



Choosing the Right Name for Your Business

Name your business like a brand, not just a legal entity.



Introduction

Choosing the right name for your Limited Liability Company (LLC) is more than a legal formality. It's the first building block of your brand. A well-thought-out name not only helps you stand out but also plays a key role in how customers perceive and remember your business.

It's a strategic asset that can enhance visibility, build trust, and contribute to long-term success.

In this guide

You'll learn how to choose a name that supports your marketing goals, resonates with your audience, and checks all the legal boxes.



Comma Usage in LLC Names

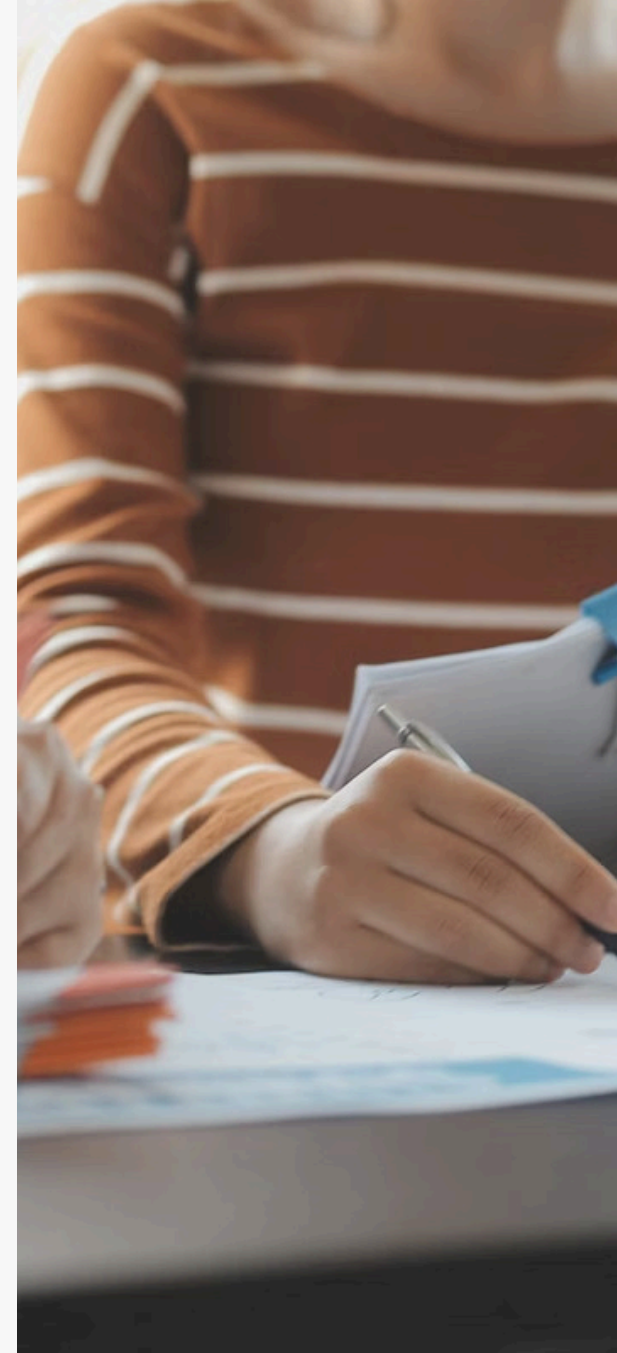
While including a comma in your LLC name (e.g., "Green Valley Landscaping, LLC") is **not a legal requirement**, it's common practice.

