

Last name

The term *last name*, *family name*, *surname* or simply *name* refers to that part of a person's name that has been passed, in most European countries, from the child's parents.

In European cultures it is often the father's last name, but in Spanish-speaking countries the child is generally given two family names, i.e. both from its father and mother. However, the use of last names is not universal, as quite a few countries do not use them (Iceland, Tibet, Myanmar, India, Indonesia, some peoples in East Africa).

Moreover, in sub-Saharan countries, the part of a person's name, which in the European culture is referred to as *family name*, may be given to the baby at birth, just like its first name. This way, it does not correspond to the mother's or father's *last name*. The person's last name can also be given according to its membership of a tribe or even be changed later during the person's life on the basis of specific ethnic customs.

Also, using the term *name* can be confusing, as it is often not clear if it refers to *first name* or *last name*.

Other complications may result from different laws existing in different countries related to marriage:

In Italy, for instance, the woman keeps her original last name when she gets married. In other European countries, however, the woman generally takes her husband's last name, or they may decide which will be their common last name.

Another issue is in Eastern countries (Poland, Russia), where masculine and feminine versions exist for many of their names. This implies that a brother and sister may have slightly different last names (e.g. Ivanov and Ivanova).