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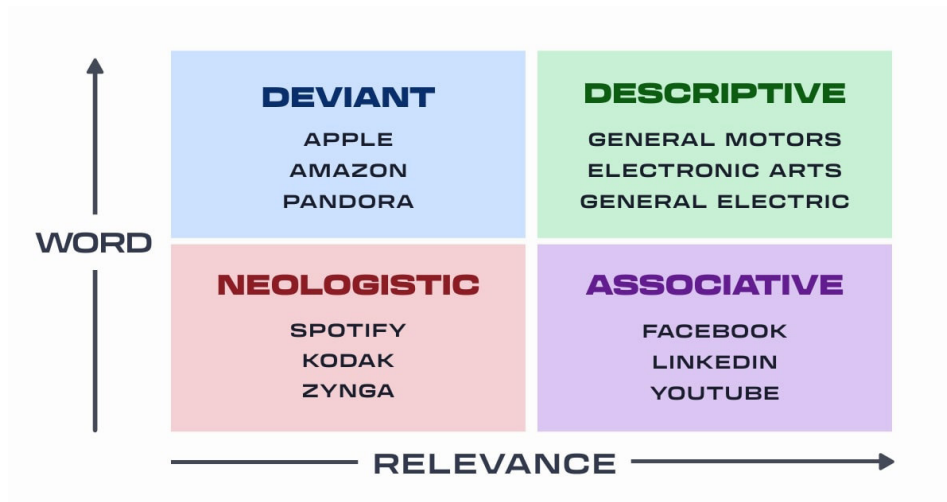


NICK KOLENDA

# CONTENTS

1 Choose the Right Type of Name .....	3
2 Generate Related Words .....	7
3 Build Associative Names .....	9
4 Build Descriptive Names .....	13
5 Find Meaningful Sounds and Letters .....	15
6 Build Neologistic Names .....	20
7 Build Deviant Names .....	23
8 Filter the Names .....	25
9 Add a Version or Number .....	27





# 1. CHOOSE THE RIGHT TYPE OF NAME

Use this product naming matrix.

I created a matrix that categorizes brand names into 4 types.

1. **Descriptive** – Words that describe the product
2. **Associative** – Nonwords that describe the product
3. **Deviant** – Words with no relevance to the product
4. **Neologistic** – Nonwords with no relevance to the product

But we can expand this matrix into a scatterplot.

Example with brands of soap:

(see fig 1)

In the bottom-left corner, you see Barf and Nivea as neologistic names.

**Side Note:** Barf isn't a typo. It means "snow" in Persian. Perhaps they have no intentions of targeting English speakers. Or maybe they want an eccentric market.

Now that we *categorized* brand names, we can choose a name that aligns with our goals.

## WHICH NAMES ARE PERSUASIVE?

Brand names are most persuasive when they are *moderately congruent* with the product (Meyers-Levy et al., 1994).

Consider the board game Pictionary. A fully congruent name (e.g., Guess a Picture) is dull and boring, while a fully incongruent name (e.g., Misaro) is confusing:

(see fig 2)

Irrelevant names are persuasive because they force customers to find meaning:

*If the ambiguous name is uninformative in the literal or semantic sense, consumers will search for a pragmatic meaning or reason for the communication (Miller & Kahn, 2005, p. 87)*

This "aha" moment feels good, and customers blame the product.

Congruent names offer no puzzle to solve, while incongruent names are impossible to solve. Therefore, avoid the extreme top-right and bottom-left of the scatterplot.

## WHICH NAMES ARE MEMORABLE?

Descriptive names are most common, yet least memorable.

Why? Based on brain studies, we think of brand names as people:

*...brand names tend to be processed through semantic routes. Similar to proper names and non-words, they are represented in the lexical systems of both hemispheres (Cheung et al., 2010)*

When is the last time you met somebody named Tall Skinny Man? You haven't. Your brain would struggle to encode it.

Therefore, avoid the top right and extreme left of the scatterplot.

## WHICH NAMES ARE EMOTIONAL?

Suppose that you want a name that communicates these traits: *delicate, beautiful, innocent, and pure*.

Descriptive names can't depict that much information concisely. Yet deviant names could communicate all of that information in four letters: *Dove*.

Deviant names are most emotional because they can borrow emotions from existing concepts.

## WHICH NAMES ARE SCALABLE?

Neologistic names are most scalable because you start with a blank canvas.

*...with a nonmeaningful name (e.g. Exxon), the marketer begins with a "clean slate" and can generate product images without interference from existing perceptions (Robertson, 1989, p. 66)*

Over time, you can paint the exact perception that you want, a helpful benefit for global expansion:

*The increasingly global nature of many markets*

*requires that meaningful brand names be translated to achieve consistent meaning...If flexibility and adaptability are given higher priority, then a non-meaningful name is attractive (Kohli et al., 2005, p. 1507)*

However, a relevant name can perform better with smaller budgets because you can borrow existing meaning (Robertson, 1989).

Think of cars. Automatic transmission is easier, yet manual transmission gives more control.

→ **Large budget?** Choose more control (*neologistic*)

→ **Small budget?** Choose easier routes (*descriptive, deviant, associative*)

## WHICH NAMES ARE PROTECTABLE?

Ross Petty, a professor of Marketing Law at Babson, describes four categories of trademark strength. Coincidentally, these categories align perfectly with the four names in this article:

*Most countries recognise roughly four categories of intrinsic trademark strength. The strongest trademarks and brand names are fanciful-made-up words or numbers that have no prior meaning such as KODAK...The next strongest are arbitrary marks-words that have meaning but no association with a particular use such as APPLE computers or CAMEL cigarettes. The third level of strength is suggestive marks-words that allude to product features or performance without actually describing them such as RAIN DANCE car wax or SURFVIVOR suntan lotion...The fourth and weakest category of trade names is descriptive words-words that describe the product, the company founder's family name or the geographic origin of the product (Petty, 2008, pp. 191-192)*

From strongest to weakest in trademarks:

5. Neologistic
6. Deviant
7. Associative
8. Descriptive

## WHICH NAMES ARE BETTER FOR SEO?

Nowadays, a catchy brand name is more rankable in SERPS than a keyword-filled domain. Search engines confuse descriptive names for the topic itself.

Neologistic names have no semantic connections, so they are easily parsable.

Deviant names can also work. Apple doesn't describe their collection of "Red Delicious" or "Granny Smith" products, so it's clear that "Apple" is referring to something else.

