

Geographic Sports Team Names

Theme:

Students will be looking at the sports names of professional teams in baseball, football, basketball, and hockey and analyzing how many of the names match up to a geographic feature of the area or city that the team represents.

Overview:

Students must research the origin of the names of professional sports teams and decide if the sports team name is related to the area or the city in which the team represents. Students will then determine what percentage of the sports teams have geographic nicknames.

Minnesota Social Studies Standards:

- V. Geography
- B. Essential Skills
- 1. Standard - The student will use maps, globes, geographic information systems, and other databases to answer geographic questions at a variety of scales from local to global.
- 1. Benchmark - Students will demonstrate the ability to obtain geographic information from a variety of print and electronic sources.
- 3. Benchmark - Students will demonstrate the ability to use geographic information from a variety of sources to determine feasible locations for economic activities and examine voting behavior.

Grade Level: 9-12

Objectives:

Students will be analyzing the sports team names of the professional sports in the United States and comparing the names with the geographic reasons for the introduction of those names. This will be compared with the stadium names to determine patriot, or corporate sponsorship of the stadiums.

Time:

3 class periods on an 84 minute block schedule.

Subjects/Topics:

Geography
American History
Mathematics

Required Materials:

- List of each of the sports teams in the four major sports, hockey, basketball, baseball and football.
- Answer key document for the names of the major league teams.
- Atlas of the United States and Canada to find cities.
- Computer lab to research city and team names.

Optional Technologies:

Students could produce a map using GIS technologies with different colors representing the names with geographic themes and those without geographic names.

Suggested Procedure:**Opening:**

Students will get the list of all of the professional sports teams in each of the major professional sports in the United States. Once they have this list they should begin researching the reasons for the names given to each of the sports teams and begin placing them in categories for those with geographic relationship to the city in which they present and those with no representation of the city in which they represent.

Development:

Students should begin to discuss some of the reasons for these names. This can lead into geographic discussions of the geographic reasons for those names in that area.

Closing:

Students should now look at the hand out with the stadium names on it. They should then determine when the stadium was built and the relationship with origin and place name in terms of the sponsorship of the stadium. Older stadiums traditionally have a name after a public figure or military service people. Newer stadiums usually have some type of corporate sponsorship associated with them.

Suggested Assessment:

Students will be turning in their summaries of the team names upon completion of the project. The teacher should assess learning based on the thoroughness of the answers in relation to the answer sheet provided to the teacher.

Definitions:

None

Discussion Questions:

1. How many of the place names have a geographic concept associated with their name?
2. What is the relationship between the athletes and the name that they are associated with?

Extension Activities:

None

Credits:

Kelly Swanson, Geography Teacher, Johnson Senior High School

Hockey

1. **Anaheim Mighty Ducks:** Disney CEO Michael Eisner named the team after the hit Disney movie “The Mighty Ducks.”
2. **Boston Bruins:** Businessman Charles Adams wanted his new franchise to have brown and yellow team colors to match his stores as well as a team equated with strength and power. A fan named the team in a contest.
3. **Buffalo Sabers:** The management held a contest and chose the sabers. Team officials wanted a fresh new name not being used in the pros, and something other than a buffalo/bison variations.
4. **Calgary Flames:** Given to the team when it was in Atlanta to commemorate the burning of the city in the civil war. When the team moved to Calgary, management held a contest/vote, and the fans chose to keep the name, which also relates to the Alberta petroleum industry.
5. **Chicago Blackhawks:** Original owner Frederick McLaughlin named the team in honor of the black hawk battalion he served with in WWI. The unit was named after Chief Black Hawk. The name was merged to Blackhawks several years ago.
6. **Dallas Stars:** Dallas is in Texas, the Lone star state. Also, when the team was in Minnesota, hockey fans chose the Minnesota state motto “Etoile du Nord” (Star of the North).
7. **Detroit Red Wings:** Then team president James Norris named it in honor of a team he had played with the Montreal Winged Wheelers. The logo was perfect for the Motor City.
8. **Edmonton Oilers:** The management held a contest and chose the Oilers, reflecting the importance of the oil industry. They kept the name when it moved from the World Hockey Association to the NHL.
9. **Florida Panthers:** H.Wayne Huizenga wanted to draw attention to the Panther, an endangered native wildcat of Florida.
10. **Los Angeles Kings:** Two possible reasons: 1.) Then management held a contest and chose the name and 2.) Jack Kent Cooke named them the Kings via executive decision, giving no specific reason.
11. **Montreal Canadiens:** Representing the nationality of the players on the team. Originally, the team had only French Canadian players.
12. **New Jersey Devils:** Comes from the legend: a witch allegedly gave birth to a demon known as the “Jersey Devil” in 1735. The Jersey Devil was alleged to be a half-man, half-beast that stalked New Jersey’s Pine Barrons of the area surrounding Lake Hopatcong for 250 years causing fear and terror and guts and gore. Others say the Devil was the 13th child of the mother Leeds, jinxed by the gypsies.
13. **New York Islanders:** The team is based in Uniondale, Long Island, N.Y.
14. **New York Rangers:** Madison Square Garden President Tex Richards team unofficial known as the Tex Rangers, a play on Texas Rangers police, but Rangers was the official name.
15. **Ottawa Senators:** In honor of the old Ottawa Senators hockey team that won 6 Stanley Cups. Originally, was Canada’s capital and the nickname of the 1901 amateur team.
16. **Philadelphia Flyers:** After 25,000 entries, a committee chose Flyers, although the winning entry by a kid was spelled fliers, because it went phonetically with Philadelphia.

