

## The surnames of spouses and children

This brochure explains how a surname can change when people get married. It also talks about the surnames of children and how they can be changed. The guidelines are intended both for those who are getting married when they request an examination of the impediments to the marriage, and to the parents of children.

The brochure is available from Local Register Offices and Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland or Finnish Orthodox Church parishes. It is also published on the Local Register Office website at [maistraatti.fi](http://maistraatti.fi). The Local Register Offices can provide further information on the charges for changes of name. Provisions on surnames are laid down in the Act on First Names and Surnames (946/2017), which can be read at [www.finlex.fi](http://www.finlex.fi).

### The surnames of the spouses when people get married

#### When do the spouses have to indicate their choice of surname?

Those getting married must indicate their choice of surname to the party examining the impediments to the marriage when they request such an examination. An examination of the impediments to a marriage is requested on a form designed for the purpose, on which there is also a section for the choice of surname. The form can be found on the Local Register Office website at [maistraatti.fi](http://maistraatti.fi). Both spouses will keep the surname they had at the time of their marriage if the parties fail to indicate their choice of surname to the party examining the impediments to the marriage.

It should be noted that the spouses may not change their choice of surname following the examination of the impediments to the marriage. If, following the examination, the spouses have second thoughts about their choice of surname, they can tell the officiator. However, in such a case they will keep the surname they had when they got married.

#### A surname from a previous marriage cannot be transferred to a new spouse.

A surname from a previous marriage cannot be transferred to a new spouse as a surname or one name in a double-barrelled surname name. Nor may a double-barrelled surname from a previous marriage be transferred to a new spouse.

#### The legal options

When getting married, the spouses have four options.

1. Both spouses keep the surname they had when they got married
2. They may agree to use a common surname or double-barrelled surname. For a double-barrelled name to be regarded as a common surname, the two names must be in the same order for both spouses, and the use of the hyphen must be agreed. See also the section hereinafter: 'The implication for children of common surnames or double-barrelled surnames'.
3. The spouses may agree that one of them adopts a double-barrelled surname, which is not common to both, from their own surname or from one of the names in their double-barrelled surname, and from their spouse's surname or from one of the names in their spouse's double-barrelled surname. Both spouses may independently exercise their right to adopt a double-barrelled

surname. It does not depend on whether both spouses adopt a double-barrelled surname or in which order the names in the spouse's double-barrelled surname appear. A surname transferring to the other spouse must, however, also be kept by the spouse the name is transferring from. The use of a hyphen is a personal choice.

4. The spouses may agree that one of them takes one of the surnames in their spouse's double-barrelled surname as their own surname.

### **What is a double-barrelled surname?**

A double-barrelled surname can be formed from two separate surnames a person has the right to use. No more than two surnames can be combined in this way. The surnames are combined either with a hyphen or are written separately. The order of the surnames and the use of the hyphen must be chosen when the double-barrelled surname is adopted.

### **What name can be chosen as a common surname or as part of a common double-barrelled surname?**

A surname can be adopted as a common surname or as part of a common double-barrelled surname that one of the parties has at the time the examination of the impediments to the marriage is requested or either of them had when they were last single. However, no surname can be adopted as a common surname or part of a common double-barrelled surname that one of the spouses took in a previous marriage.

A double-barrelled surname may contain no more than two surnames.

### **The implication for children of common surnames or double-barrelled surnames.**

If the spouses have adopted a common surname or common double-barrelled surname, their children will always have the same surname or double-barrelled surname as the parents.

### **What if those getting married do not adopt a common surname or common double-barrelled surname?**

If people intending to get married do not adopt a common surname or common double-barrelled surname, one of the parties, with the consent of their spouse, can adopt a double-barrelled surname from their own surname or one of the names in their double-barrelled surname and from their spouses' surname or one of the names in their spouse's double-barrelled surname. Someone intending to get married may, with the consent of their spouse, also take as their surname one of the names in their spouse's double-barrelled surname.

- The right to adopt a double-barrelled surname is a personal choice and does not depend on whether both parties adopt a double-barrelled name or in which order the names in the spouse's double-barrelled surname appear. A name transferring to the other spouse must, however, also be kept by the spouse the name is transferring from.