## RECAP

Ultimately, *any* brand name can work. but try avoiding

descriptive names in the extreme top-right of the scatterplot.

(see fig 3)

Cheung, M. C., Chan, A. S., & Sze, S. L. (2010). Electrophysiological correlates of brand names. *Neuroscience letters*, 485(3), 178-182.

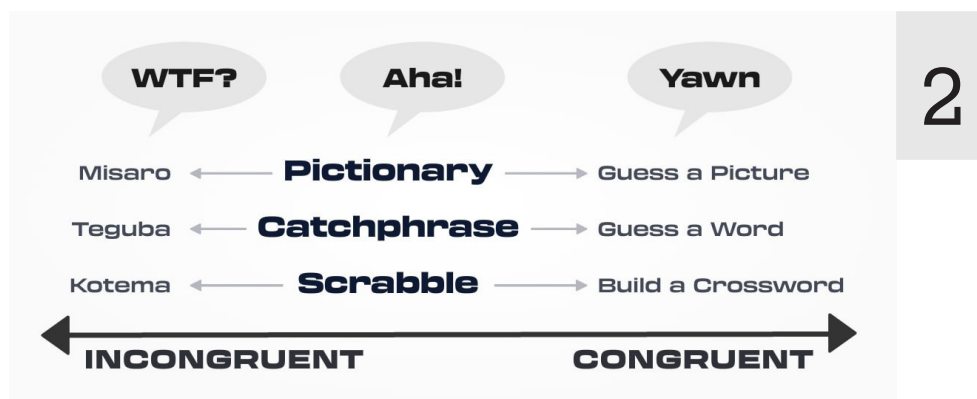
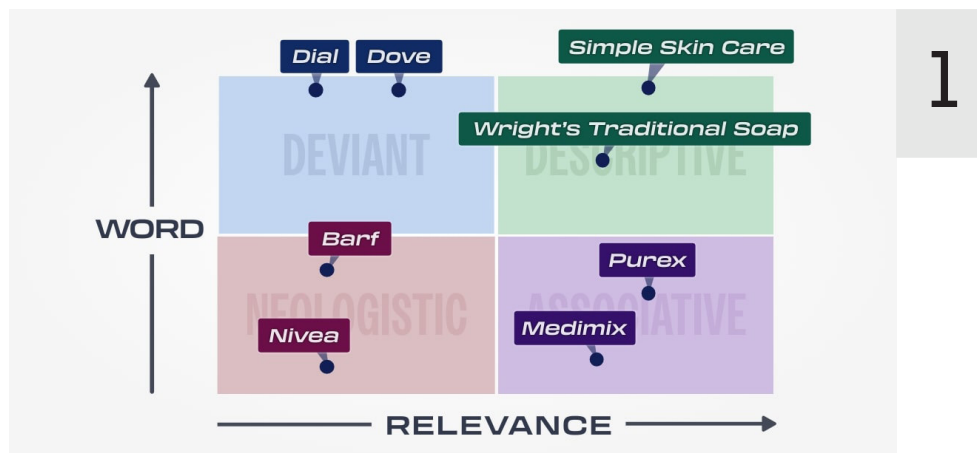
Kohli, C. S., Harich, K. R., & Leuthesser, L. (2005). Creating brand identity: a study of evaluation of new brand names. *Journal of business research*, 58(11), 1506-1515.

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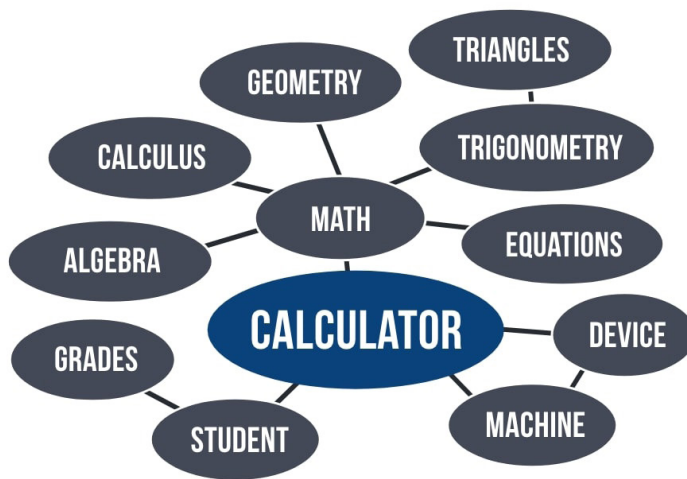
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	NEOLOGISTIC	ASSOCIATIVE	DESCRIPTIVE	DEVIANT
PERSUASIVE	✓	✓		✓
MEMORABLE		✓		
DISTINCTIVE	✓	✓		✓
RELEVANT		✓	✓	
EMOTIONAL				✓
SCALABLE	✓			
PROTECTABLE	✓			✓
SEO	✓	✓		✓



## 2. GENERATE RELATED WORDS

Create a semantic map and compile synonyms of your benefit.

**Suppose that you're launching a calculator.**

Silicon Valley is salivating for a calculator, but you need a catchy name for it.

First, generate a list of words that are related.

→ **Create a Semantic Map.** Examples from my map: (see fig 1)  
*math, algebra, calculus, geometry, shapes, trigonometry,*

*triangles, equations, device, machine, student, geek, genius, grades.*

→ **Compile Synonyms of the Main Benefit.** Brand names convert better when they contain positive attributes (Kohli et al., 2005). Determine one or two key benefits or advantages in your calculator (e.g., *elegant, intelligent*), then generate synonyms of these words.