- 17. Pittsburgh Penguins:** The management held a contest and chose Penguins, partly because the team is located in Northeastern PENsylvania.
- 18. Saint Louis Blues:** Then owner Sid Salamon Jr. drew inspiration from the famous song by W.C. Handy.
- 19. San Jose Sharks:** Out of 5,000 entries, officials picked the Sharks. 7 varieties of the shark are found in the Pacific Ocean, and there are several shark research facilities in the area. One part of the Bay Area is known as Red Triangle due to its shark population.
- 20. Toronto maple Leafs:** Then owner Conn Smythe drew inspiration from an old Toronto team called the East Maple Leaves.
- 21. Vancouver Canuck:** The nickname was taken from a Canadian folk hero. The legend says that Jonny Canuck was a great logger, and was a skater and a hockey player in his spare time.
- 22. Washington Capitols:** Washington D.C. is the capital of the United States.
- 23. Minnesota Wild:** Held a contest and was voted on by the fans that chose the Wild for the states wildlife.
- 24. Atlanta Thrashers:** The fans voted on a rare Canadian bird that migrated to the Atlanta area.
- 25. Nashville Predators:** After more than 5,000 entries, Nashville officlas chose the Predators aggressive and mean name.
- 26. Columbus Blue Jackets:** Columbus chose the Blue Jackets because of its Civil War building in Columbus.

Baseball

What's in a Name?



Astros: The 1961 Houston expansion team, then the Colt .45s, was renamed the Astros in '66 because of the heavy aerospace industry present in Houston. The team had just moved into what later became known as the Astrodome in 1965 and made history, playing in the first indoor ballpark.



Braves: Boston had both an NL and an AL club at the turn of the century. While the Junior Circuit squad became the Red Sox, the NL club called itself the Doves because of its owners at the time, the Dovey brothers. In 1912, new ownership took over, and at the suggestion of future Hall of Fame shortstop John Montgomery Ward, a new name was selected. New owner James Gaffney was a political bigwig with ties to the New York City political machine known as Tammany Hall (Tammany was a Leni-Lanape Indian Chief), and members of the Hall were known as Braves. From that point on, so was the franchise.



Brewers: Even before it had a Major League franchise, Milwaukee was a city that prided itself on its pitchers – of beer, that is. The city is so thick with breweries, it might be better suited to house a rec-softball team. But when the “Beer Capital of the World” became home to a big league franchise, the choice of a name was simple and any other ideas were canned. The toast of Milwaukee became the Brewers.



Cardinals: Sportswriters from the turn of the 20th century are credited with coming up with a number of team names that are still used today. In 1988, the St. Louis franchise had a new owner, and one of his first orders of business was a uniform change. He discarded the team's brown stockings, which had led to its old moniker of Browns. Instead, St. Louis players wore bright, deep red socks, leading William McHale, a sportswriter for the *St. Louis Republic*, to call the team the Cardinals.



Cubs: A rookie newspaper reporter is often referred to in the business as a cub, so when Chicago manager Frank Selee began stocking his club with young and unproven players in the 1890s, sportswriters applied the name. Chicago officially became the Cubs in 190. While the franchise has aged, the name has stayed the same.



Diamondbacks: Arizona was looking for a name with bite when it turned the naming of its expansion team over to the fans. While the Rattlers, Phoenix, Scorpions and Coyotes were all in the hunt, fans decided to name the club after the prominent, venomous rattlesnake found in the state, and thus the Diamondbacks were hatched. (Diamondback rattlers get their name from the pattern on their backs.) And since baseball is played on a diamond, the name slithered in a reference to the game.



