

**Part 1 (Reading) DIRECTIONS:** Read closely and color code: **main idea(2-3 sentences that capture what the whole article is about)**, **best evidence (think credible sources)**, **interesting choices/figurative language (think about what the writer's technique/style)**, **counterclaim (if applicable)**. You may also leave comments in margins if it helps you to think about the text. When finished, you will write your summary paragraph at the bottom of this doc.

## What's in a name change? The logistics of retiring and creating a team name

By The Athletic, adapted by Newsela staff

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So your beloved sports team is going to change its name because of relocation, because of an owner's rebranding whim, because it's a slur or for other reasons.

What does that mean from a nuts-and-bolts perspective for the staff that has to actually do the work of removing the old name from a seemingly endless number of places?

A lot of logistical work for a lot of people is what it means. And it's typically an 18-month to two-year process to fully implement at a cost of millions of dollars, according to sports branding experts.

Let's get this out of the way up front: The time and cost of such a change are immaterial for billionaire sports franchise owners and leagues with problematic team names. No one is weeping for Washington Football team owner Daniel Snyder, who is estimated to be worth \$2.6 billion and owns a \$100 million-plus yacht equipped with an IMAX theater.

His NFL team is worth \$3.4 billion (he paid \$750 million for it in 1999), per Forbes.

"At the end of the day, Snyder has a company worth \$2 billion to \$3 billion," said sports economist and consultant Andrew Zimbalist of Smith College. "If he has to spend \$10 million or \$20 million making all these changes and doing new promotion around the team, no one should feel sorry for him. They'll be able to figure it out. Logistically it's complicated, but in terms of the struggles other companies and individuals are facing right now, we don't need to shed any tears for Dan Snyder."

It's Snyder's employees, along with staff from the NFL headquarters and a bevy of suppliers, clients and business partners, who will have to scrub the old name once a new moniker and logo are finalized. The team reportedly will retain its burgundy and gold color scheme, which will ease the rebranding burden somewhat.

Snyder has been the target of critics over his team's name, which he has ardently refused to change until announcing on July 13 a to-be-decided name is coming and the current name is now retired.

Snyder's staffers aren't alone in the rebranding work on the horizon. In Cleveland, the Indians have stated they are studying a possible name change two years after mothballing the widely criticized Chief Wahoo logo. The Chicago Blackhawks and Atlanta Braves have said no name changes are planned for those teams – but similar to Snyder, outside financial pressure from corporate sponsors and retailers could eventually force a rebrand.

Once the renaming decision has been made, the process is more than just polling the public and hiring image consultants and brand developers.

Here's a quick rundown on the logistics involved in changing a team's name:

For starters, there is the obvious: Player uniforms and equipment bearing the new name and logo (and possibly the team colors, if the rebrand is a complete overhaul) have to be replaced. New workout gear and clothing for coaches, staff and perhaps the stadium's game-day staff have to be manufactured in cooperation with apparel makers such as Nike Inc. – a company that pulled Washington's merchandise from its site recently.

Teams and leagues have in-house creative departments, but often rely on third-party branding companies to create names, logos and other visual imagery.

Then there's the signage and printed materials. A team's name, logo and colors can appear thousands of places just in and around its home ballpark. It's sometimes literally etched in stone, and team facilities use the name (as is the case of Snyder's team headquarters). All of that will be replaced, even if it's out of public view.

"In terms of the physical changes, these are offseason activities but there are a lot of applications you don't think about," said Conor O'Flaherty, managing director at New York City-based SME Branding, which has managed team and conference name changes. "Digital – that's the easiest thing to do. The challenge is the physical. Is (the name) chiseled into concrete? When you think about a facility and when you walk around, you see that brand."

A team has to ask itself: Will it remove old banners, trophies and historic paraphernalia that use the old name and logo as part of history displays? In the case of a relocation rebrand, that's a simpler decision than a team shifting names because of racism or bigotry.

There also is a mountain of legal paperwork such as trademarks and copyrights, licensing agreements with makers of apparel, merchandise and other retail services. That's work often handled at least in part by the leagues, which ink the licensing deals (and revenue from which is shared among other teams, meaning all NFL clubs have benefited from Snyder's merchandise sales).

With online federal trademark applications easily searchable, teams often will file to control a slate of possible names (and sometimes have to battle in court for them) for rebranding or for other business functions such as stadium and arena names. They often leak.

"Franchises will move forward with trademarking a number of names to protect those, and perhaps to keep people guessing," O'Flaherty said.

Teams also will have contracts, legal, medical, governmental and insurance documents to update, which is the work of attorneys and other front office staff.

On the technical side, team and league staff have to work to replace the old name with the new one on official websites, social channels, mobile apps – and not just on the team's properties, but for all the other teams and the league itself. Email addresses have to be updated. Major leagues have direct access to companies like Twitter and Facebook, so that can hasten a transition process.

Also requiring updates: Mountains of advertising and marketing materials. Billboards. Tickets. Name badges. Business cards. Limited edition cups. Entire team retail stores. And old logo merchandise has to be destroyed, recycled or donated. The list goes on and on.

Media partners such as local and national TV, radio and digital carriers of the team and league's content have to get the new name, logo, colors and lettering, meaning the rebrand update is work for more than staffers in Washington and Cleveland.

While there is a lot of work involved for low-level staffers, suppliers, partners and consultants, it can be done, and has been done in many places.

Ending negative connotations or outright racism is critical in the 21st century as a business imperative, regardless of the work and cost involved. And picking the best replacement name is nearly as important, branding experts say.

"It's not as simple as changing a name and logo. It goes to the heart of what these franchises are and what they present," O'Flaherty said. "How do different groups perceive these names? How do they resonate?"

Even with an enormous punch list that will take years and cost millions, a name change functionally begins with the decision on what to call the team. Franchises and leagues have to tread carefully to find a popular but inoffensive name and logo, and branding experts say fans need to feel like part of the process. No one wants to go from a problematic name to a silly or dumb name that brings a fresh wave of scorn (particularly if the team is mediocre or worse when it comes to wins and losses, such as Snyder's team).

So what do the teams and leagues that have to do the work have to say about the logistics of it all?

Not much at the moment.

Whatever the approval process and logistics, the moment has arrived for teams like Washington to make the change and then stand by the new name.

"I think now is the time. There are some fans who always will be against it because their feeling is nothing is wrong with these names," O'Flaherty said. "Fans, regardless of the name or design, will push back on it. The team needs to be prepared to push back. These changes have been happening across the college sports world for much of the last 20 years in the sports world."

**Part 2 (Writing) DIRECTIONS: Now that you have read and thought about the article, write your summary below. It should consist of the articles 3-4 main points and should not contain 1st person pronouns (I, me, my) nor direct quotes from the text.**

DIRECTIONS:

**WRITE A TWO PARAGRAPH REFLECTION**

1. **ANALYSIS:** One paragraph that reflects on the writer's style
  - Think about the techniques the writer used - HOW it was written, his/her word choice, the way the text was organized, the quality of the evidence, tone, figurative language. Use the literary devices whenever possible!
  - Get specific. Only comment on something you think is meaningful here!
  - Use evidence from the text and discuss what "moves" the writer is making.
  - Avoid 1st person pronouns (I, me, my).
2. **RESPONSE:** One paragraph that reflects the reader's thoughts on the content of the article.
  - I want your opinion here **on the topic**, not the article! Get real :)
  - It is ok to use first person pronouns in this paragraph!