



Fact sheet on married names

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You are planning to get married or you have recently done so abroad. It is important for you, therefore, to decide on the last name or names you wish to use as a married couple. The purpose of this fact sheet is to acquaint you with the various options from which to choose. Titles and headings in bold below are designed to make it easier for you to find the sections pertaining to your personal situation.

- **If you reside in Switzerland**, Swiss law is applicable to the use of names. If you are not Swiss, you may want to refer to your own national law on names by filing the appropriate declaration with a civil status registry or a Swiss consulate abroad.
- **If you reside abroad**, your last name is subject to the law referred to by current regulations of your country of residence. Further information may be obtained from a Swiss consulate or a civil status registry. Swiss nationals (who are not concurrently holding citizenship of the country of residence) may adopt Swiss law on names by filing a declaration with a civil status registry or a Swiss consulate.
- **If a marriage has already taken place abroad**: The name declaration ought to be filed in connection with the registration of a marriage, preferably at the same time or soon after, usually no later than six months after the marriage.
- **Name declaration with a view to a marriage**: If a civil marriage is performed in Switzerland, the name declaration must be filed with a civil status registry or a Swiss consulate *prior to the wedding*. In the event of celebration of a marriage abroad, the name declaration may also be filed with a Swiss consulate *prior to marriage* (see above).

1. Swiss Law on last names used after marriage

One of following options may be chosen when filing a name declaration:

- a) **Unless stated otherwise, the husband's last name becomes the family name.** Both husband and wife bear forthwith his last name. For example: "Mr. Miller" marries "Ms. Weiss." They now use the family name "Miller"; their children will also bear the name "Miller."
- b) **The husband's last name becomes the family name. The bride may, however, file a declaration with the civil status registrar or a Swiss consulate to the effect that she wishes to have the so far used last name placed before the family name.**

For example: “Mr. Miller” marries “Ms. Weiss.” He will continue to use his last name “Miller” while her name will be “Weiss Miller.” Their children's last name will be “Miller.”

- c) **The husband's last name becomes the family name. Before marriage the bride has used a double last name.** In that case, she may place the first of the two former last names in front of the family name. For example: “Mr. Miller” marries “Ms. Weiss Grau.” He maintains his actual name “Miller”; her name will be “Weiss Miller.” Their children will use the last name “Miller.”
- d) **The wife's last name becomes the family name.** In order to do so, the married couple must file a **substantiated application of name change** under Article 30, Section 2 of the Swiss Civil Code with the government of the Swiss canton of residence or — if it lives abroad — to the government of the canton of origin. For example: “Mr. Miller” marries “Ms. Weiss.” The application of name change has been accepted. Forthwith the family name as well as their children's last name will be “Weiss”.
- The husband may file a declaration to the effect that his former last name be placed before the new family name; that is, he will be known by the name of “Mr. Miller Weiss.” If the husband already uses a double last name, he, too, may place only the first of the two former last names in front of the family name. For example: When “Ms. Weiss” marries “Mr. Miller Grey,” the last name “Grey” will be omitted. Hence, the husband's name will be “Miller Weiss”.

2. Relevant authorities entering Names in the Swiss civil status Registers

- **Marriage in Switzerland:** The cantonal supervisory offices in civil status matters determine the name/s to be entered into Swiss civil status registers.
- **Marriage abroad:** The cantonal supervisory offices in civil status matters and not the Swiss consulates abroad, determine under which name/s marriage may be entered into relevant Swiss civil status registers. You may request a confirmation to that effect from the competent cantonal supervisory office in civil status matters.

Please note that the terms "civil status" and "last name" may be replaced by "marital status" / "vital statistics" and "surname", according to regional common usage of the English language. If you have further questions about the use of names in connection with a marriage, you may contact the nearest Swiss consulate that will - upon request - also provide information regarding fees involved. We hope that this fact sheet will assist in taking the appropriate decision.

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