Dodgers: In the early 1900s, Brooklyn was a maze of interlocking and crisscrossing trolley lines. Brooklynites walking anywhere in the borough were

constantly dodging trolleys, so they were called “Trolley Dodgers.” The team they rooted for had been known as the Bridegrooms, the Superbas, the infants and the Robins. In 1932, the club officially dubbed itself the Dodgers. When the franchise took the trip west to Los Angeles, it kept the name.



Expos: In 1967, the city of Montreal held a wildly successful World’s Fair called “Expo ’67.” Feeding off the event’s success, the club grabbed the name Expos.



Giants: The San Francisco franchise formerly of New York, is one of the oldest clubs in baseball history. Amazingly, the team has used the name Giants since 1885, a streak of 115 consecutive seasons. The story varies over the history of the name, depending on who you listen to. According to most sources, sportswriter P.J. Donahue was the first to refer to the team, formerly known as the Gothams, as the Giants. But the name was originally believed to have come from then-manager James Mutrie, who after a long and successful road trip, told reporters, “My boys are not only in stature, but in baseball ability.” Another version of that story says Mutrie may have swiped the line from a group of fans who told him that his team had played like giants. It remains one gigantic debate.



Marlins: When a Major League franchise is awarded to a city, the club sometimes takes on the name of a minor league club already entrenched there. Accordingly, Florida owes their inspiration for its fishy moniker to the bush leagues. From the 1950s through the 1980s, various Miami-based minor leagues clubs hooked the name Marlins. A marlin is a game fish found in the South Florida waters that is revered by fisherman as a tough catch.



Mets: The Metropolitan Baseball Club, Inc. needed a name for its new franchise to begin play in 1962. Club owner Joan Payson wanted a name that reflected New York, was short and easy for headline writers, and had some historical significance. After rejecting names such as Rebels, Burros and Skyliners, and passing on the likes of Islanders and Jets (which eventually managed to find their way into the New York sports scene anyway), Payson selected Mets after the Metropolitan, a team that had played in the American Association in the late 1800s. Along with the Reds, the Mets own the distinction of having the shortest name in the big leagues – a headline writer’s delight.



Padres: The city of San Diego was home to the first Spanish mission in California, established in 1769. Two hundred years later, Major League Baseball came to San Diego, and the new franchise took the name Padres, the Spanish word for “father”. It was the same name used by the city’s Pacific Coast League franchise for years.



Phillies: Obviously, the Phillies were named for their city of Philadelphia. But in the mid-1940s, the team went by a different name. In 1944, William Cox, owner of the franchise, was banned from baseball for betting on the team’s games. He sold the club, and the new owner thought that a new name might help reverse the team’s recent unsuccessful trend. More than 5,000 letters poured in with suggestions. The winner selected the name Blue Jays. But the name never caught on with the fans or sportswriters, so after two seasons as the Jays, the club returned to its original name, the Phillies.



Pirates: The Pittsburgh Pirate’s nickname is more of an accusation than a tribute.

In 1887, the National League’s Pittsburgh Alleghenies, named for the river, defeated the defending champion Chicago White Stockings to claim the championship. Only three seasons later, Pittsburgh, now called the innocents, saw its roster raided by teams from the new Player League. The innocents struggled through an awful season losing a club-record 113 games. Despite the influx of talent the Players League could not compete with the already established National League or the American Association, and folded after one season. Players were expected to re-sign with their former teams, but second baseman Louis Bierbauer signed with Pittsburgh instead of returning to the AA’s Philadelphia Athletics. Pittsburgh had “pirated” away Bierbauer from them. The A’s demanded that he be returned. The now not-so-Innocents held on to both Bierbauer and new moniker, the Pirates which has the second longest continuous tenure in the Majors.



Reds: The Cincinnati Base Ball Club was born out of the post-Civil War baseball boom that swept through the country in the late 1860s. The club’s first official name was the Resolutes, but like many things about the team, that changed when

Harry Wright was hired to run the club. Wright, a cricket player from England was a pioneer in developing managerial strategies and practice regimens for the National Pastime. He was also among the first to outfit his team in knicker-style trousers. Wright’s club took the field in short pants with bright red socks, truly earning the name Reds. That club moved to Boston and became the Braves, but a new Reds team started in 1882 and borrowed the old name.



Rockies: When baseball moved to Colorado in 1991, the franchise scooped up a regional name that had been abandoned by professional hockey. In 1976, the NHL placed a team in Colorado, and the owners took the name Rockies. When the franchise packed up and moved to New Jersey, it changed the team’s name to the Devils. But the lure of the Rocky Mountains was too great for Major League

Baseball to ignore, and the Rockies were reborn.