# SEMANTIC

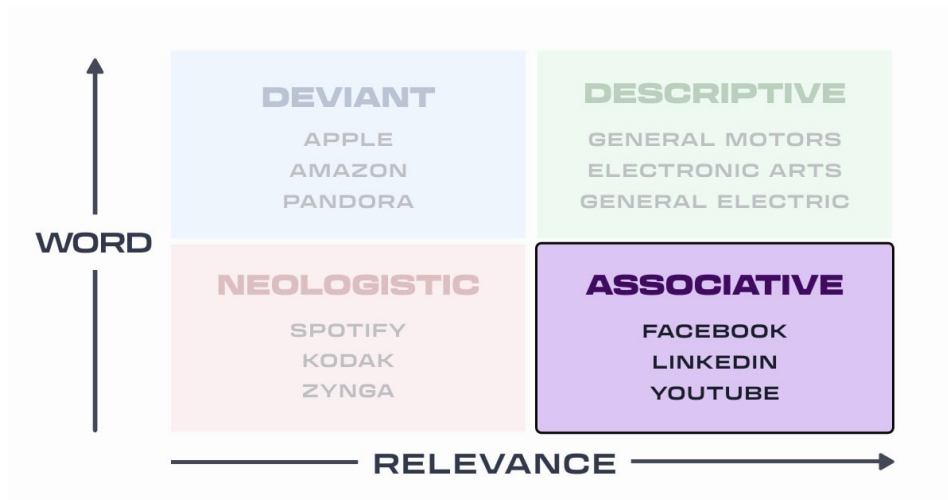
CALCULATOR
Machine
Device
Math
Algebra
Calculus
Geometry
Shapes
Trigonometry
Triangles
Equations
Student
Grades
Geek
Genius

# BENEFITS

INTELLIGENT	ELEGANT
Acute	Chic
Astute	Fancy
Brainy	Grace
Brilliant	Grand
Creative	Luxurious
Rational	Opulent
Smart	Ornate
Wise	Stylish

1





### 3. BUILD ASSOCIATIVE NAMES

Enter your related words into naming techniques.

#### Use these techniques:

- **Blend** - Combine two words
- **Prefix** - Add a relevant prefix
- **Suffix** - Add a relevant suffix
- **Removal** - Remove various letters
- **Replacement** - Replace various letters
- **Homophone** - Change the spelling
- **Onomatopoeia** - Imitate the sound of your product
- **Translation** - Translate a semantic term
- **Acronym** - Abbreviate a descriptive name

(see figs 1-9)

Here are names that I compiled for the calculator:

- **Blend:** IntelliCalc, Intellivice, Intellicus, Intellibra, Equad, Algent
- **Prefix:** iCalc, iTrig
- **Suffix:** Geekify, Equatero
- **Removal:** Geomet, Stud, Trig
- **Replacement:** Intellivent, Elevant
- **Homophone:** Wize, Aküt
- **Onomatopoeia:** Whiz
- **Translation:** Friki, Sabio, Trekant, Kone, Fiksu, Triangulum
- **Acronym:** TIC, TEC

Don't like your names? Adjust your *input* (e.g., semantic map).

## BLEND

COMBINE TWO WORDS

1

PICTURE + DICTIONARY	PICTIONARY
PIN + INTEREST	PINTEREST
INTELLIGENT + CALCULATOR	INTELICALC
INTELLIGENT + DEVICE	INTELLIVICE
INTELLIGENT + CALCULUS	INTELLICUS
INTELLIGENT + ALGEBRA	INTELLIBRA
EQUATIONS + GRADE	EQUADE
ALGEBRA + INTELLIGENT	ALGENT

## PREFIX

ADD A RELEVANT PREFIX

2

TURBO + TAX	TURBOTAX
WEB + MD	WEBMD
I + CALC	ICALC
I + TRIG	ITRIG

## SUFFIX

ADD A RELEVANT SUFFIX

3

SHOP + IFY	SHOPIFY
BIT + LY	BITLY
GEEK + IFY	GEEKIFY
EQUATIONS + ERO	EQUATERO



4

## REMOVAL

### REMOVE VARIOUS LETTERS

ACCURATE - TE	ACURA
EXCELLENT - LENT	EXCEL
GEOMETRY - RY	GEOMET
STUDENT - ENT	STUD
TRIGONOMETRY - ONOMETRY	TRIG

5

## REPLACEMENT

### REPLACE VARIOUS LETTERS

VIDEO + M	VIMEO
INTELLIGENT + V	INTELLIVENT
ELEGANT + V	ELEVANT

6

## HOMOPHONE

### CHANGE THE SPELLING

FANTASTIC + K	FANTASTIK
CRISPY CREAM + K	KRISPY KREME
WISE + Z	WIZE
ACUTE + AKUT	AKÜT

## ONOMATOPOEIA

IMITATE THE SOUND OF YOUR PRODUCT

WII

PING

WHIZ

7

## TRANSLATION

TRANSLATE A SEMANTIC TERM

I ROLL → LATIN

**VOLVO**

HUMANITY → ZULU

**UBUNTU**

WISE → SPANISH

**SABIO**

GEEK → SPANISH

**FRIKI**

TRIANGLE → DANISH

**TREKANT**

NERD → FINNISH

**KONE**

SMART → FINNISH

**FIKSU**

TRIANGLE → LATIN

**TRIANGULUM**

8

## ACRONYM

ABBREVIATE A DESCRIPTIVE NAME

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS MACHINE

**IBM**

HELP A REPORTER OUT

**HARO**

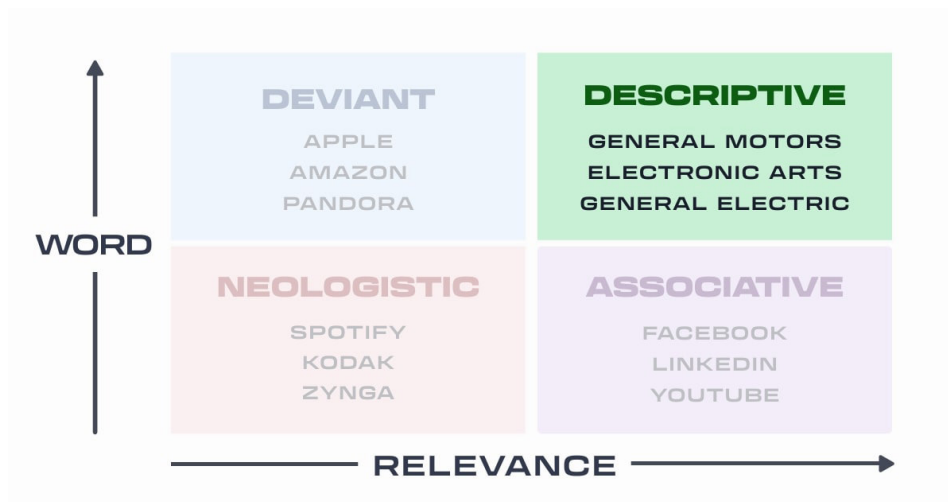
THE INTELLIGENT CALCULATOR

**TIC**

THE ELEGANT CALCULATOR

**TEC**

9



## 4. BUILD DESCRIPTIVE NAMES

Use these techniques for relevant names.

