Just about every Thai person has a nickname by which they are known informally, given to them by their parents at birth. The pervasive use of nicknames in this way apparently comes from the old belief that evil spirits (ปีศาจ, bpee-sàat) are constantly on the lookout for newborn children to snatch away and control. The spirits are apparently easily fooled though, as just the use of a nickname instead of a normal Thai name confuses them and helps to keep the child safe.

This is not a widespread belief nowadays of course, but nonetheless the use of nicknames remains widespread in Thailand. So much so that it’s not uncommon to know someone for years and still not be entirely sure of their real name and surname (unless it’s on their Facebook page!)

The nicknames given may be a contraction of their real name, but most often Thai parents take inspiration from a wide variety of other sources instead.

One common source of names is from your how you are at birth, including your appearance, size or whether you’re the first child.

- Bum
- บู่ม bŭm Dimpled
- Daeng
- แดง daeng Red
• Lek
  • เล็ก lék Small
• Dam
  • ดำ dam Black
• Nit
  • นิด nít Small
• Muay
  • mūay (A light-skinned female of Chinese descent)
• Noi
  • น้อย nói Small
• Som
  • ส้ม sôm Orange
• Pui
  • ปุ้ย bpûi Plump
• Tee
  • ตี๋ dtĕe (A light-skinned male of Chinese descent)
• Toi
  • ต้อย dtôi Tiny
• Uan
  • อ้วน ûan Fat
• Neung
  • หนึ่ง nèung One
• Yai
  • ยัย yài Big
• Song
  • สอง sŏng Two

Of course, how you look as a new-born baby and as a grown adult are completely different. The nickname often sticks though, even if it no longer has any meaning.

Animals

Another common source is names of animals, or even from the sounds animals make. This tradition is also related to protecting the newborn child
from the spirits, as calling the baby as if it were an animal was thought to be an effective way of tricking the spirits into leaving it alone.

- Aod
  ออด ót Tadpole
- Mot
  มอต mot Ant
- Aud
  อุด ót (From the sound of a pig)
- Nok
  นก nók Bird
- Hong
  หงส์ hòng Swan
- Non
  หนอน nŏn Worm
- Jeab
  เจี้ยบ jiap Baby chicken
- Nu
  หนู nŏo Mouse
- Kai
  ไก่ gài Chicken
- Pet
  เป็ด bpèt Duck
- Kob
  กบ gòp Frog
- Pla
  ปลา bplaa Fish
- Kung
  กุ้ง gûng Shrimp
- Poo
  ปู bpoo Crab
- Maew
  เมา maew Cat
- Seua
  เสือ sĕua Tiger
- **Mee**
  มหา mĕe Bear
- **Tai**
  ต้า dtàai (A shortened form of “Rabbit”)
  กระต่าย gra-dtàai
- **Meow**
  เมียว mĭeow (From the sound of a cat)
- **Takkataen**
  ตั๊กแตน dták-gà-dtaen Grasshopper
- **Moo**
  หมู mŏo Pig
- **Tao**
  เต่า dtào Turtle

### Foreign Words

English words also provide a fertile source for Thai nicknames. While some are taken straight from English names, like Jack (jàek), others take inspiration from more unconventional sources. Say, food or technology...

- **Apple**
  แอปเปิ้ล àep-bpêrn
- **Bank**
  แบงค์ báeng
- **Beer**
  เบียร์ bia
- **Beam**
  บีม beem
- **Cake**
  เค้ก káyk
- **Benz**
  เบนซ์ bayn
- **Cream**
  ครีม kreem
- **Bomb**
- bom
- Ice
- iai
- Bonus
- boh-nát
- Itim (from “ice cream”)
- ai-dtim
- Fiat
- fiat
- Jam
- yaem
- Ford
- fôt
- Mint
- mín
- Gear
- gia
- Milk
- min
- Gift
- gif

...or leisure activities, or letters of the alphabet.

- Art
- áat
- A / Ay
- ay
- Ball
- bon
- B / Bee
- bee
- Cartoon
- gaa-dtoon
- J / Jay
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Thai Name</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jay</td>
<td>แจ๊ย</td>
<td>jay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film</td>
<td>ฟิล์ม</td>
<td>fim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M / Em</td>
<td>เอม</td>
<td>em</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game</td>
<td>เกม</td>
<td>gaym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O / Oh</td>
<td>โอ</td>
<td>oh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golf</td>
<td>กอล์ฟ</td>
<td>góf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q / Kiw</td>
<td>กิว</td>
<td>kiw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guitar</td>
<td>กีตาร์</td>
<td>gee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R / Ah</td>
<td>อาร์</td>
<td>aa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joke</td>
<td>โจ๊ก</td>
<td>jóhk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X / Ek</td>
<td>เอ็ก</td>
<td>èk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ping Pong</td>
<td>ปิงปอง</td>
<td>bping-bpong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y / Wai</td>
<td>วาย</td>
<td>waai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If some of the above seem unlikely choices for a name, others can be even more eccentric. It seems like any impressive-sounding foreign word is suitable for using as a nickname, so there are Thais out there with nicknames of “King Kong” กิงคอง, “Laser” เลเซอร์, “Vegas” เวกัส, “Chocolate” ช็อคโกแลต, “Nasa” นาซ่า and the like.

Most of the above names can be used for either gender, but most are more common for one gender than the other. The names of small animals and of
food and drink are mostly female names, whereas names of leisure activities and technology are mainly male names.

Some people are actually named after their gender – Chai (ชาย chaai) “male”, Ying (หญิง yìng) “female” and Num (หนุ่ม nùm) “young man” are all also common Thai nicknames.

Below are further examples of names that are either gender specific, or much more commonly used for that gender compared to the other.

**Female Nicknames**

- Chompoo
- ชมพู่ chom-pôo
- Rose Apple
- Nam
- น้ำ náam
- Water
- Dear
- เดียร์ dia
- (From English)
- Noy Na
- น้อยหน่า noi-nàa
- Sugar Apple
- Dao
- ดาว daao
- Star
- Ploy
- พลอย ploi
- Gem
- Fah
- ฟ้า fâa
- Sky
- Praew
- แพรว praew
- Sparkling
- Fai
- ฝ้าย fâai
- Cotton
- Sai
• ทราย saai Sand
• Fon
  •ฝน fŏn Rain
• Tan
  •ตาล dtaan Sugar palm
• Kay
  •เก๋ găy Stylish
• Tip
  •ทิพย์ típ Divine
• Maem
  •แหม่ม màem From English “Ma’am”
• Tukta
  •ตุ๊กตา dtúk-(gà)-dtaa Doll

**Male Nicknames**

• Big
  •บิ๊ก bík (From English)
• Pon
  •พล pon Armed forces
• Boy
  •บอย boi (From English)
• Pop
  •ป๊อป bpóp (From English)
• Chai
  •ชัย chai Victory
• Ton
  •ต้น dtôn Leader
• Ek
  •เอก èyk Main / most important
• Tong
  •โต้ง dtôhng Big
• Jom
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thai</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>จอม jom</td>
<td>Peak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top</td>
<td>ท็อป (From English)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kla</td>
<td>กล้า (Brave)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat</td>
<td>วัต (Religious duty)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pat</td>
<td>พัด (Blowing wind)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yut</td>
<td>ยุทธ (Strategy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pete</td>
<td>พีท (From English)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>