Angels: Los Angeles is known as the City of Angels, so when Gene Autry’s expansion team setup camp near the Dodgers, he wanted a name that the people of the city could identify with. Angels had been the name of the cubs’ Minor League team that played in L.A., and it was that club’s park, an L.A. version of Wrigley Field, where the Angels played their first season. When the club moved to Anaheim

in 1966, the name Angels flew along with them.



Athletics: In the mid 1800’s – baseball’s “formative years” – groups of men often formed baseball teams. The prestigious Philadelphia Athletic Club, a city social club made up of lawyers and merchants, put together a baseball team of its own in 1859. The team, which later joined the American League and played in Kansas City and Oakland, went by the name Athletics. In 1902, a year after A’s owner Connie

Mack helped form the American League, New York Giants Manager John McGraw dismissed the team as “white elephants,” implying that Mack shouldn’t be allowed to spend money without supervision. Ever defiant of his critics, Mack adopted the white elephant s his team’s insignia.



Blue Jays: When Toronto needed a moniker for its new ball club in 1976, the city held a “Name the Team” contest. Over 30,000 entries poured in with over 4,000 suggested names. A panel of judges narrowed down the list, which was then presented to the team’s Board of Directors. The first choice was Blues, but that name was claimed by the University of Toronto’s sports teams. So the directors selected the name Blue Jays, which 154 contestants had submitted as their choice. A drawing named the winner of the contest, who received season tickets for the 1977 season and an all-expense paid trip to Toronto’s Spring Training in Florida. Since the Phillies were the Blue Jays in 1945 as a result of the same process, this marked the second time that the nickname had won a “Name the Team” contest. But this time, the name stuck.



Devil Rays: When Tampa Bay was granted a franchise in 1995, eager potential fans deluged the organization with prospective names. Most popular among the 7,000 suggestions was some form of the name Rays. A telephone contest then let Tampa area residents vote for either the Manta Rays or the Devil Rays, and the latter won out. Both names refer to the same fish, the largest member of the ray family. Devil rays can be found in the waters off Florida and have been known to grow as long as 23 feet and weigh as much as 2,400 pounds. The devil rays itself got its name from its cephalic fins, which people often think resemble devil’s horns.



Indians: Although there are disputes to this claim, it’s believed that Cleveland named its franchise in honor of one of the first recognized Native Americans in Baseball. Up until 1915, the team was known as the Naps, in honor of its star player, Napoleon Lajoie. When Lajoie left for Philadelphia after the 1914 campaign, the team needed a new moniker. Team owner Charles M. Somers invited the Cleveland baseball writers to suggest names. When all the ink had dried and all their readers’ mail was opened, the name Indians was selected. As legend has it, the old Cleveland National League Club had carried the name in honor of outfielder Louis Francis Sockalexis, who was a full-blooded American Indian and the grandson of a Penobscot tribal chief.



Mariners: A franchise in Seattle joined Toronto as part of the 1977 Major League expansion. The ownership group there also held a “Name the Team” contest. The winner selected the name Mariners “because of the natural association between the sea and Seattle and her people, who have been challenged and rewarded by it.”



Orioles: In 1901, this franchise was founded as the Milwaukee Brewers. A year later, it became the St. Louis Browns. When the team left St. Louis after the 1953 season, the move called for another name change. Arriving in Baltimore, the club opted for the name Orioles, after Maryland’s state bird.



Rangers: When this franchise played in Washington from 1961-1971, the name Senators – the second expansion team to use it – fit perfectly. After all, Washington is America’s capital and home to the Capitol Building, the workplace for Congress. The franchise’s move to Texas in 1972 necessitated a new name, however, and Rangers – the name of the Lone Star state’s legendary police force – fit the bill.



Red Sox: Choice of attire played a role in the naming of the Boston Red Sox. The name Red Stockings had belonged to the National league Boston franchise in the 1870s and 80s, and to the Cincinnati Red Stockings, who were the first ones to use it. The NL Boston teams abandoned the moniker because Manager Fred Tenney forced his club to stop wearing its customary red socks for fear that the red dye could cause infections in spike wounds. The American League Boston franchise owned by John I. Taylor, took on both the red stockings and the name Red Sox. And, to the best of our knowledge, no infections followed.



Royals: When Kansas City received an AL expansion franchise in 1969, the club held a team-naming contest. They were looking for a name fit for a king, so the winning entry, naturally, was the Royals. Intentionally or not, the name can be said to pay tribute to the Kansas City Monarchs, the kings of the Negro Leagues for many years.



Tigers: Detroit is another city whose team emerged from the newspapers. The franchise had been called the Wolverines, after Michigan's state animal. Around the late 1800s, the *Detroit Free Press* ran the name Tigers in a headline, and the name caught on. Soon after, the story goes, Detroit Manager George Starlings took credit for naming the team, saying that he was inspired by the tiger-like black and brown stripes that his players wore. Since the AL formed in 1901, the Tigers have had their stripes.