Use these techniques for descriptive names:

→ **Alliteration** - Repeat the beginning phonemes (e.g. Math Machine)

→ **Rhyme** - Repeat the ending phonemes (e.g., Chic Geek)

→ **Founder** - Incorporate the founder's name (e.g., Kolenda Calc)

→ **Geography** - Incorporate the specific location (e.g., Calc Worldwide)

(see figs 1-4)

### ALLITERATION

REPEAT BEGINNING PHONEMES

BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU

---

BEST BUY

MATH MACHINE

1

## **RHYME**

REPEAT ENDING PHONEMES

ETCH-A-SKETCH

FITBIT

CHIC GEEK

2

## **FOUNDER**

INCORPORATE THE FOUNDER'S NAME

CICI'S PIZZA

DICK'S SPORTING GOODS

KOLENDA CALC

3

## **GEOGRAPHY**

INCORPORATE THE SPECIFIC LOCATION

BOSTON LAGER

SANTA BARBARA WINERY

4

1	Small	Big	2
	Angular	Round	
	Fast	Slow	
	Bright	Dark	
	Elegant	Rugged	
	Female	Male	
FRONT VOWELS		BACK VOWELS	
ē, i, ā, e, a		ō, o, ä, u, ü	
VOICELESS		VOICED	
ch, f, h, k, p, s, sh, t, th		b, d, g, j, l, m, n, r, th, v, w, y, z	
FRICATIVES		STOPS	
f, h, s, sh, th, v, z		b, d, g, k, p, t	

## 5. FIND MEANINGFUL SOUNDS AND LETTERS

Choose whichever group of sounds "feels right" for your product.

Look at these shapes:

(see fig 1)

Which shape is *kiki*? And which is *bouba*? Did you guess:

- **Kiki = Pointy Shape**
- **Bouba = Round Shape**

95% of people choose these labels (Ramachandran & Hubbard, 2001).

Here's another. Which table is *mil*? Which is *mal*?

(see fig 2)

Over 80% of people assign *mal* to the big table (Sapir, 1929).

Some products just "feel right" with certain sounds. In this step, you'll find these sounds.

### TYPES OF PHONEMES

Phonemes are the smallest units of sound (see Yorkston & Menon, 2004).

Consider the word "the" —

- **3 Letters:** t – h – e
- **1 Syllable:** the
- **2 Phonemes:** th – uh

Roughly 44 phonemes exist, and we can dissect their meaning by categorizing them.

**Vowels** are categorized by **tongue location**:

- **Front:** e, i, e
- **Back:** o, a, u

(see fig 3)

**Consonants** are categorized by **vibration of vocal cords**:

- **Voiced:** Vibration occurs (e.g., b, d, g)
- **Voiceless:** No vibration (e.g., p, t, f)

They're also categorized by **air flow in the mouth**:

- **Fricatives:** Air escapes (e.g., s, f, z)
- **Stops:** Air stops (e.g., p, k, b)

## MEANINGS OF PHONEMES

In the following summary, choose the side with descriptions that “feel right” for your product:

(see fig 4)

**Sources:** Duduciuc, 2015; Klink, 2000; Klink, 2003; Yorkston & Menon, 2004; Lowrey & Shrum, 2007.

Consider these beers

→ **Beer A:** Cold, clean, crisp

→ **Beer B:** Smooth, mellow, rich

None of those adjectives appeared in the previous groups, but you can sense that Group 1 is better for Beer A, while Group 2 is better for Beer B (see Lowrey & Shrum, 2007).

Examples:

→ **Small vs. Big.** “Mal” seemed fitting for a large table, while “mil” seemed fitting for a small table. In another study, cancer medications seemed less invasive with Group 1 sounds (Abel & Gilnert, 2008).

→ **Angular vs. Round.** Brimley was better for a knife, yet Bromley was better for a hammer (Lowrey & Shrum, 2007). And ice cream seemed smooth and creamy when it was called Frosh (vs. Frish; Yorkston & Menon, 2004).

## WHY DO SOUNDS HAVE MEANING?

Researchers once believed that linguistic sounds were randomly assigned, except for onomatopes (e.g., *woof*, *bang*, *fizz*).

But that belief has been debunked. Sounds are meaningful across languages:

9. Bouba-kiki effects occur for babies and remote populations (Maurer et al., 2006; Bremner et al., 2013).

10. English speakers could choose which Japanese words meant “pain” without knowing the language (Iwasaki et al., 2007).

But *why* are sounds meaningful? You can blame these sources:

→ **Blending.** We create new words by combining existing words — e.g., we merged *bat* and *mash* into *bash*. Certain sounds repeatedly appear in similar words because of this blending: “back vowels such as the [u] sound in *dull* or *ugh* are often found in English words expressing disgust or dislike (e.g., *blunder*, *bung*, *bungle*, *clumsy*, *muck*; Duduciuc, 2015, p. 113). Look at the following words and the years they entered the English language:

(see fig 5)

→ **Sources of Pitch.** Small objects produce high-pitched sounds, while large objects produce low-pitched sounds. And we inject these connotations into linguistic sounds. We also adjust the pitch of our voice to appear big or small. For example, we raise the intonation of our voice while asking questions because we need cooperation (Ohala et al., 1997).

→ **Perceptual Fluency.** *Bouba* has round letters, while *kiki* has sharp letters (Lockwood & Dingemanse, 2015)

→ **Kinesthetic Fluency.** *Bouba* is spoken with a round mouth, while *kiki* is spoken with a narrower mouth. Indeed, brand names that were spoken with a round mouth were preferred for a hammer (vs. knife; Lowrey and Shrum, 2007).

(see fig 6)

→ **Facial Feedback Hypothesis.** A cartoon seemed funnier when people held a pencil in their mouth because it forced them to smile (Strack et al., 1988). And it’s been replicated: People were more likely to help someone whose name ended in a hard “e” sound (Kniffin & Shimizu, 2014). Some researchers also found that firms with “e” sounds in their name are more successful (Pogacar et al., 2014).

→ **Dual Activation.** Whenever you read a word, you subvocalize those sounds and activate *all* meaning with those sounds. In fact, exposing people to the word “bye” influences them to purchase a product because of the phonetic similarity with “buy” (Davis & Herr, 2014). Perhaps the drink Bai had this intention.