### **Examples**

#### **Example 1**

Lindgren and Mattila, when the impediments to their marriage are being examined, state that they intend to adopt a common surname or common double-barrelled surname when they get married. For the double-barrelled name to be regarded as a common surname, the surnames must be in the same order for both spouses, and the use of the hyphen must be agreed.

These are the options:

- Lindgren
- Mattila
- Lindgren-Mattila
- Lindgren-Mattila
- Mattila-Lindgren
- Mattila-Lindgren

#### Example 2

Maija Kangas and Jussi Järvi Luoto request an examination of the impediments to their marriage. Both have their original surname. Together they have agreed that Maija will adopt a double-barrelled surname consisting of her own surname and one of the surnames in Jussi's double-barrelled surname.

The double-barrelled surname may be

- Kangas Järvi or Kangas-Järvi
- Järvi Kangas or Järvi-Kangas
- Kangas Luoto or Kangas-Luoto
- Luoto Kangas or Luoto-Kangas

#### Example 3

Maija Kangas Luoto and Jyrki Järvi request an examination of the impediments to their marriage. Both have their original surname. Together they have agreed that, when she marries, Maija will adopt a double-barrelled surname consisting of one of the surnames in her double-barrelled surname and Jyrki's surname.

The double-barrelled surname may be

- Kangas Järvi or Kangas-Järvi
- Järvi Kangas or Järvi-Kangas
- Luoto Järvi or Luoto-Järvi
- Järvi Luoto or Järvi-Luoto.

#### Example 4

Maija Mäki Kangas and Jyrki Järvi Luoto request an examination of the impediments to their marriage. The surname Kangas in Maija's double-barrelled surname is from her previous marriage. Together Maija and Jyrki have agreed that, when he marries, Jyrki will adopt a double-barrelled surname consisting of one of the surnames in his double-barrelled surname and one of the surnames in Maija's double-barrelled surname.

The double-barrelled surname may be

- Järvi Mäki or Järvi-Mäki
- Mäki Järvi or Mäki-Järvi
- Luoto Mäki or Luoto-Mäki
- Mäki Luoto or Mäki-Luoto.

The surname Kangas cannot transfer to Jyrki, because it is from Maija's previous marriage.

#### Example 5

Maija Mäki Kangas and Jyrki Järvi Luoto request an examination of the impediments to their marriage. Both have their original surname. Together Maija and Jyrki have agreed that Jyrki, when he marries, will adopt a double-barrelled surname consisting of one of the surnames in his double-barrelled surname and one of the surnames in Maija's double-barrelled surname.

The double-barrelled surname may be

- Järvi Mäki or Järvi-Mäki
- Mäki Järvi or Mäki-Järvi
- Luoto Mäki or Luoto-Mäki
- Mäki Luoto or Mäki-Luoto.
- Järvi Kangas or Järvi-Kangas
- Kangas Järvi or Kangas-Järvi
- Luoto Kangas or Luoto-Kangas
- Kangas Luoto or Kangas-Luoto

Furthermore, Maija can, within certain restrictions, adopt her own, different double-barrelled surname, with Jyrki's consent, from one of his surnames and one of her own, with the name transferring from the spouse, however, remaining with him (i.e. same surnames, but in a different order). If Jyrki chooses the name Järvi Mäki and Maija wants a different double-barrelled surname, she can be called Mäki Kangas, Mäki Järvi or Mäki-Järvi.

### **How is a name changed?**

Name changes other than those when people get married are applied for with the Local Register Office. The application form and details of charges can be found on the Local Register Office website at [maistraatti.fi](http://maistraatti.fi)

## **Children's surnames**

### **A child's surname when the parents have a common surname or double-barrelled surname.**

If, when a child's name is recorded, the parents have a common surname or double-barrelled surname, the child always takes that common surname or double-barrelled surname.

For the double-barrelled name to be regarded as a common surname, the surnames must be in the same order for both spouses, and the use of the hyphen must be agreed.

### **The choice of a child's surname when the parents have different surnames**

If, when recording the name of their child, the child's parents, who are husband and wife, do not share a common surname, they have the right to choose whose parent's surname the child will take. A double-barrelled surname consisting of the parent's surnames may also be chosen for the child.

