

WHAT'S IN A NAME (VALIDATION)?

I'M CARLY HO

» Senior Engineer @ Clique Studios

» carlymho.com

» [@carlymho](https://twitter.com/carlymho)



LET'S TALK ABOUT NAMES

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

- » Names are pretty important across cultural borders
- » They're one of the first pieces of info we ask for in conversation
- » They're one of the first pieces we ask for in account creation
- » Having someone else mangle your name can range from mildly annoying to genuinely hurtful

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

SOME ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT NAMES

- » Everyone has one first name and one last name.
- » Everyone has one first name and two last names!
- » A name has a minimum of three characters.
- » A given name comes first, and a family name comes last.

SOME ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT NAMES

- » Names are composed of letters.
- » Names are composed of letters from the Latin alphabet, or can be losslessly translated into letters from the Latin alphabet.
- » Names don't change, or only change at a few very specific points in time.
- » Everyone has one canonical full name.

THESE ARE ALL WRONG.

WHAT IS A NAME?



**THE FORM OF A NAME IS
DIFFERENT ALMOST
EVERYWHERE.**

SOME NAMING CONVENTIONS

- » First name, middle name, last name inherited from father.
- » First name, middle name, one last name from each parent.
- » One name at home, a "visitor name" for travel.
- » Family name, given name.
- » One name for the family tree, one for your first year, one for school, one for work.

**IN THE USA, WE OFTEN
ASSUME WESTERN
EUROPEAN NORMS.**

SOME THINGS GET LOST IN A MELTING POT:

- » Immigrants frequently changed their names to assimilate
- » (And still do.)
- » People with "weird" names get marked as perpetual foreigners.
- » "Where are you from?"

**THERE'S NO SUREFIRE
WAY TO VALIDATE
NAMES.**

INCLUSIVE FORM DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

WHAT DO YOU NEED THE NAME FOR ON A FORM FOR A(N)...

- » Email newsletter?
- » Online shopping cart?
- » Account registration?
- » Online voter registration?

EMAIL NEWSLETTER

- » Technically, you don't **need** a name here
- » You might want to personalize/customize content
- » In that case, you probably want someone's given/
first name
- » One box; ask how they'd like to be addressed

ONLINE SHOPPING CART

- » Shipping and billing information
- » Names for shipping label, billing method
- » Some people have middle names on their credit card!
- » One field for each name: "Recipient" and "Name on card"

ACCOUNT REGISTRATION

- » Will a username or email address suffice?
- » Make it possible to change names (and usernames, and emails)
- » Let users know if a chosen name will be public-facing
- » (Safety first!)

ACCOUNT REGISTRATION

- » Context is key: ask for the forms of address you'll be using
- » Don't ask for data you don't need - everyone has a security breach eventually

ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION

- » This is tied to a legal name on a form of ID
- » Only need to be concerned with local name formats
- » High importance, so provide adequate instructions

THE KEY CONSIDERATIONS

DO YOU NEED THEIR NAME?

WHY DO YOU NEED THEIR NAME?

WHAT PART OF THE NAME DO YOU NEED?

HOW CAN YOU HELP THE USER HELP YOU?

HOW WILL YOU ACCOUNT FOR A WIDE VARIETY OF NAMES?

COMPASSIONATE VALIDATION

GOOD INTENTIONS, BAD SYSTEMS

- » Old, hard-coded systems
- » Government systems
- » Stakeholder requirements handed down from on high

BE HONEST

SANITIZE YOUR INPUTS!!

IT'S US, NOT YOU

WORK TO IMPROVE

INCLUSIVE FORMS ARE GOOD FOR EVERYONE

- » People who feel welcomed by a service are more likely to engage with it
- » Inclusive name validation means you can reach a wider variety of people
- » It's a small but impactful way to make the world easier to live in
- » Why not make people feel welcome?

RESOURCES & FURTHER READING

- » "Regular Expression for Validating Names and Surnames," stackoverflow
- » "Your Last Name Contains Invalid Characters," John Graham-Cumming
- » "Representing People's Names in Dublin Core," Andrew Waugh

RESOURCES & FURTHER READING

- » "Wookey - is that it?" Wookey
- » "Falsehoods Programmers Believe About Names,"
Patrick McKenzie