

she claimed my



Avoid getting caught in a tug-of-war over your top-choice moniker.

PARENTS-TO-BE TEND to follow one of two strategies when it comes to revealing Junior's name before his debut: swiftly announcing their pick to "claim" it or guarding it as a secret for fear that another mama might pilfer the idea. Unfortunately, neither guarantees your babe will be the only Marley on the block. We asked Baby Name Wizard Laura Wattenberg how to handle common sources of name-heist drama.

NAME-NAPPER YOUR CO-WORKER

After spending months debating the possibilities with your partner, you've finally settled on the perfect name (woot!) when another preggo in your office announces that *she's* picked the same one (ugh!). Before you resolve to find a new No. 1, "ask yourself if this person is really part of your life long-term," Wattenberg says. If so, talk to her as early as possible and say something like: "You won't believe this, but we'd already picked that name for our baby, too!" You may not be able to broach it in person if your colleague is on maternity leave; gauge if an email or phone call is in order. But if you're fairly certain the two of you won't be in touch in five years, forgo the convo and order that Anson sign for the nursery. Sure, it might feel like a bit of the thunder has been taken away from your reveal, but in

the end, it's more important to bestow a name you love than a name no one has thought of, right? Right.

NAME-NAPPER A FAMILY MEMBER

Even if you live across the country from your nearest and dearest, you and your cousin could independently dream up Evalynn or another thought-it-was-original name. "Many people are drawn to the same styles and trends," Wattenberg says. If you discover a far-flung relative is gunning for the same name as you, but you rarely see each other face-to-face, try looking at the shared autograph as a point of bonding for your future tots. Family namesakes can create a murkier situation. For instance, what if your brother is a IV or V and has no sons, but you want to give his name to your little guy? Ask, says Wattenberg, who notes that people are remarkably hesitant to have the convo. Just go in knowing whether you're requesting his blessing—in which case, you should be willing to walk away from the name—or simply offering a considerate heads-up. "The worst thing you can do is ask for permission, be denied and do it anyway," she says.

NAME-NAPPER A FRIEND

Your BFF has her heart set on Deacon, her Gramp's name—aaaand so do you. Now what? You guessed it: time to talk.

The same rules apply here as with your family: figure out your intention first. If you don't plan to back down, you'll have to weigh the consequences of her irritation with how strongly you feel about the name. "Make it clear you're bringing it up because you care about her feelings," Wattenberg says. "Explain that you know how important names are and tell her why this one means so much to you." Hopefully, she'll realize that Deacon isn't just your fave character on *Nashville*—it's also what you dubbed every male fish, doll and Tamagotchi you had growing up.

NAME-NAPPER YOUR PET

Yep, you read that right. Over the past several years, Wattenberg has fielded countless questions from expectant women who've accidentally scooped *themselves* by calling their dog or cat by the name they'd hoped to use for their then-way-future offspring. "We're giving our pets more human names these days, so women end up naming a pet at age 22, not thinking they want a baby in the next seven years, but the animal is still in the picture when they get pregnant," Wattenberg says. The baby takes precedence, so your best option is to laugh it off and share the love. As long as you give the right dinner to the right Riley, they'll both be happy.

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