Start with your project to choose a name

Your activity, customers, languages and ambitions provide the first criteria for choosing a name. Explore the name and its domain name together to build a digital identity that reflects your project.

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BEFORE YOU START

Could this happen to you?

Feeling lost. You are unsure how a trade mark, trading name, domain name and legal company name differ.

Unable to decide. Several names seem promising, but personal preferences change from one day to the next.

The domain changes the decision. The name has been chosen, but all acceptable domain options are already registered.

WHAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO PREPARE

- Connect the name and domain name to your business ambitions.
- Distinguish the names that make up your identity.
- Compare candidates and possible addresses while keeping several options open.

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STEP 1 OF 4

Describe your customers and ambitions

> **EXPECTED RESULT**
>
> A description of the offer, customers, markets and useful languages.

Before comparing names, describe what you will offer, to whom and in which setting. This gives you a common basis for judging ideas, even when you are starting on your own.

When should you start looking?

Start once you can explain your offer, customers and ambitions. For a business, the search develops alongside the project; for a product, a working name can accompany the first prototypes. You can explore ideas without making the final choice immediately.

> **IMPORTANT**
>
> ### The domain name belongs on the critical path.
>
> The available options may lead you to adapt the business or product name. Clarify which addresses you could use before confirming the final visual identity, packaging, signs or public communication.

Which reference points should you describe?

Specify your offer and the people it is for. A local repair service and software sold in several countries call for different uses of the name. Distinguish the people who discover the activity, those who recommend it and those who decide to buy.

Describe the launch markets and developments you are already preparing. For languages, focus on those your customers and the people who recommend you actually use. In Luxembourg, a business serving the Greater Region may need perspectives beyond the language in which you are preparing the project.

Describe the impression you want to give, too: for example, repairs explained simply or highly personalised support. These reference points make your expectations clearer than words such as “accessible” or “premium”. The name contributes to that impression alongside the service, copy and design; it does not have to explain everything on its own.

How should you record this?

We recommend collecting these points in a naming brief: a short document describing the project and guiding the choice. It gives you a reference whether you are choosing alone or working with an agency, an adviser or other people.

Here is the beginning of a brief for a bicycle repair business. It shows a useful level of detail; candidates and search results will follow.

Example brief: a bicycle repair business

Reference point	Example answer
Offer	Repair and maintain everyday bicycles, explaining the work in simple terms.
Customers	People who cycle regularly and want a local workshop.
Market and languages	Launch in Luxembourg; customer conversations in French and German.

Reference point	Example answer
Planned development	Add a bicycle collection service without changing the name.
Desired impression	A practical, reliable service that is easy to contact.
Uses to examine	A name that works over the phone, plus a website and email address that are easy to dictate.

KEY POINT

A useful brief describes the offer, customers, markets, languages and intended uses of the name.

STEP 2 OF 4

Understand which name you mean

EXPECTED RESULT

The elements the name must identify and how they connect.

The same word can serve several purposes. Before looking for the ideal name, identify what you want to name: the company, activity, premises, products or services.

For our bicycle repair business, the table distinguishes these roles before choosing the names that will fulfil them.

The different names and their roles

Element	Role and example
Legal company name	Identify a company. For the workshop: the company name recorded in its articles of association.
Trading name	Make an activity known to the public. For the workshop: the name under which its services are presented.
Shop or premises sign	Identify an establishment. For the workshop: the name or sign visible on the building.
Trade mark	Distinguish products or services from those of other businesses. For the workshop: a name or logo used to distinguish its repair services.
Domain name	Provide an address for the website and email. For the workshop: the address customers use to find it or get in touch.
Social media handle	Identify an account on a platform. For the workshop: the account name used to share its work.

These elements can use the same name, but they do not have to. A company can also offer several activities under different names. In your brief, note which uses you want to bring together and which you want to keep separate.

If you operate as a sole trader, do not automatically copy the particulars used by a company. The part on rights explains which checks to consider for your situation. An available domain does not, on its own, answer the trade mark questions.

KEY POINT

Specify what the name will identify. The uses may overlap, but the checks remain distinct.

Do this now: Specify whether it names a company, activity or premises, then the associated addresses.

STEP 3 OF 4

Explore different approaches to naming

EXPECTED RESULT

A shortlist from several approaches, with reasons for keeping each candidate.

Explore sufficiently different directions to understand what suits your project. The three approaches below provide a starting point; none wins in every situation.

These examples offer ideas to explore, then put through the tests and searches in the series.

Three approaches for our bicycle repair business

Approach and example	Benefit and point to examine
Descriptive: “Bicycle Repairs”	The service is stated directly. Examine: how to stand apart from other workshops and accommodate a changing offer.
Evocative: “The Second Spoke”	The name suggests cycling and giving a bicycle another life. Examine: what customers actually understand and other possible interpretations.
Constructed: “Nuvelo”	A combination of sounds and words can carry its own identity. Examine: pronunciation, spelling and the explanation needed to make the name known.