Twins: When Calvin Griffith, owner of the original Washington Senators, moved the team to Minnesota after the 1960 season, he wanted to attract fans from both of the state's twin cities, Minneapolis and St. Paul, but he also wanted to appeal to the entire state. After considering Twin Cities and Twin City Twins, Griffith named the club the Minnesota Twins. Ironically, the Twins' first home game was a 5 – 3 win against the new expansion team in Washington, once again named the Senators.



White Sox: In 1901, owner Charles Comiskey, seeking big crowds, joined the new American League with a team on Chicago's South Side. The club took on the name White Stockings from the moniker of the old National League club that played in the Windy City, which in turn, took its name from the color of its socks. Chicago Tribune sportswriters Carl Green and Irving Sanborn struggled to squeeze Stockings into the space allotted for headlines. When they couldn't they took a few stitches out of the White Stockings and were left with White Sox.



Yankees: Believe it or not, the franchise that has won more World Championships than any other was first known as the Baltimore Orioles when it played by the harbor in Maryland for its first two seasons. Then in 1903, the club moved to New York and became the Highlanders, named because it played its home games in Hilltop Park – a 10,000-seat wooden stadium overlooking the Hudson River. As early as 1904, sources say, many city newspapers had begun to refer to the team as the Yankees because of the red, white, and blue flags that flew atop Hilltop Park. In 1913, the club left Hilltop to become co-tenants of the polo grounds with the Giants. The name Highlanders lost its relevance, so they became known as the Yankees.

National Football League

- 1. Chicago Bears:** George Halas moved the Decatur Staleys to Chicago in 1921. The Staleys played at Wrigley Field, the home of baseball's Cubs. Halas determined that if the baseball tenants were Cubs, then his more rugged gridiron combatants should be known as the Bears.
- 2. Cincinnati Bengals:** Paul Brown chose this nickname for Cincinnati's 1968 AFL expansion team because there had been earlier football teams in the city called the Bengals. The elder bengals were members of the AFL in 1937, competed as an independent club in 1938, then played in a new AFL from 1939-1941 before the league folded again.
- 3. Buffalo Bills:** The nickname refers to William F. Cody, who was known as "Buffalo Bill." Buffalo had a football team called the Bisons, but the city's minor league baseball and hockey teams had the same name. The football team held a contest to select a new nickname following the 1946 season. More than 4,500 entries were submitted and the Bills beat out the Bullets, Nickels and Blue Devils.
- 4. Denver Broncos:** This nickname was also selected through a contest in January 1960. Broncos was the winner, referring to Denver's Wild West heritage. Denver's 1921 entry in the Midwest baseball league team was also named the Broncos.
- 5. Cleveland Browns:** Cleveland's All-American Football Conference entry was founded in 1946. Paul Brown was named the team's first coach and general manager. The Browns moved to Baltimore in 1996, but the team's history remained, paving the way for the Browns to be resurrected as an expansion team in 1999.
- 6. Tampa Bay Buccaneers:** This name defeated more than 400 entries in a radio-sponsored competition, held one month after Tampa was awarded the first of two expansion franchises on April 24, 1974. Buccaneers was the winner beating out such noble competitors as Buzzards and Sea Horses.
- 7. Phoenix Cardinals:** A football club on the southwest side of Chicago was formed in 1898. The team was known as the Normals until 1901, when founder Chris O'Brien secured some hand-me-down jerseys from the University of Chicago. The jerseys were actually maroon, but the color had faded, striking O'Brien as more of a cardinal tint. The team became the Racine Cardinals keeping the nickname as the club moved from Chicago (1922) to St. Louis (1960) and finally to Phoenix in 1988.
- 8. San Diego Chargers:** The Los Angeles AFL franchise held a contest in 1960. Hollywood resident Gerald Courtney was awarded an all-expense paid trip to Mexico City and Acapulco after submitting the Chargers. Three reasons for choosing the Chargers have been offered: 1. It sounded dynamic 2. the club's new stationary featured a horse; and 3. Owner baron Hilton had recently instituted the Cart Blanche card. The team kept the name when it moved to San Diego the following year.
- 9. Kansas City Chiefs:** This original AFL franchise was originally the Dallas Texans but relocated to Kansas City. Owner Lamar Hunt picked the Chiefs as a nickname to honor Kansas City mayor Roe "The Chief" Bartle for his efforts in securing the team. Bartle promised to enlarge Kansas city's Municipal Stadium and guaranteed Hunt three times as many season season ticket sales as his club had in Dallas.