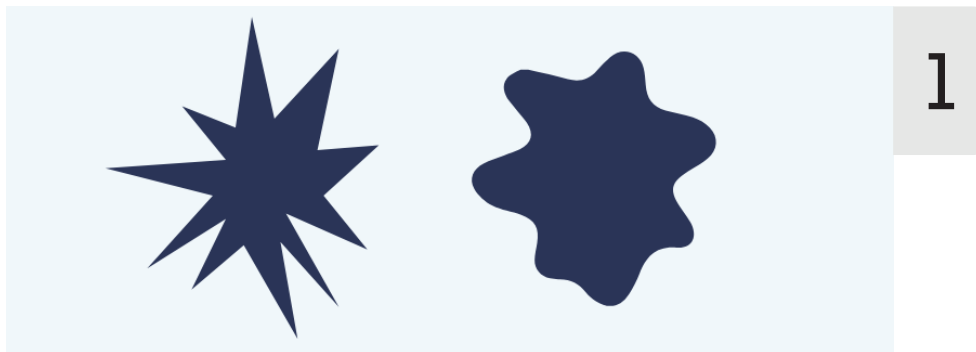
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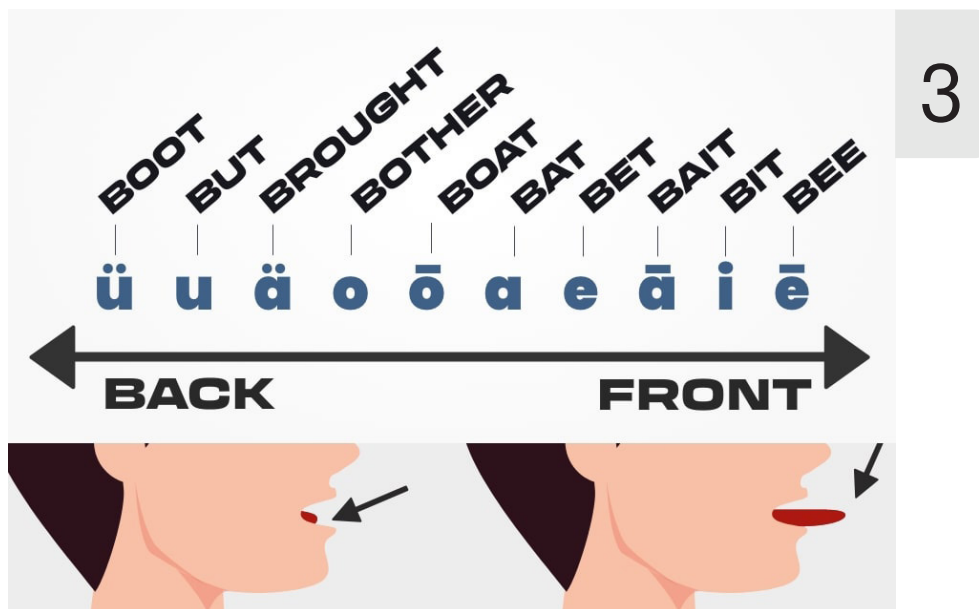
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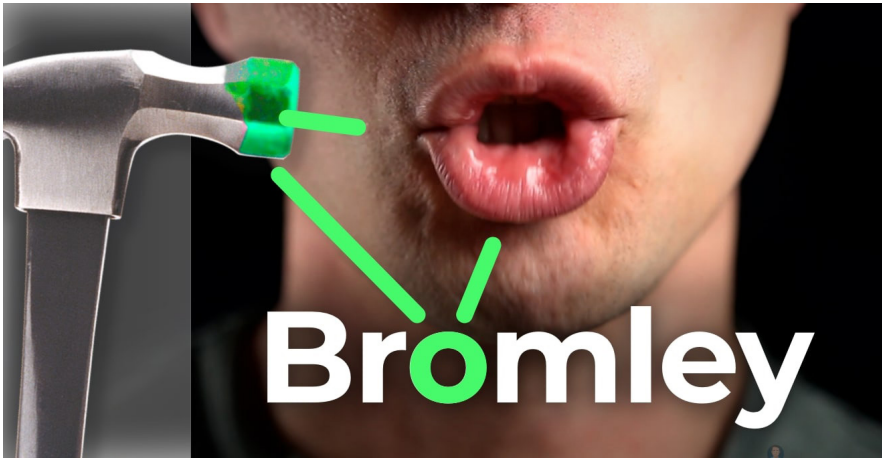




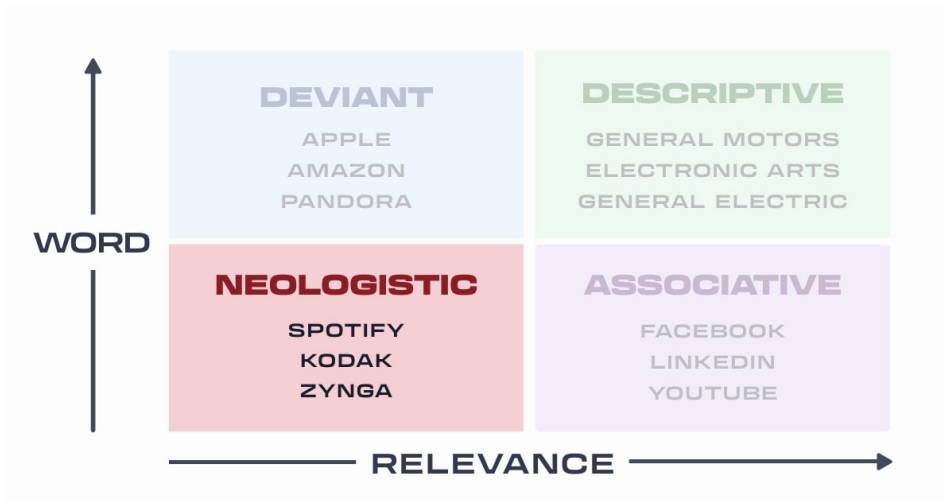
1	Small	Big	2	4	
	Angular	Round			
	Fast	Slow			
	Bright	Dark			
	Elegant	Rugged			
	Female	Male			
FRONT VOWELS		BACK VOWELS			
ē, i, ā, e, a		ō, o, ä, u, ü			
VOICELESS		VOICED			
ch, f, h, k, p, s, sh, t, th		b, d, g, j, l, m, n, r, th, v, w, y, z			
FRICATIVES		STOPS			
f, h, s, sh, th, v, z		b, d, g, k, p, t			

5

<b>bat</b> 1205	+	<b>mash</b> 1000	<b>bash</b> 1641
<b>clap</b> 1275	+	<b>crash</b> 1400	<b>clash</b> 1500
<b>smack</b> 1746	+	<b>mash</b> 1000	<b>smash</b> 1778



6



## 6. BUILD NEOLOGISTIC NAMES

Generate fake words to describe your product or service.

