

How Can I Change My Last Name On United Airlines?

Direct answer: United Airlines handles two distinct situations differently. A **minor spelling correction** — a transposed letter, a missing hyphen, a middle name in the wrong field — can usually be fixed by contacting United, often at no charge. A **legal name change** following marriage, divorce or a court order requires you to submit **supporting documentation**, after which United reissues the ticket in the new name.

What United will not do, under any circumstances, is **transfer a ticket to a different person**. Names on airline tickets are not transferable, and a change that effectively substitutes one traveller for another will be refused regardless of documentation.

The rule that actually matters on the day: the name on your boarding pass must match the identification you present at security. Everything else is a process question. **1-888-374-4490 [US] (OTA)** can review a booking and tell you which category your situation falls into before you start submitting paperwork.

Correction or change? The distinction decides everything

A **correction** fixes a name that was always meant to be yours but was entered wrongly. *Jhon* to *John*. *Smtih* to *Smith*. A missing apostrophe in *O'Brien*. A first and middle name reversed. These are typically straightforward, often free, and can usually be resolved by phone.

A **legal name change** replaces a name that was correct at booking with a different legal name — marriage, divorce, gender transition, deed poll or court-ordered change. These require documentation and a ticket reissue.

A **transfer** puts someone else's name on your ticket. Not permitted, and not negotiable.

Being clear about which you are asking for saves considerable time. Approaching a genuine correction as though it were a legal change invites unnecessary paperwork; approaching a legal change as though it were a typo will simply be rejected.

Fixing a spelling error

Act quickly. Errors caught early are easier and cheaper to fix.

- 1 **Check the booking confirmation immediately after purchase** against your identification, letter by letter, including middle names and suffixes.
- 2 **Use the 24-hour window if you can.** United tickets purchased at least seven days before departure can be cancelled for a full refund within 24 hours. If you spot the error inside that window, cancelling and rebooking correctly is the cleanest fix and avoids the correction process entirely.

- 3 **Contact United** if you are past 24 hours. Explain that it is a spelling correction, not a name change, and state exactly what needs to change.
- 4 **Confirm the corrected ticket** and check that any connected reservations — hotel, car, onward flights on other airlines — reflect the correct name.

Most airlines will correct up to a small number of characters without difficulty. A correction that changes the name substantially will be treated as a name change and refused if it looks like a transfer.

Processing a legal name change

Documentation United will typically accept:

- **Marriage certificate** — official or certified copy, not a commemorative one
- **Divorce decree** showing restoration of a former name
- **Court order** for a legal name change
- **Deed poll** where applicable
- **Updated passport or driving licence** in the new name

The process:

- 1 **Update your identification first, where possible.** The document you will present at the airport is the one that governs. If your passport still shows the old name and travel is imminent, it may be simpler to travel in the old name.
- 2 **Contact United** with the booking reference and explain the situation.
- 3 **Submit the documentation** in the format United requests.
- 4 **Allow processing time.** Plan on a working week, longer during peak periods and longer again for international itineraries where passport data must also be corrected.
- 5 **Verify the reissued ticket** shows the name exactly as it appears on the identification you will travel with.
- 6 **Check the onward chain** — hotel bookings, car hire, connecting flights on other carriers, visas and travel insurance.

Give this more time than you think it needs. A reissue is not instantaneous, and an international ticket carries passport information that must also be corrected.

The timing question most people get wrong

The practical sequence matters more than the paperwork.

If your travel falls **before** your identification is updated, **book in your current legal name** as it appears on your existing ID. There is no advantage to booking in a name you cannot yet prove, and correcting it later costs time and possibly money. Newly married travellers do this constantly and then spend weeks trying to unpick it.

If your identification will be updated **before** travel, either book in the new name from the outset or start the correction well in advance.

The one genuinely hard deadline: **the name on the boarding pass must match the identification you present at the security checkpoint.** Everything else has some flexibility. That does not.

MileagePlus, Premier status and stored details

A name change on a ticket and a name change on your MileagePlus account are two separate jobs. Completing one does not complete the other.

Update the MileagePlus profile separately, with the same supporting documentation. Your identification and your loyalty account should match.