If the child is born out of wedlock and paternity has been confirmed, the child's parents can choose which parent's surname the child takes (see later: 'Children take the surname of the parent that has given birth to them' and 'Changing a child's surname to the other parent's surname'). A double-barrelled surname consisting of the parent's surnames may also be chosen for the child.

A surname may be chosen for the child's surname or part of the child's double-barrelled surname which one parent has at the time the children's names are recorded in the Population Information System.

### **Restricted choice when the parents have different surnames**

However, the parents may not choose a child's surname where they have joint custody of a minor: a child born later takes the same surname or double-barrelled surname as his or her sibling.

### **The child's surname when there is only one parent**

If the child has one parent when his or her name is recorded, the child takes the parent's surname or double-barrelled surname.

### **Other situations**

In situations other than those described above, a child's surname may be the surname of either parent or a double-barrelled surname consisting of the parents' surnames. If one parent has a double-barrelled surname, the child may be given:

- 1) the double-barrelled surname of the parent as it stands
- 2) one of the names in the parent's double-barrelled surname as it stands or combined with the other parent's surname or one of the names in the other parent's double-barrelled surname.

### **The child's surname when the parents have an international connection**

Under section 6(5) of the Act on First Names and Surnames, a surname or a compound surname formed of the name of a parent or a grandparent or of the names of both of these may be chosen as the surname of a child, if the parent has a connection to a foreign state due to his or her citizenship, marriage or some

other equivalent circumstance and the surname notified by the parents complies with the naming practices of that state.

### **When and how is the choice made?**

The child's surname must be recorded within three months of the child's birth with a Local Register Office or the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland or Finnish Orthodox Church parish of which he or she is a member.

### **The child's surname when the parents fail to record it**

If the parents make no notification of the surname of a child by the given deadline, the Local Register Office will send the child's guardian a reminder. If the obligation to record the name is not met within a reasonable time following the reminder, the child will take the surname of the parent who gave birth to him or her.

### **Children take the surname of the parent who gave birth to them**

Children take the surname of the parent who gave birth to them if parentage has not been established at the time the child's forenames and surname are recorded in the Population Information System. A child's surname may, after parentage is established, be changed to that of a parent, on application and free of charge.

### **Who decides the child's surname?**

A child's surname is decided by his or her guardian. When the parents have joint custody of their child, they will decide on that child's surname together. If the parents do not have joint custody of the child, the guardian or guardians of the child has/have the right to decide which parent's surname the child should take.

## Examples

### Example 1

Maija Mäki and Jussi Mäki, wife and husband, have a child together. The child's surname will be Mäki.

### Example 2

Virtanen and Linden have their first child together. They do not share a common surname or double-barrelled surname, so they can choose a surname or double-barrelled surname for the child. The child can take the surname or double-barrelled surname

- Virtanen
- Linden
- Virtanen-Linden
- Linden-Virtanen
- (Virtanen Linden)
- (Linden Virtanen)

### Example 3

Liisa Laakso and Niilo Niemi, wife and husband, have their second child together. The child's surname will be Niemi, because the surname of the parents' first child is Niemi and they have joint custody of the child.

### Example 4

Leena Ranta and Mikko Lehti cohabit and have a child together. Mikko acknowledges that he is the father and the Local Register Office establishes paternity accordingly. The child can take the mother's surname, Ranta, or the father's surname, Lehti. In this case the child can also adopt a double-barrelled name in the form Ranta Lehti, Ranta-Lehti, Lehti Ranta or Lehti-Ranta.

### Example 5

Leena Ranta Lahti and Mikko Lehti Kangas, wife and husband, have a child together, the first for either parent. The options for the child's surname or double-barrelled surname are the following.

Ranta Lahti or Lehti Kangas or Ranta, Lahti, Lehti or Kangas or Ranta Lehti or Ranta-Lehti or Ranta Kangas or Ranta-Kangas or Lahti Lehti or Lahti-Lehti or Lahti Kangas or Lahti-Kangas or Lehti Ranta or Lehti-Ranta or Lehti Lahti or Lehti-Lahti or Kangas Ranta or Kangas-Ranta or Kangas Lahti or Kangas-Lahti

### Example 6

The surname of a child of a Somali-born family consists of his patronymic, Abdullahi, and his grandfather's name Yussuf. If they wish, the parents can choose a surname under the Finnish naming system.