- 10. Indianapolis Colts:** In 1946, the Miami Seahawks of the All-American Football Conference were relocated to Baltimore. Charles Evans of Middle River, MD won a name contest by submitting Colts. His reasoning was “The Colts are the youngest entry in the League, Maryland is famous for its race horses and it is short, easily pronounced and fits well in newspaper headlines.” The franchise kept the name when it moved to Indianapolis in 1984.
- 11. Dallas Cowboys:** This name might seem like an easy choice in Dallas, but Rangers was actually the first name suggested. The club went with Cowboys since the Rangers might cause confusion with a local minor league baseball team of the same name.
- 12. Miami Dolphins:** After Miami was awarded an AFL expansion franchise in 1965, a contest was held to determine the name. A dozen names were forwarded to a seven-member screening committee of local media and Dolphins was the runaway winner. Although 622 entrants submitted Dolphins, Mrs Robert Swanson of Miami won the two lifetime passes to Dolphins games. The tiebreaker was picking the winner and score of a 1965 tilt between Notre Dame and the University of Miami. The game ended in a scoreless tie.
- 13. Philadelphia Eagles:** The NFL’s Frankford Yellowjackets were awarded to a syndicate headed by Bert Bell and Lud Wray in 1933. Bell named the new Philadelphia team Eagles in honor of the symbol of the New Deal’s national Recovery Act.
- 14. Atlanta Falcons:** Atlanta held a contest in 1965 and many chose Flacons for the NFL’s newest team. The best argument was submitted by Julia Elliot, a teacher from Griffin, GA. “The Falcon is proud and dignified, with great courage and fight. It never drops its prey. It is deadly and has a great sporting tradition.”
- 15. San Francisco 49ers:** Owner Anthony J Morabito chose 49ers for his All-America Football Conference squad because it reflected San Francisco’s link to the California Gold Rush. The 49ers kept the name when they joined the NFL in 1950.
- 16. New York Giants:** In 1925, Tim Mara purchased New York’s first professional football team for a reported \$500. Mara decided on Giants because his team would play at the Polo Grounds, the home of baseball’s new York Giants. The original Giants derived their name from the city’s giant buildings.
- 17. Jacksonville Jaguars:** Jacksonville held a contest in 1991, two years before the city was awarded the NFL’s 30th franchise. Jaguars claimed the majority of votes, besting a group that included Sharks, Stingrays and Panthers.
- 18. New York Jets:** New York’s AFL squad was originally the Titans. In 1963, after three seasons, a five-man syndicate bought the franchise. On the same day they hired Weeb Ewbank, the owners announced that they were changing the team’s name to jets. It sounded like New York’s baseball mets and LaGuargia Airport was nearby.
- 19. Detroit Lions:** Detroit radio executive George Richards purchased the NFL’s Portsmouth Spartans and moved them to the Motor City in 1934. Richards chose Lions. Felines were already prevalent in Detroit. Baseball could claim the Tigers and a Detroit football team called the Panthers had folded after two years in 1927.
- 20. Green Bay Packers:** In 1919, Earl “Curly” Lambeau and George Calhoun pieced together a group in the Green Bay Press-Gazette editorial room with the notion of starting a football team. Lambeau’s employer at the Indian Packing Company – Frank Peck – provided jerseys, equipment and use of its athletic field for practice. Early on, the club was identified as a project of the company, hence the Packers became a natural fit.