### Follow these steps:

1. Start With a Meaningful Prefix
2. Arrange Consonants From Front to Back
3. End With a Relevant Gender Phoneme
4. Choose the Appropriate Stress

Gl- is a *phonaestheme* because these sounds appear in many words related to light or vision (e.g., *glimmer*, *glisten*, *glitter*, *gleam*, *glow*, *glare*, *glint*).

Phonaesthemes are distinct from suffixes and prefixes (-ing, -ly, -ed) because they can't be attached or detached.

### 1. START WITH A MEANINGFUL PREFIX

Brand names are similar to prices in which the beginning is crucial.

*while evaluating "2.99," the magnitude encoding process starts as soon as our eyes encounter the digit "2." Consequently, the encoded magnitude of \$2.99 gets anchored on the leftmost digit (i.e., \$2) and becomes significantly lower than the encoded magnitude of \$3.00 (Thomas & Morwitz, 2005, p. 55).*

Remember the bouba-kiki effect? Let's try a similar exercise.

Invent a definition for the word *glon*.

Got one? Over 25% of people invent definitions that are related to light or vision (Magnus, 2000).

Examples:

- **BLOW** (blast, blurt, blaze)
- **BRIGHT** (breezy, brisk, brilliant)
- **CLANG** (clank, clash, clap)
- **CRANKY** (crabby, crazy, cry)
- **DRAG** (drift, droop, drape)
- **FLOW** (float, flush, flee)
- **FRANTIC** (frazzle, fray, freaky)
- **GLEAM** (glow, glint, gloss)
- **GROWL** (grunt, groan, gruff)
- **PLEASANT** (playful, platonic, plentiful)
- **PRIZED** (present, praise, prince)
- **SKIM** (skid, skip, skate)
- **SCREECH** (scream, scrape, scratch)
- **SLIDE** (slip, slope, slant)
- **SNOUT** (sniff, snort, sneeze)
- **SPLIT** (splice, splinter, splatter)
- **SQUEEZE** (squash, squirt, squirm)
- **STRAIGHT** (stripe, strip, stretch)

- **SWING** (swish, swoop, swipe)
- **TREAD** (trudge, trot, tramp)
- **TWIST** (twirl, twine, tweak)
- **WHACK** (whip, whoosh, whoop)
- **WRITHE** (wring, wrap, wrath)

If you find a relevant phonestheme, then great. Start with this sound.

If not, scan this list of Latin prefixes.

If you still can't find anything, then use a plosive consonant:

*Plosives are consonants such as b, c, d, g, k, p, and t, which, when pronounced, produce an explosive, popping sound. Brand names beginning with plosives were found to produce significantly better recall and recognition. (Robertson, 1989, p. 63)*

## 2. ARRANGE CONSONANTS FROM FRONT TO BACK

Which group of names do you prefer:

- Buleka, Balugor, Mesuikiro, Patugi, Batikero, Podakeri
- Kuleba, Ragulob, Rekusimo, Gatupi, Rakitebo, Rokadepi

Most people prefer the first group (Topolinski et al., 2014)

In these words — BULEKA, BALUGOR — you speak the beginning letters (B, F, M, P) with the front of your mouth, then the ending letters (K, G) with the back of your mouth. This articulation resembles your digestive system.

*...the mere articulation of inward words (featuring consonantal stricture spots wandering from the front to the rear of the mouth) would induce an affective and motivational state associated with deglutition [i.e., swallowing], namely a positive state of approach. In contrast, the articulation of outward words (featuring consonantal stricture spots wandering from the rear to the front of the mouth) would induce an affective and motivational*

*state associated with expectoration [i.e., spitting], namely a negative state of avoidance. (Topolinski et al, 2014, pp. 6-7)*

Inward names generate a higher willingness-to-pay, plus other benefits (Topolinski et al., 2015).

Some argue that “inward” arrangements are simply more common in languages, and this frequency heightens our *pronunciation fluency* (Bakhtiari, 2015).

**Key Step:** Once you've chosen meaningful sounds from Group 1 or Group 2, arrange the consonants from front to back.

(see fig 1)

## 3. END WITH A RELEVANT GENDER PHONEME

Male names are more likely to end in consonants (e.g., Bob, Ted) whereas female names are more likely to end in vowels (e.g., Sue, Katie; Cassidy, Kelly, & Sharoni, 1999).

Consider the name *Chris*.

It's usually a male name, but we can transform this name into a female name by adding vowels at the end:

- Chris Christie
- Chris Chrissy
- Chris Krista

We do it often. With *many* names:

- Nick Nicki
- James Jamie
- Carl Carla
- Pat Patti
- Vic Vicki

And the list goes on.

- **Targeting Men?** End with a consonant.
- **Targeting Women?** End with a vowel.

Or end with a relevant Latin suffix (see this list).



## 4. CHOOSE THE APPROPRIATE STRESS

Buleka can be pronounced in different ways:

- BOO-LAY-KUH
- BOO-LEE-KUH
- BEW-LUH-KUH

Choose a pronunciation that “feels right.” If it sounds right to you, it probably sounds right to your customers.

Or consider the part of speech:

- **Want a noun?** Stress the first syllable
- **Want a verb?** Stress the later syllables

Oftentimes, you can change the meaning of words (e.g., *record*, *permit*, *compound*) by alternating this stress (Kelly, 1988; Bergen, 2001).

## RECAP

I followed this process and generated these names for a calculator:

- Utilik
- Previk

- Prezik
- Prazik
- Privelik
- Brevik
- Brezik
- Brazik
- Brivelik

Bakhtiari, G. (2015). The role of fluency in oral approach and avoidance (Doctoral dissertation, Universität Würzburg).

Bergen, B. K. (2001). Of sound, mind, and body: neural explanations for non-categorical phonology. University of California, Berkeley.

Kelly, M. H. (1988). Phonological biases in grammatical category shifts. *Journal of memory and language*, 27(4), 343-358.

Kelly, M. H., Springer, K., & Keil, F. C. (1990). The relation between syllable number and visual complexity in the acquisition of word meanings. *Memory & cognition*, 18(5), 528-536.