Father's surname: Yussuf Isse, forename: Abdullahi

Child: Abdullahi Yussuf

### Example 7

In Iceland someone's family name is taken from the parent's forename and ends in 'son' in the case of a boy or 'dóttir' in the case of a girl. If an Icelandic or half-Icelandic family is resident in Finland, a child's parents can decide themselves whether to adopt the Finnish system of inheriting surnames or the Icelandic system based on the parent's forename. If they wish to adopt the Finnish system of surnames, the names

of the Icelandic father and mother (for example, Sveinsson and Magnúsdóttir) are interpreted as the names adopted as they are from one generation to the next. The parents can choose which name or combination of these they want to use if they choose the Finnish system, or whether to give the child names based on the father's and mother's forename, as with the Icelandic system.

Father: Anton Sveinsson

Mother: Lára Magnúsdóttir

Son: 1. Antonsson 2. Láruson

Daughter: 1. Antonsdóttir 2. Lárudóttir

### **Changing a child's surname to that of the other parent**

If a child has taken the surname of the parent who gave birth to him or her, where the parents did not share a common surname when the child was born, and parentage was not established or recorded in the Population Information System, the child's surname can be changed to that of the other parent after parentage is established.

### **Who decides on the change to a child's surname?**

When the parents have joint custody of their child, they decide together on changing that child's surname to that of the other parent. If the parents do not have joint custody of the child, the guardian or guardians of the child has/have the right to decide on a change to the child's surname.

### **The consent of the child**

When children reach the age of 12, their consent is needed to change their surname. Nor may the forename or surname of a minor be changed against the wishes of a child under the age of 12 if that child has developed to the extent that due attention can be paid to what the child wants. For this reason, the consent of a child who has reached the age of 10 is also required, unless there is a special reason for ignoring the child's opinion.

### **Example**

Tarja Vuori has a child and Kari Koski declares that he is the father. When the child's names are recorded in the Population Information System, the Local Register Office does not accept acknowledgement of paternity. Consequently, the child takes the surname of the mother, Vuori. If then the Local Register Office accepts acknowledgement of paternity, and paternity is therefore established, the child's surname can be changed on application to the father's surname, Koski. A child's surname in such a case can also be changed to a double-barrelled one: Vuori Koski, Vuori-Koski, Koski Vuori or Koski-Vuori.

### **Changing the surname of a child to a surname or double-barrelled surname the parents share**

The surname of a minor can be changed to a surname or double-barrelled surname his or her parents share

When children reach the age of 12, their consent is needed to change their surname. Nor may the forename or surname of a minor be changed against the wishes of a child under the age of 12 if that child has developed to the extent that due attention can be paid to what the child wants. For this reason, the consent of a child who has reached the age of 10 is also required, unless there is a special reason for ignoring the child's opinion.

### **Changing the surname of a child to the surname or double-barrelled surname that his or her parent share with that parent's spouse**

If the parent of a minor gets married or becomes someone's registered partner and the spouses or partners take a common surname or double-barrelled surname, they can agree that the child will take their common surname or double-barrelled surname.

When children reach the age of 12, their consent is needed to change their surname. Nor may the forename or surname of a minor be changed against the wishes of a child under the age of 12 if that child has developed to the extent that due attention can be paid to what the child wants. For this reason, the consent of a child who has reached the age of 10 is also required, unless there is a special reason for ignoring the child's opinion.

If a child also has another guardian, this person must also give his or her consent to change the child's surname.

### **How is a child's surname changed?**

A child's surname is change by filing the relevant application with the Local Register Office. It is free of charge to change a child's surname in the circumstances described above. The application form can be found on the Local Register Office website at [maistraatti.fi](http://maistraatti.fi).

### **Restrictions on changing the name of a minor**

Changing the name of a minor for no particular reason may not be approved if the child's forename or surname has been changed three times before he or she has reached the age of 12.

A change to a child's surname for no particular reason may not be approved if the change would result in a situation where there was no longer any connection between the child's name and both parents or one where full siblings in the family who are minors had different surnames.

A child's surname may only be changed to that of his or her parent following the child's death if parentage is only acknowledged and established after the child died.