- 21. Carolina Panthers:** The nickname for Carolina's 1995 expansion team was selected by team president Mark Richardson, the son of owner Jerry Richardson. The younger Richardson also chose the Panther's colors of Panther blue, silver and black.
- 22. New England Patriots:** A group of new England sportswriters picked Patriots as a tribute to Patriot Day, which celebrates Paul Revere's ride.
- 23. Oakland Raiders:** In 1960, Oakland held a contest to pick a name for its AFL team. The fans chose Senors, but Oakland management opted for Raiders.
- 24. Saint Louis Rams:** In 1936, Cleveland's new AFL franchise decided to take its name from one of the top collegiate teams of the era, the Fordham Rams. The Rams name stuck with eventual moves to Los Angeles (1946) and St. Louis (1995).
- 25. Baltimore Ravens:** After a 12-year void, Baltimore again acquired an NFL team in 1996 when the Cleveland Browns relocated. Owner Art Modell allowed the Brown's name, colors and history to remain in Cleveland. Baltimore then set up focus groups and fan polls to help secure a new name. Ravens won out over Americans and Marauders. The name refers to the mythical bird in Edgar Allen Poe's poem "The Raven." Poe lived and died in Baltimore.
- 26. Washington Redskins:** George Marshall headed a syndicate that purchased an NFL team fro Boston in 1933. The team would play at the home of baseball's Boston Braves so it adopted the same name. The following year, the Braves moved to Fenway Park and changed their name to the Redskins. The name remained when the team moved to Washington in 1937.
- 27. New Orleans Saints:** The new Orleans NFL franchise was awarded on All Saints Day (November 1) in 1966. In addition, the song "When the Saints Go Marchin' In" is often associated with the city of New Orleans.
- 28. Seattle Seahawks:** In a 1975 contest, Seattle's expansion franchise received 10,365 entries, extolling 1,741 different names. Seahawks, a name denoting the city's link to the sea, was on 151 ballots.
- 29. Tennessee Titans:** The Houston Oilers, who played at the Astrodome from 1960-1996, moved to Nashville for the 1997 season. After two seasons as the Tennessee Oilers, owner Bud Adams announces that the team will change its nickname to the Titans. "Titans come from early Greek mythology and the fact that Nashville is known as the 'Athens of the South' makes the Titans name very appropriate," Adams said.
- 30. Minnesota Vikings:** General manager Bert Rose recommended Vikings to Minnesota's Board of Directors in 1960. The name represents both an aggressive person and the Nordic tradition inherent in the region.
- 31. Houston Texans:** The Houston Texans were named by the fans. They chose it to honor the Texas citizens and the great athletes of Texas.

Professional Basketball Team Names

- 1. Los Angeles Lakers:** The team originated in Minneapolis Minnesota in 1948 to go with the states motto of the “The Land of 10,000 Lakes.” Then the team moved to Los Angeles in 1960.
- 2. Utah Jazz:** The team originated from New Orleans in 1974 they chose it for the reputation of the “jazz capital of the world.” The name stayed with them when they moved to Salt Lake City, Utah in 1979.
- 3. Chicago Bulls:** Chicago’s original owner, Richard Klein probably had a premonition about the clubs success when name it the Bulls. He picked the name because the fighting bulls had a relentless attitude along with the instinct to never say quit. Klein founded the club in 1966.
- 4. Boston Celtics:** As head of the arena corporation, Walter brown wanted basketball to fill his arena during the long winter months. Brown tossed around names like whirlwinds, Olympics, and unicorns but in the end chose the Celtics. The name has a great tradition form the old original Celtics in Boston (1914-1939).
- 5. New York Knicks:** Tradition played a big part in naming the New York Knickerbockers. Chosen by the clubs founder Ned Irish, the knickerbockers name already played an integral part of the New York scene. The first original team in baseball history was named the New York Knickerbockers or the knickerbockers nine. The term “Knickerbocker” traces its origins back to the dutch settlers who came to the new world and wore the Knickerbocker pants style.
- 6. Detroit Pistons:** The Pistons first home was in Fort Wayne, Indiana where they were known as the Fort Wayne Zollner Pistons. Team owner Fred Zollner named the club after himself and his business, a pistons manufacturing company. Zollner moved the team to Detroit in 1957 in hopes of finding a bigger market and name stuck due to the automobile industry located there.
- 7. Charlotte Hornets:** In Charlootes case the public prevailed after rejecting the original name, the Charlotte Spirit. After team officials narrowed down fan submissions fans voted on the last six choices and the “Hornets won by a very large margin.
- 8. Miami Heat:** The fans also chose the Heat from names like the Sharks, Tornadoes, Beaches, and the Barracudas. The heat refers to the year round high temperatures in the city.
- 9. Orlando Magic:** In Orlando the fans spoke again and chose the magic because the city’s tourism slogan is “Come to the Magic.”
- 10. Minnesota Timberwolves:** Team officials narrowed down contest submissions to the Timberwolves and the Polars. The Timberwolves were selected 2-1 over the Polars because Timberwolves are indigenous to Minnesota, the only state with a signifigant number of this breed of wolves, other than Alaska.
- 11. Dallas Mavericks:** Dallas was also a team that needed fan help. Dallas chose the Mavericks from fan submissions because of its connection to the world famous cowboy image of Texas.
- 12. Phoenix Suns:** The Suns got their name from a contest. It was chosen because of Arizona’s year-round sunshine and tropical climate.
- 13. Seattle Supersonics:** Seattle named its team the Supersonics because of the huge Boeing plant located in the area in 1967. Boeing, one of the leading airplane manufacturers in

the United States, proposed the building of a Concord-style airplane called the “supersonic transport.” Over 200 entries suggested the Sonic name even though the plans for the new plane never took off.