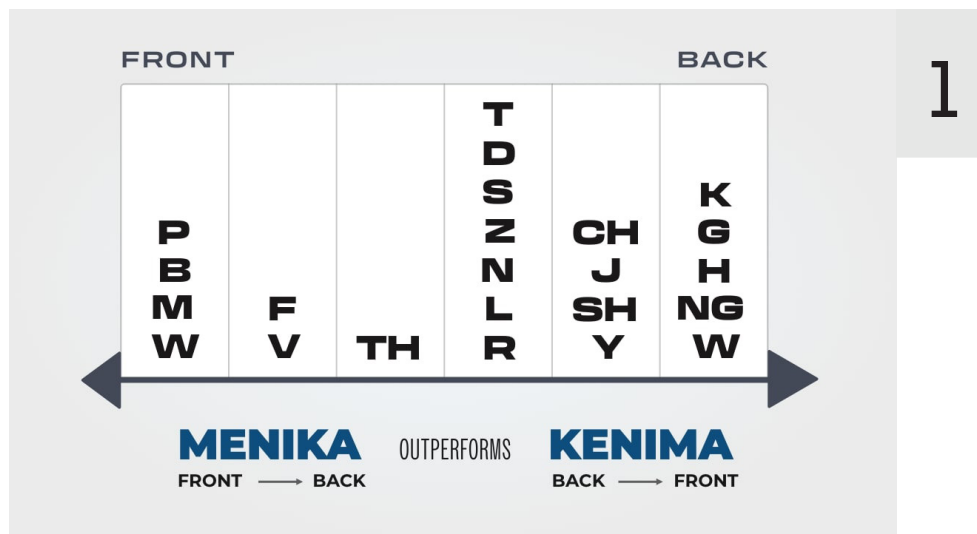
Magnus, M. (2001). What's in a Word?: Studies in Phonosemantics. Det historisk-filosofiske fakultet.

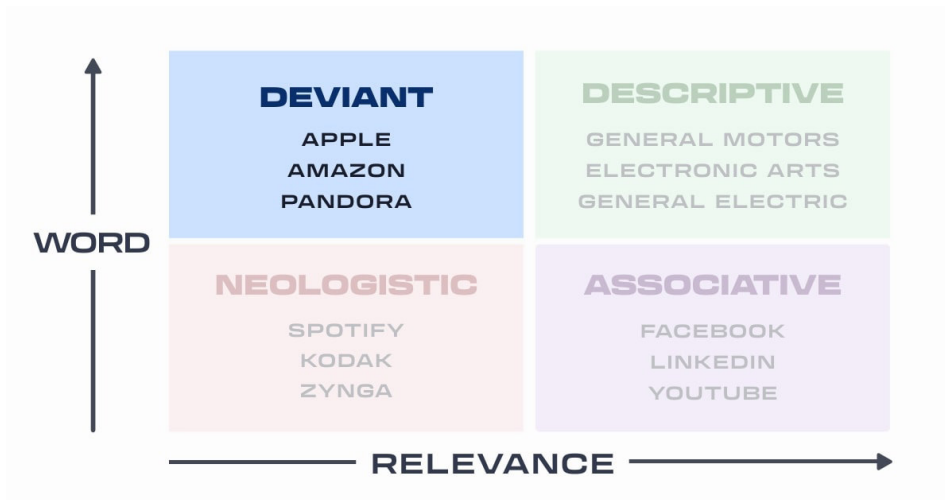
Robertson, K. (1989). Strategically desirable brand name characteristics. *Journal of consumer marketing*, 6(4), 61-71.

Thomas, M., & Morwitz, V. (2005). Penny wise and pound foolish: the left-digit effect in price cognition. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32(1), 54-64.

Topolinski, S., Maschmann, I. T., Pecher, D., & Winkielman, P. (2014). Oral approach-avoidance: Affective consequences of muscular articulation dynamics. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 106(6), 885.

Topolinski, S., Zürn, M., & Schneider, I. K. (2015). What's in and what's out in branding? A novel articulation effect for brand names. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6, 585.





## 7. BUILD DEVIANT NAMES

Generate metaphors that describe your product.

Follow these steps:

1. **Identify the Primary Emotions of Your Product.** Suppose that your calculator is very *robust* with tons of features. One emotion could be feeling *overwhelmed* (in a good way).

2. **Transform Those Emotions into Visual Labels.** When I visualize feeling overwhelmed, I think of a giant monster overlooking me, so I'll choose "giant" or "monster" as the label.

3. **Create Semantic Maps Surrounding Those Labels.** I created a semantic map with these words: *goliath, babel, tower, skyscraper, infinity, open space, jungle, titan, mammoth, behemoth, mountain, everest*

4. **Keep Concrete Nouns that Spark Your Interest.** Nouns can be triggered — e.g., seeing an apple will subconsciously activate the company Apple (Fitzsimons et al., 2008). Plus, nouns are memorable.

*Concrete nouns, with tangible, visual referents (e.g., "dog") more easily elicit these mental images than abstract nouns (e.g., "justice"). Therefore, concrete brand names such as Dove, Mustang, Rabbit, and Apple should inherently be more easily learned*

*and/or retrieved from memory than abstract names such as Pledge, Tempo, Ban or Bold (Robertson, 1989, p. 65)*

(see fig 1)

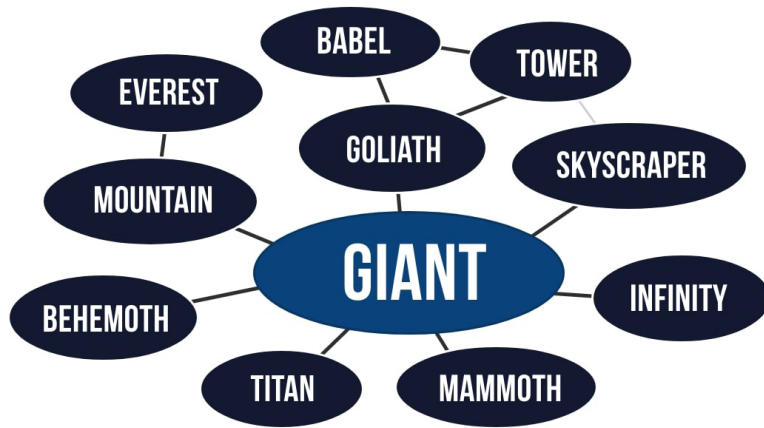
I liked these names for a calculator:

- Goliath
- Babel
- Behemoth
- Mammoth
- Titan

You can also tweak these deviant names with other naming techniques:

- **Homophone:** Behemoth Behemath
- **Blend:** Behemoth + Genius = Behemius
- **Suffix:** Titan + icus = Titanicus

Fitzsimons, G. M., Chartrand, T. L., & Fitzsimons, G. J. (2008). Automatic effects of brand exposure on motivated behavior: how apple makes you "think different". *Journal of consumer research*, 35(1), 21-35.



