

How to Alphabetize for Filing and Indexing

Individual or Personal Names

The names of people are alphabetized by their surname. When surnames are the same, the position is naturally determined by the letters that follow:

- Smith, Mary B.
- Smith, Ned
- Smithson, John

When two or more similar names are of unequal length, file the shorter name first:

- Smith, M.
- Smith, Mary
- Smith, Mary C.
- Smith, Mary Charlene

Individual surnames with prefixes are alphabetized as each is written and are considered to be one word, whether or not they are written as one word:

- Mason, Tim
- McFarland, John
- Merrill, Jane
- Vane, K.
- Van Houton, Mae
- Vargas, Louise

A religious title or foreign title is alphabetized when it is followed by a first name only:

- Brother Thomas
- Burton, Francis (Rev.)
- Friar Tuck
- Queen Elizabeth
- Sister Mary Rose
- Tilton, Sarah (S.S.J.)

Company or Business Names

Words joined by a hyphen are treated as one word. However, if the hyphen is used instead of a comma in a business name, the individual parts of the name are treated as separate words, and therefore the name is indexed by the first word alone. The second name of the hyphenate is used only when needed, similar to a given name:

- Johnson, Samuel
- Johnson-Smith & Company
- Johnson, Steven
- Johnson, Victor

Whether a company name is composed of a compound word or is spelled as two words, it is alphabetized as if it were one word:

- New Deal Loan Company
- Newdeal Marine Works of America
- Suncity Shipbuilding Corporation
- Sun City Tannery

The exception is when a company name contains the name of a person. In this case, alphabetize by using the surname, followed by first name, then middle initial or middle name if any. The exception is the names of schools. These are alphabetized as written, as are other organizations, businesses, or institutions. See Table 1.

Single letters used as words are treated as words and arranged alphabetically preceding word names:

- BB Shop
- BBB Service Company
- Bakery Heaven
- Brighton Clothes Company

TABLE 1

Filing When the Company Name Contains a Person's Name

Name	Filed As
American Petroleum Co.	American Petroleum Co.
Mary Brown Cafe	Brown, Mary Cafe
John Dillard Company	Dillard, John Company
Dillard Stores	Dillard Stores
Joyce Kilmer High School	Joyce Kilmer High School
May's Floral Center	May's Floral Center
John C. Wilson Realty	Wilson, John C. Realty
Wilson Realty Company	Wilson Realty Company

When two or more similar company or business names are of unequal length, file the shorter name first:

- ◆ National Bank
- ◆ National Bank of Commerce
- ◆ Bronson Club
- ◆ Bronson Club of New York City

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Miscellaneous

Abbreviations are alphabetized as if spelled in full. See Table 2.

TABLE 2 Filing Abbreviations

Name	Filed As
St. Luke's Church	Saint Luke's Church
Jas. Smith	Smith, James
Chas. Williams	Williams, Charles

Designations following names are alphabetized according to natural order of age:

- Smith, James III
- Smith, James, 2d
- Smith, James, Jr.
- Smith, James, Sr.

Articles, prepositions, conjunctions, and the ampersand are disregarded in alphabetizing:

- Thomas & Anderson, Inc.
- Thomas, Brown R.
- Washington Bank, The
- Workshop for the Blind

When words end in s, the s is considered part of the name:

- Leon Neon and Light
- Leon's Art Supplies

If a name contains a number, do not put it in “numerical order” with other numbered names. Alphabetize it as if the number were spelled out:

- 1020 Building Corporation (one thousand twenty)
- 13 Park Avenue Studio (thirteen)
- 21 Club (twenty-one)

Titles are disregarded:

- Jones, R. L. (Dr.)
- Simms, Carlotta (Countess)
- Smith, Nancy (Miss)

Exception: If a company name starts with a title, the title is considered to be the first word:

- Queen Mary Boat Company
- Sir John Thomas Cigar Company
- Viceroy of India Silk Company