- 14. Cleveland Cavaliers:** Out of all of the submissions to the local newspaper, the Cavaliers were the top pick for Cleveland.
- 15. Portland Trailblazers:** In the same year as Cleveland, Portland chose the Trailblazers for its team name from a contest that resulted in over 10,000 entries.
- 16. Houston Rockets:** The Rockets first started in San Diego, which selected its name because it agreed with the city’s theme of a “City in Motion.” After the 1970-1971 season, the San Diego Rockets moved to Houston, Texas and kept the same name since it related to the city’s NASA space program.
- 17. Milwaukee Bucks:** In 1968, the bucks were chosen for its team name from entries that included Skunks, Beavers, Hornets, and Ponies. It also reflected the wildlife atmosphere in Wisconsin.
- 18. Los Angeles Clippers:** After losing the Rockets to Houston, San Diego did not have a team until the Buffalo Braves moved to San Diego in 1978. Since team officials believed that it did not fit with the city’s image, a contest helped select the “Clippers” as the new name. San Diego was famous for the great sailing ships (clippers: which passed through the city many years ago. Los Angeles became home to the NBA franchise, now known as the Los Angeles Clippers, in 1984.
- 19. Toronto Raptors:** When the team became the 28th team in the NBA and the first expansion franchise outside of the United States, a contest helped come up with the Raptors for the team name.
- 20. Atlanta Hawks:** The Hawks played in three separate cities over a 20 year span before they settled in Atlanta in 1968. Originally known as the Tri-City Black Hawks, named after the famous Sauk Indian Chief Black Hawk, the team moved from Moline, to Rock Island and Davenport, Iowa in 1948. In 1951, the team migrated north to Milwaukee where the name was shortened to the Hawks. Four years later the team moved to St. Louis, Missouri where it was known as the St. Louis Hawks. After 13 seasons the team moved to where it is now located in Atlanta.
- 21. Denver Nuggets:** Denver first played in the ABA in 1967 when the team was known as the Denver Rockets. The team got a new set of owners and settled in the NBA, which already had a team known as the Rockets. Denver chose the Nuggets during the 1974-75 season. The team name refers to the 19th century gold rush when people overwhelmed the area in search of gold and silver.
- 22. Golden State Warriors:** The Warriors first started in Philadelphia. The Warriors were named after the city’s original team in the ABL in 1952. After 16 seasons, the team moved to San Francisco. They moved across the bay to Oakland in 1971. It was renamed the Golden State Warriors in an attempt to get the entire state of California involved with the team.
- 23. New Jersey Nets:** After moving in its inaugural season in 1967, the club returned to New Jersey after 10 years in the summer of 1967. In 1968 the team moved to Commack, Long Island and was renamed the New York Nets after one of the most important parts of the basketball game – the net. Before the start of the 1977-1978 season, the team relocated back to New Jersey and kept the same name.
- 24. Sacramento Kings:** The team started as the Rochester Royals in 1945 in the NBL. In 1957, the team moved to Cincinnati and renamed the Cincinnati Royals. In 1972 the team moved to Kansas City and was called the Kansas City-Omaha Kings after the city’s

fans voted on the name. In 1985 the team moved to Sacramento and the name remained with the team.

- 25. San Antonio Spurs:** The franchise started in Dallas in 1967, when the club was named the Dallas Chaparrals, a name representing the trees in Texas and Mexico. In 1970 the name was changed to the Texas Chaparrals in an effort to spark interest throughout the state. Then one year later the team reverted back to Dallas. When the team relocated the name didn't suit the city's image and a contest decided the new Spurs name was a reflection of the Western heritage of Texas.
- 26. Indiana Pacers:** In 1967 the team selected their team name in a different way than any other team. Their decision was based on what they wanted to do in the NBA. Team officials chose the Pacers name because the organization wanted to set the "Pace" in professional basketball.
- 27. Philadelphia 76ers:** After Philadelphia purchased the Syracuse Nats, the team renamed the team 76ers, in honor of the signing of the United States Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, by the Continental Congress at Independence Hall located in Philadelphia.
- 28. Washington Wizards:** The team first started out as the Chicago Packers in 1961, when owner David Trager named the club after his packing company. One year later the team changed its name to the Chicago Zephyrs. By 1963, the team moved to Baltimore and renamed the Baltimore Bullets after the city's first basketball team. Originally the team was named after a World War II ammunition factory. For the 1973-1974 season, they were known as the Capital Bullets. With America moving to end violence and bring peace to its neighborhoods, Washington owner Abe Pollin made the decision to change the name to the Wizards for the beginning of the 1997-1998 season.
- 29. Vancouver Grizzlies:** As the latest addition to the NBA, the team chose the Grizzlies as its team name because grizzlies are an indigenous species to the area and are prominent in northwestern native culture and mythology.