80%

Common Practice

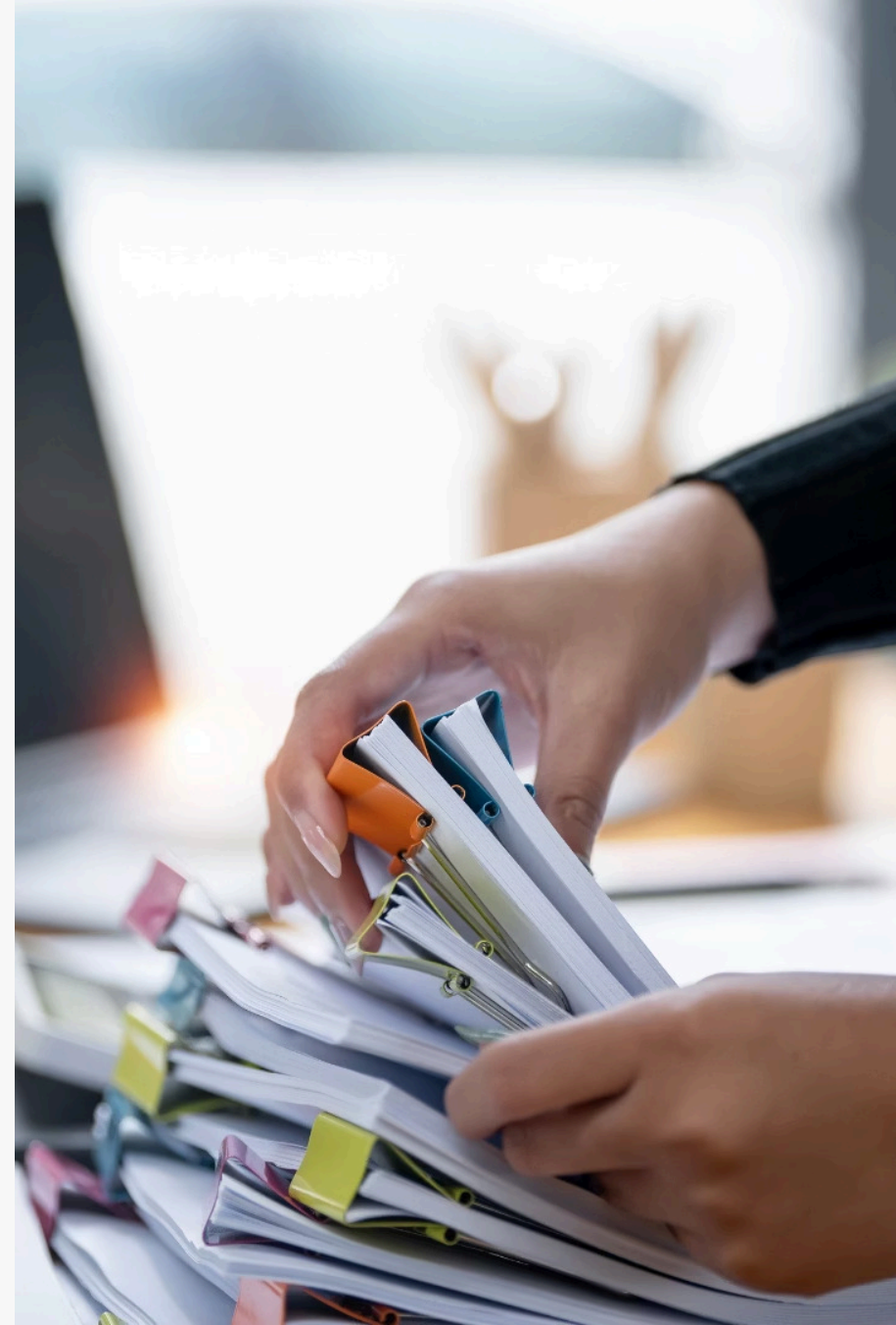
of LLCs include a comma before "LLC"

Consistency is Key: Once you've chosen whether or not to include a comma, make sure to use the same format on all business documentation. The name approved by your Secretary of State is your LLC's official legal name, and it should remain consistent on contracts, bank accounts, and other formal documents.



Essential Factors to Consider

Beyond legal compliance, your LLC's name is a foundational element of your brand. As you embark on selecting the perfect identity for your business, consider the following crucial factors that will set you up for success.





1. Ensure Your LLC Name is Easy to Spell

A name that is easy to spell is crucial for making your business discoverable. An easy-to-spell name ensures that potential customers can easily search for and find your business online, improving your visibility and search engine optimization (SEO).

Benefits

- Improved online discoverability
- Better SEO performance
- Fewer missed connections
- Clearer word-of-mouth referrals

2. Keep Your LLC Name Short and Memorable

Short, snappy names are more likely to stick in the minds of customers and are easier to share through word-of-mouth. A concise LLC name also enhances brand recognition, making it easier for your customers to remember your business name when they need your services.

Memory Techniques

Consider using alliteration like "Coca-Cola" or "Bright Beginnings" to make your name more memorable.

Rhyming

Names that rhyme like "Bobby's Hobby Shop" or "Super Duper Movers" aid memory retention.

3. Choose a Name With Positive Connotations


Your LLC name should evoke positive emotions and create a favorable impression of your business. A name with a positive association can build trust with your target audience and encourage repeat business.

Emotional Impact

Names that create positive feelings can significantly influence customer perception and loyalty before they even interact with your business.

4. Check the Availability of Your LLC Name

Before finalizing your LLC name, it's important to check if it's available for use. You can search your state's business name database to confirm that the name isn't already taken or is too similar to another business. This helps you avoid potential legal issues and confusion with other businesses.

 **Important:** Your LLC name must be distinct from existing businesses in your state's database. If your chosen name is too similar to another business, the state will likely reject it. It's essential to pick a name that stands out and doesn't create confusion.



