

## Pronouncing Other People's Names Correctly Does Matter

*Especially if you value dignity, respect and inclusion.*

*"A person's name is the greatest connection to their own identity and individuality. Some might say it is the most important word in the world to that person... It is a sign of courtesy...*

*When someone remembers our name after meeting us, we feel respected and more important."*

Those are the words of Joyce E. A. Russell an organisational psychologist and leadership expert

### What's in a name?

The names we are given, agonised over by our parents afraid of how it will affect us for the rest of our lives, are part of our identities.

It's who we are as individuals.

It is also a connection to family, culture, heritage and history.

### Getting it wrong!

We can often get it wrong, sometimes innocently or often being lazy. It can also be considered a microaggression. Sending a message that "you are minimal", "You are not important in this environment, so why should I take time and my effort to learn your name?"

We must learn the importance of learning and seeing names we might find difficult at first. We learn the names of our favourite sports stars, not to mention Tchaikovsky, Michelangelo and Dostoevsky. Being respectful is always worth the effort.

### Why pronouncing someone's name correctly is important?

By getting it right you make someone feel accepted and comfortable, included and that they belong. It is an important part of mental and physical well being. Allowing them to flourish with a strong sense of self.

Here are some examples from the Race Equality Matters community e.g.

Efemena is called Effy

Nanno is called Nando's

Abdullah is called Jeff

Bharrat is called Bob

By naming someone wrongly, repeatedly, you are denying them the respect we are all entitled to as equals.

*'There is nothing wrong with someone, getting the pronunciation or spelling wrong if they're unfamiliar with your name. However, if they refuse to try to say it correctly or they call you by something else entirely, that is a bigoted choice.'*

Uju Asika, Bringing Up Race.

My name is :  
#mynameis



# Take Action

## #ActionNotWords for Black History Month

A simple and visual solution could be to normalise adding phonetic spelling by adding it to our email signatures. It could sit under your pronouns.

1. First step, I will add my phonetic pronunciation to my email signature. Not sure check out the suggestions below.
2. Second step, I will encourage my colleagues, employees and networks to put the pronunciation of their names on their email.
3. Final step, I will add phonetic options in all my communication channels e.g. meetings, social media, name badges etc.

## How do I write my name phonetically?

Not sure how to write your name here are some tips.

1. Don't worry about it too much. You are unlikely to get it perfect the first time. Try and write the sounds of your name.
2. Ask 3-4 people to read what you wrote outloud. Revise based on what they say.
3. Add it to your email signature under your name.
4. Need a bit more help here are some examples.

Thandiwe Newton [tan-DEE-way]

/tan-dɪ:-wæ/

Bijal Patel [Be-Jul-pat-ell 'as in well']

/bɛ-ʒəl/ /pat-ɛl/

Ama Afrifa-Tchie [Ah-ma Ah-free-fah-Chee]

/ɑ-mɑ/ /ɑ-fɪ:-fɑ-chɪ:/

Ngoc Nguyen [nock" "WIN]

/nʌk/ /wɪn/

# How to get it right

## 7 simple steps

How to be part of getting other people's names right. Remember that there is nothing wrong with getting the pronunciation or spelling wrong if you are unfamiliar with a name. However, if you want to be part of the change here are 7 steps.

- 1. Ask the person to pronounce it - and actively listen.** Rather than try to say a name you are unfamiliar with, ask the person how to pronounce it.
- 2. Don't make it a big deal.** Once you have heard the correct pronunciation, thank them and move on. Don't focus on how unfamiliar you are with their name.
- 3. Observe and practise.** Make an effort to hear how someone pronounces their name to other people, even if you have heard it before. Check if you are introducing them in a public forum and practise.
- 4. Clarify again.** If you meet someone again after a while it's fine to check how you should pronounce their name.
- 5. Do something when you realise you've been mispronouncing it.** Apologize when you get it wrong, as soon as you realise.
- 6. Be an ally.** If you hear someone mispronouncing a colleague's name, when they are not around, step in and correct them gently.
- 7. Don't be arrogant or flippant.** Don't say "I'll never get it right." or not listen when you are corrected.



*"The thing I'm most grateful for in our business right now is being in the company of others who truly see me. And to not be complicit in the objectification of black people as 'others', which is what happens when you're the only one," she said.*

*"That's my name. It's always been my name. I'm taking back what's mine," Newton told British Vogue.*

## Appendix

### Examples and options for phonetics

There are a few ways of writing your name phonetically. Find the one that works for you. Here are some examples. A stronger syllable can be shown with CAPITALS or **bold**. Write what you think and then get someone (or multiple people) to say it back to you. It's not about being perfect, it's about taking action.

#### #MyNames #ActionNotWords

##### Written > Pronounced /IPA/

Aaron > ah-**ron**  
Adebajo > ad-dee-bar-joe  
Afrifa-Tchie > ah-free-fah-chee /ɑ-fɪ:-fɑ-çhi:/  
Ailbhe > AL-va  
Áine > Awn-yeh.  
Ama > ah-ma /ɑ-mɑ/  
Amar > um-er  
Aoife > Eee-fah  
Batra > BAT-ra  
Bijal > be-jul /bə-ʒʌl/  
Caoimhe > key-va  
Chioma > chi-or-ma  
Cian > KEE-an  
Claire > kl-air  
Dashiell > da-SHEEL  
Diandra > dee-an-drah  
Donna > don-nah  
Eoghan > ow-an  
Fayola > fay-oh-lah (Fay rhymes with May)  
Hilda > hil-dah  
Isobel > iz-oh-bell  
Janine > jah-neen  
Javed > jah-ved  
Jesús > hay-soos  
Joaquin > hwa-KEEN  
Judeline > jew-de-line  
Jusna > joos-na  
Justine > jus-teen  
Kajota > ka-YO-ta  
Kamleish > khml-eh-sh  
Lilianna > li-li-arna  
Linnea > lin-NEH-ah

##### Written > Pronounced /IPA/

Lorraine > law-**rain**  
Louise > loo-eez  
Máirín > **maw**-reen  
Makayla > ma-kay-la  
Manglafi > man-lafi  
Marcelle > mar-sel  
Mercy > mer-see  
Mulrooney > mul-roon-nee  
Nagy > nah-jee  
Ngoc > nock /nɒk/  
Nguyen > win /wɪn/  
Niamh > neev  
Nicholas > nik-oh-las  
Oisín > uh-SHEEN  
Pádraig > paw-drig or paw-rick  
Patel > pat-el (as in well) /pat-el/  
Qamar > co-mer  
Rajdeep > raj-deep  
Róisín > ro-SHEEN.  
Sade > sha-day /ʃɑ-dæ/  
Sadio > sah-jaw  
Sanjay > SAN-jay  
Saoirse > SEER-sha  
Seamus > shay-muss  
Shortte > short  
Síle > shee-la  
Sioban > shiv-**awn**  
Sion > shaun  
Sushila > soo-shil-la  
Tadgh > tyge  
Thandiwe > tan-dee-way /tan-di:-wæ/  
Zbigniew > zz-BIG-niev

The International Phonetic Alphabet symbols can be found at [ipa.typeit.org](http://ipa.typeit.org)