1





## BRAND NAMES

- 1 Right **length**?
- 2 Right **complexity**?
- 3 **Enticing** to say?
- 4 Few **spelling variations**?
- 5 Good **abbreviation**?
- 6 Good **translations**?
- 7 **Available** (e.g., trademark)?

## 8. FILTER THE NAMES

Prioritize your names based on length, complexity, flow, and other factors.

Prioritize your names based on these factors.

### LENGTH

Long words are associated with more complex ideas::

*We can often deduce at what point a particular word entered our language purely by evaluating the word's simplicity. Think about domain names on the Internet. When we see a website called Books.com, Buy.com, or Frames.com, we know those sites must have been reserved fairly early in the creation of the Internet in comparison to sites like Buybookshere.com...words associated with fundamental survival needs tend to be short and simple (cow, dog, head, face, ear, eye, nose, toe, stone)...This concept also affects the way people perceive our names. Names that are short, abrupt, and simple tend to signify no-nonsense, down-to-earth, active individuals, while longer multi-syllable names evoke complex and imaginative personalities. (Feinson, 2004)*

Indeed, people invent longer words for polygons that look more complex (Kelly et al., 1990).

Longer names can also imply *largeness*, much like prices seem larger when they are visually larger (Coulter & Coulter, 2005).

Same with language. Consider these two sentences:

- The pie was huge.
- The pie was huuuuuuuge.

You extend the length of “huge” to convey a larger size.

Therefore:

- Short names are better for “small” products (e.g., simple calculator)
- Long names are better for “large” products (e.g., robust calculator)

### PRONUNCIATION

Short names are *familiar*; long names are *exciting* (Song & Schwarz, 2009).

For example, roller coasters seem:

- Less intense with easy names (e.g., Chunta, Ohanze)

→ More intense with long names (e.g., Tsiischili, Heammawihio)

Likewise, long drug names seem *risky* or *advanced* (Cho, 2014).

## SPELLING VARIATIONS

Reduce the number of potential spelling variations:

*...upon hearing an ad for the laundry detergent Purex a literate English speaker would know to spell it as p-u-r-e-x....the letters p-u-r-e-x are the only letters that would produce such a sound in English (Luna et al., 2013, p. 37)*

If not, you could prime the correct spelling by including a similarly spelled word near your name:

*...in lexical priming a real word that sounds and is spelled like the nonword is presented before the nonword (e.g., “rose” before Bose; Luna et al., 2013, p. 38)*

## ABBREVIATIONS

People will abbreviate your name whether you like it or not. So if your name is the Amazing New Ultimate Store. Well, you got a problem ANUS.

Choose a name that is still brandable when abbreviated. Ideally, abbreviations should be easy-to-pronounce. A ticker symbol of COF will boost a stock price more than XRI (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2006).

## TRANSLATIONS

Translate your name into popular languages to see if it still works.

The Honda Fitta sounds great, doesn't it?

It's cool. It's young. It's hip.

And it's also Swedish for female genitalia.

Honda wasn't too happy. Though I wonder if they changed their slogan: *Small on the outside, big on the inside.*

Anyway, here are other blunders:

→ Mazda renamed their Laputa minivan (*puta* is *prostitute* in Spanish).

→ Clairol renamed their Mist Stick (*mist* is *manure* in German).

→ Mitsubishi renamed their Pajero (*pajero* is *wanker* in Spanish).

→ Reebok renamed their Incubus sneaker (an *incubus* was a demon who ravished women in their sleep).

→ Exxon tested names in 54 languages. One name, Enco, referred to a stalled engine in Japanese.

## AVAILABILITY

Are other people using the domain or trademark?

Alter, A. L., & Oppenheimer, D. M. (2006). Predicting short-term stock fluctuations by using processing fluency. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 103(24), 9369-9372.

Cho, H. (2015). The malleable effect of name fluency on pharmaceutical drug perception. *Journal of health psychology*, 20(10), 1369-1374.

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Kelly, M. H., Springer, K., & Keil, F. C. (1990). The relation between syllable number and visual complexity in the acquisition of word meanings. *Memory & cognition*, 18(5), 528-536.

Luna, D., Carnevale, M., & Lerman, D. (2013). Does brand spelling influence memory? The case of auditorily presented brand names. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 23(1), 36-48.

Song, H., & Schwarz, N. (2009). If it's difficult to pronounce, it must be risky: Fluency, familiarity, and risk perception. *Psychological Science*, 20(2), 135-138.



## 9. ADD A VERSION OR NUMBER

Add versions in tech or chemically formulated products.

Many products include numbers:

- WD-40
- 7-UP
- Boeing 767
- Xbox 360
- Canon T5i

These *alphanumeric names* usually work best for products that are *technical* or *chemically formulated* (e.g., drugs, fuels, vitamins)

### HOW TO APPLY

→ **Higher Numbers Seem More Advanced.** X-200 seemed better than X-100 for a computer (Gunasti & Ross, 2010). Plus, a higher number can trigger anchoring. A \$500 MP3 player seemed like a better value when it was called M-600 (vs. M-500; Yan & Duclos, 2013).

→ **Choose Alliterative Names.** Like the *Titan 200* (see Davis et al., 2012)

→ **Choose Round Numbers to Convey Simplicity.** Risky products seem less risky with round numbers. If you don't use a round number, then at least choose a number that isn't prime: Volvo S12 was better than Volvo S29, Axe 16 was better than Axe 17, Solus 36 was better than Solus 37 (Janiszewski & King, 2010).

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Gunasti, K., & Ross Jr, W. T. (2010). How and when alphanumeric brand names affect consumer preferences. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 47(6), 1177-1192.

Janiszewski, C., & King, D. (2010). The Affective Consequences of Alpha-Numeric Branding. *ACR North American Advances*.

Yan, D., & Duclos, R. (2013). Making sense of numbers: Effects of alphanumeric brands on consumer inference. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 30(2), 179-184.