***Pro Tip:* Visit your state's Secretary of State website for the LLC name availability search tool.**

5. Include "Limited Liability Company" or "LLC"

As we said earlier, when forming an LLC, your business name must include the phrase "Limited Liability Company" or the abbreviations "LLC" or "L.L.C."

Example

If you want to name your business "Green Valley Landscaping," the official LLC name must be "Green Valley Landscaping, LLC" to comply with naming rules.

Corporate designators like "LLC" or "L.L.C." are required, but they don't help make your name distinct from others. For example, if "Sunshine Investments, LLC" is already taken, you can't name your business "Sunshine Investments, Inc." or "Sunshine Investments, LLC" because they're still considered too similar. Instead, try alternatives like "Sunshine Capital Partners, LLC".



6. Avoid Using Prohibited Terms in Your LLC Name

Your LLC name cannot imply that it is a corporation. Avoid using terms like "Corporation," "Incorporated," or their abbreviations ("Corp." or "Inc.") in your LLC name.

Example:

You cannot name your LLC "Green Valley Landscaping, Inc." If you intend to form an LLC, the name must be "Green Valley Landscaping, LLC."



7. Take Grammatical Variations into Account

Minor grammatical changes, such as switching between singular or plural forms, do not create distinct names. For example, "Oak Tree Gardens" and "Oak Trees Gardens" may be considered the same, depending on the state, and one version would need to be modified.

Examples of Similar Names That May Not Pass the Sniff Test

- "Oak Tree Gardens" vs. "Oak Trees Gardens"
- "Modern Design Studio" vs. "Modern Designs Studio"
- "City Bakery Shop" vs. "City Bakeries Shop"

8. Avoid Using Articles, Conjunctions, and Punctuation Marks

Articles like "A," "An," and "The," or conjunctions like "and" or "or," do not help distinguish your LLC name.

For example, "The Print Shop" is not distinct from "Print Shop."

Similarly, using punctuation like hyphens or commas does not create distinguishability, so "Charles-Brooks Studios, LLC" is considered the same as "Charles Brooks Studios, LLC."

9. Consider Alphanumeric Variations Carefully

Alphanumeric variations, where numbers replace words or vice versa, do not create distinguishable names. For example, "Two Teachers Consulting" is not distinct from "2 Teachers Consulting."

Examples of Non-Distinct Names

- "Two Teachers Consulting" = "2 Teachers Consulting"
- "4 Seasons Landscaping" = "Four Seasons Landscaping"
- "1st Choice Plumbing" = "First Choice Plumbing"



LLC Name vs. DBA Name: Understanding the Difference

Starting a new venture and want to use a different name than your current business? You've got two main options: register a DBA (Doing Business As) or form a new LLC.

DBA

The simplest path as it lets you operate under a new name without setting up an entirely new business entity. It's fast, affordable, and perfect if your new offering is related to your current business.

New LLC

If your new venture has a completely different focus, involves new partners, or needs its own bank account and liability protection, forming a separate LLC might be the smarter move.



Why Should You Care About a DBA?

A DBA, also called a trade name, fictitious business name, or assumed name, lets you run your business under a name other than the one you legally registered.

If you're a sole proprietor or partner (without official state registration), you'll need to file a DBA to use any name that isn't your own. For LLCs and corporations, it's the same. You must register a DBA if you want to operate under a name different from the one on your formation documents.



Public Protection

While a DBA doesn't offer legal protection for owners, it serves an important role in protecting the public. It ensures that consumers can trace who is behind the business.

Once you've filed for a DBA, anyone can look up your DBA name in public records and find out who owns it, providing transparency and accountability.

Banking Considerations for LLC Names

Why It's Important

Banks typically allow variations of your LLC name when processing payments. However, using the exact official name on your bank accounts, contracts, and tax filings ensures consistency and avoids confusion.

Best Practices

- Use your exact legal name on all bank accounts
- Maintain consistency across all financial documents
- Avoid abbreviations or variations when setting up accounts
- Keep your business and personal finances separate



Your Steps in Choosing an LLC Name

List Key Characteristics

Start by listing key characteristics of your business. For example, if you're opening a boutique coffee shop, think of words like "organic," "fresh," "artisan," and "cozy."

Brainstorm Ideas

Let your creativity flow and brainstorm as many name ideas as you can. Don't worry about editing or judging your ideas at this stage; write them down.

Reflect and Refine

Take a break, and then come back to refine your ideas. After a few days of reflection, the perfect LLC name might become clearer. Trust your instincts and choose the name that feels right for your business.

✓ **Then all you have left to do is to form your LLC.**

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