

P's and Q's: What's the proper way to address a woman with 2 last names?

by Letitia Baldrige

Q. How should I address a woman who uses two last names, such as "Geneva Besmer Silverstone"?

A. First, find out if the last two names are hyphenated, as many women started doing in the '70s. If she's Geneva Besmer-Silverstone, you should use the last two names at all times.

If she has a career, and Besmer is her family (maiden) name and Silverstone her surname, at social events she might go by "Geneva Silverstone," dropping her maiden name. If she uses her family name, Besmer, as her professional name and does not like to be addressed by two different names, she should be Ms. Geneva Besmer to everyone for everything. (Many women who have earned their independence the hard way don't want to throw away their birth identity at work.)

It's sad that in many companies today, people don't give a darn if they don't get a name correct in correspondence, invitations or introductions. They don't care about spelling or titles, either. That sends a very bad message to the public about that company.

Tip: Find more etiquette advice in our special report, [***14 Tips on Business Etiquette: Setting a professional tone with co-workers, clients and customers.***](#)

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