

Character Names

This page is going to help you create a name for the main characters in your story – the goodies and the baddies.

Characters' names in stories are often very important and can hint at their personality or job. I always think that certain names suit certain kinds of people.

Charles Dickens, David Walliams and Roald Dahl regularly use the names as a clue to what the character is like or what they do. For example:

- Mr and Mrs Twit in Roald Dahl's book: 'The Twits' are... twits! Mr Willy Wonker is a silly name for a silly man!
- Miss Root, in the book 'The Demon Dentist' by David Walliams, is a dentist (and not a very nice one!)
- Miss Honey and Miss Trunchball, in Roald Dahl's 'Matilda', are two very different types of teacher – can you guess which one is nice and which isn't?
- In 'Harry Potter' we learn that Tom Marvolo Riddle is in fact Lord Voldemort (an anagram of his original name!)
- Why do you think Charles Dickens called the main character in 'A Christmas Carol' Scrooge?

In our story, 'Mission Possible', we have the following characters:

- Polly Powers and Pete Powers (secret agent)
- Cyril Secret (Head of the Secret Services)
- Dodgy Rodger and Raucous Reggie (thief)

Do you think their names suggest something about them? Do you like their names? What do you notice about their names?

What are your favourite names of characters in stories that you have read?

Three thought bubbles are arranged in a triangular pattern. Each bubble contains two lines of text: 'Character name:' followed by 'Book or film they were in:'. The bubbles are empty, intended for students to write their favorite character names and the source stories.

Let's invent some character names for your story

Here are 3 ideas for coming up with a name for a character

1. Find the origin of a name (*where the name comes from*)

For example, the name Peter comes from the Greek meaning 'rock'. When you find the origin, you can think whether it suits your character. (You will need the internet for this so surf safely and with an adult present.)

2. List names

Find some story books and write two lists – one of the author's first names and another list with all of the second names. Put the lists side by side and match the first names and surnames with ones that you think work well, for example, *Roald Donaldson*.

Or you could list all your friends name, or all the names of people you know, and then rearrange them to come up with names that fit the characters you want to invent.

3. Use jobs or special features

In real life, some surnames originally suggested the owner's job or special feature. Could you invent a surname to fit your character e.g. name + special feature:

- an evil surgeon could be called Doctor Slice
- a tall teacher: Mr Longlegs
- a boy who can run fast: Samuel Speed
- a girl who is good at scoring goals: Gail Goodshot.

Write some ideas for character names here:

Names for your main characters (goodies)	Names for your bad characters



Learning from Other Writers

It is great to read another writer's work and use their ideas to influence our own. Let's do some reading and look at this paragraph about a teacher:



Mr Hawthorn strode into the classroom, slammed his briefcase on top of his desk and perched on the edge of his pristine leather chair. He stared intensely out of the window and his angular nose twitched.

The air was filled with an uncomfortable silence until Jimmy Jones stuttered: "Please, Sir, what will we be learning today?"

A smile slithered across Mr Hawthorn's page-white face. "Today, boy," he hissed through brown, broken teeth, "you will learn nothing."

From reading the paragraph above what do you know about Mr Hawthorn?

- Is he nice? How do you know?
- What does he look like?
- How does he move?
- How does he speak? What does that tell us?
- Do you think he suits his name?
- Do you think other people like him? How do you know?
- Do you like him? Explain your answer.

Choose your favourite word or line from the passage above and jot it down below – maybe you could use it, or something similar in your own story:

Read this paragraph, which has been taken from Chapter 1 of Anthony 'Horowitz book Never Say Die'. (Thanks to Anthony for letting me use this):

In fact, the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC) had met in their offices close to the Houses of Parliament just a few days before and had agreed that the threat level at the Suffolk Air Show would remain at MODERATE. They weren't expecting any trouble.

And so nobody paid very much attention to the woman who arrived just after three o'clock. She had driven into the car park in a Ford Transit van which, according to the Automatic Number Plate Recognition system, belonged to the St John Ambulance service. This is the country's leading first-aid charity and, indeed, the woman was dressed in the green and black uniform of a local volunteer. She was carrying a nylon bag marked with a white cross which, if opened, would reveal medicine and bandages.

She was short and round-shouldered with dark red hair that had been cut so badly that it stuck out straight on one side of her head and curled in on the other. There was something quite aggressive about the way she walked, like a boxer about to enter the ring. She was overweight, breathing heavily, with beads of sweat on her upper lip. She had a lot of make-up on but it did nothing to make her more attractive, sitting uselessly on her leathery skin. As she walked, she put on a pair of cheap sunglasses. They concealed the smouldering violence in her eyes.

From reading this, what do you know about the lady in the story?

- Is she a goodie or a baddie in the story? How do you know?
- Where is she? Is this important to her character do you think?
- What does she look like?
- Why do you think she doesn't have a name? If she did have a name, what do you think it could be?
- Do you think other people will like her? Why do you think that?
- What do you think (predict) will happen?

Choose your favourite word or line from the passage above and record it below – maybe you could use it, or something similar in your own story: