting Limited.

If names differ by one or more words, they will usually be acceptable, unless the names have very distinctive elements in common, and differ only by words such as 'services' or 'trading'.

Objecting to a name

If you wish to object to a name, write to the registrar where the company to which you object is registered:

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For England and Wales:

The Secretary of State

Registration Customer Support

Companies House

Crown Way

Cardiff

CF14 3UZ

For Scotland:

The Secretary of State

New Companies

Companies House

4th Floor

Edinburgh Quay 2

139 Fountainbridge

Edinburgh

EH3 9FF

For Northern Ireland:

The Registrar of Companies

Companies House

Second Floor

The Linenhall

32-38 Linenhall Street

Belfast

BT2 8BG

Directions to change a company name must

be issued within 12 months of registration or change of name. If the registrar upholds the objection, the company or LLP must change its name within 12 weeks.

Opportunistic registrations

If a company has registered a name with the main objective of getting money or other consideration from an individual or another company, they can be ordered to change the name. [Find guidance on opportunistic registrations on the Intellectual Property Office \(IPO\) website - Opens in a new window.](#)

Prescribed and sensitive words

Some words require the consent of a relevant body or must meet certain requirements before they can be used in a company or LLP name. A copy of the consent must be sent to Companies House with the application to register your company or LLP.

[Find a list of prescribed and sensitive words and the bodies whose consent you may need to obtain on the Companies House website - Opens in a new window.](#)

Helplines

Companies House Contact Centre

0303 1234 500

Business Link Helpline

0845 600 9 006

Rules for naming your limited company or limited liability partnership (LLP)

Related guides on
businesslink.gov.uk

Use our interactive tool to search for an available company name and trade mark | [Legal structures: the basics](#) | [Choose the right name for your business](#) |

Related web sites you might find useful

[Trade marks information on the Intellectual Property Office website - Opens in a new window](#)

[Trade marks guidance on the Institute of Trade Mark Attorneys website - Opens in a new window](#)

[Opportunistic registrations information on the IPO website - Opens in a new window](#)

[Prescribed and sensitive words and the bodies whose consent you may need to obtain listed on the Companies House website - Opens in a new window](#)