A family name or place name offers other directions. Consider whether the connection fits the project over time: could the business be transferred? Should the activity remain associated with this town?

Clarity alone does not establish whether a name can be protected as a trade mark. Research into rights addresses that separate question; keep it distinct from preferences about style.

Then keep a short list, perhaps three to five candidates. This is a method suggested by Wize. For each, note what it expresses, its limits and why you are keeping or discarding it.

KEY POINT

Keep several directions open and note what each brings to the project before narrowing the shortlist.

Do this now: Keep several candidates and record their meaning, limits and questions.

STEP 4 OF 4

Turn preferences into criteria

EXPECTED RESULT

Names compared with their possible domains, conditions and next decision.

A preference becomes useful when it leads to a question you can examine. Instead of stopping at "I do not like this name", say what bothers you: the sound, its associations or a possible difficulty for your customers.

Return to the brief to choose concrete criteria. For example: being written correctly after a conversation, working for French-speaking and German-speaking customers, or remaining relevant to two planned services. Your personal preference counts too, since you will use the name; explain it so that it can be discussed.

Compare the name and its possible addresses

Associate each candidate with possible domain names and extensions suited to the intended markets. Compare the email use as well: an address you would constantly have to spell out deserves a test.

For a .lu, the DNS Luxembourg availability search shows whether the domain is registered. The absence of a visible website does not establish this. Record the exact domain, result and date of your search. An already registered domain remains an option to investigate, never an asset you already have: a sale depends on its holder agreeing.

Distinguish acceptable compromises from obstacles needing an answer. One domain variation may work; another may blur the identity you want. If no realistic address meets the project's needs, keep the option of finding another name. A positive overall impression must not hide an essential condition that remains unresolved.

Prepare the next decision

For each candidate, keep your observations and open questions. Set a review date. If other people are involved, clarify who gives an opinion, who carries out research and who decides.

Practical tests and the part on rights (currently in French) will help inform the choice. At this stage, the aim is to have comparable options, rather than declare a name ready to launch.

KEY POINT

Compare each candidate with its possible addresses, observations and conditions still to be confirmed.

Do this now: For each candidate, record possible domains, dated results, acceptable compromises and open questions.

Mistakes and solutions

Behaviour	Consequence and response
One favourite from the outset.	Possible consequence: Its weaknesses become hard to accept. To avoid it: Keep several options. If it has happened: Return to the brief to compare the candidates.
Opinions without criteria.	Possible consequence: The same doubts keep returning. To avoid it: Specify what the name must enable. If it has happened: Turn each objection into a question to examine.
Looking for the domain too late.	Possible consequence: The preferred addresses may already be registered. To avoid it: Explore name and domain together. If it has happened: Compare a variation, a possible purchase and another name.

What to remember

Your starting point: a clear brief, a few candidates and the questions to answer before choosing.

Your first action: Open a document and describe your offer, customers and intended uses of the name. Use these reference points to explore several options.

Mini-glossary

Term	Definition
Naming brief	A short document describing the project, intended uses of the name and choice criteria.
Legal company name	The name identifying a company.
Trading name	The name under which an activity is known to the public.
Shop or premises sign	A name or sign identifying an establishment.
Trade mark	A sign distinguishing products or services from those of other businesses.
Domain name	A name used as an Internet address, notably for a website and email.
Positioning	The impression and place you want to establish with customers.

Sources and method

The comparison methods are proposed by Wize. The sources explain concepts within their stated scope.

IPIL - Checking the availability of a business name (French)
Definitions of legal company name, trading name and premises sign. March 2021 factsheet; old tools and procedures are not reproduced.
https://ipil.lu/app/uploads/2020/10/05-Verifier-la-disponibilite-du-nom.pdf

Guichet.lu - Registered trade mark (French)
Purpose of a trade mark and forms of a sign. Historical fees and procedures are not reproduced.
https://guichet.public.lu/fr/entreprises/gestion-juridique-comptabilite/propriete-intellectuelle/propriete-industrielle/marque.html

Benelux Convention on Intellectual Property - WIPO Lex
The distinguishing function of a sign; French reference text.
https://www.wipo.int/wipolex/fr/legislation/details/20174

DNS Luxembourg - .lu domain availability
Checking whether a .lu domain is registered.
https://dns.lu/en/domains/availability

Restena Foundation - My domain name (French)
An already registered domain requires its holder's agreement for a sale.
https://my.lu/fr/gestion-classique/mon-nom-de-domaine

Something to clarify? info@wize.lu