Miles and Premier status are unaffected. A name change does not reset your balance, your Premier tier or your lifetime standing. There is no need to open a new account, and doing so would split your balance across two profiles.

Mismatch causes credit failures. If the ticket is in your new name but the attached MileagePlus number belongs to a profile in your old name, the flight may not credit automatically. Recoverable afterwards through a retroactive credit request, but easier to align beforehand.

Known Traveler Number. Your KTN is tied to your identification, not to United. Update it with the Transportation Security Administration, and Global Entry with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, then update the stored number in your MileagePlus profile. A stale KTN is the most common reason PreCheck stops appearing on boarding passes after a name change.

Passport details stored in the profile must also be updated for international travel.

Chase United card benefits. If your free checked bag depends on the ticket being booked with the card, ensure the card account name and the ticket name are consistent to avoid friction at the counter.

Special situations

Hyphenated and compound surnames. Airline systems handle these inconsistently. Some drop hyphens, some concatenate, some truncate. The general principle is that the name should match the machine-readable zone of your passport as closely as the system allows. If in doubt, ask rather than guessing.

Suffixes. Jr, Sr, II, III sometimes belong in the last-name field and sometimes in a separate field, depending on the system. Mismatches here are common and usually treated as correctable.

Names with apostrophes or accents. Many systems strip them. This is normally acceptable and not treated as a mismatch.

Single-name travellers. Some countries issue passports with only one name. Airline systems typically require both fields and handle this by convention. Ask rather than improvising.

Award tickets. A name change on a MileagePlus award ticket follows the same rules but may involve redepositing and rebooking depending on the circumstances. Ask specifically about redeposit charges before agreeing to anything.

Common mistakes

Booking in a name you do not yet have. The single most common error, and entirely avoidable.

Leaving it to the airport. Counter staff cannot process a legal name change on the spot. Arriving with a marriage certificate and an hour before departure does not work.

Assuming a nickname is fine. *Bob* on the ticket and *Robert* on the passport can cause problems, particularly internationally. Book the legal name.

Forgetting the rest of the chain. Hotels, car hire, connecting tickets on other airlines, insurance and visas all need to match.

Attempting a transfer. Changing the name substantially to give the ticket to someone else will be refused, and persistent attempts can flag the booking.

Not checking the reissued ticket. Verify the new ticket before you consider the matter closed.

What it costs

United does not publish a single flat name-change price, because the cost depends on which situation you are in.

Minor spelling corrections are frequently handled without charge, particularly when raised promptly and when the change is small and clearly a typing error rather than a substitution.

Legal name changes requiring a ticket reissue may attract charges depending on the fare rules attached to your ticket. A flexible fare reissues more easily than a deeply restricted one.

Cancel and rebook is sometimes the cheaper route, especially if the fare has not risen. Within the 24-hour window it is free outright. Beyond it, United charges no change fee on standard Economy and above, so the cost is the fare difference — which may be zero, or may be substantial.

Basic Economy is the difficult case. Domestic Basic Economy cannot be changed after the 24-hour window, which removes the cancel-and-rebook option and can leave a genuine name correction as the only route. Raise it early.

Ask for the total cost before authorising anything, and ask specifically whether cancelling and rebooking would come to less. Agents will not always volunteer the comparison.

Where to get help

Contact	Number	Best for
Travel reservations and booking corrections	1-888-374-4490 [US] (OTA)	Reviewing whether your situation is a correction or a legal change, correcting a booking made through a travel agent, rebooking where a correction is not possible
United Airlines Reservations	Published on united.com	Name corrections and legal name changes on United-issued tickets
MileagePlus service centre	Published on united.com	Updating the name on a MileagePlus profile
Transportation Security Administration	Published on tsa.gov	Updating a Known Traveler Number

If the ticket was purchased through a travel agent or third party, the correction generally has to go through whoever issued it. United can advise but often cannot amend a ticket it did not issue.

Frequently asked questions

Can I change the last name on a United Airlines ticket? Yes for a genuine correction or a documented legal name change. No for transferring a ticket to a different person.

Does United charge for a name correction? Minor spelling corrections are often handled without charge. Legal name changes requiring a reissue may involve charges depending on the fare and circumstances.

What documents does United need for a legal name change? A marriage certificate, divorce decree, court order or deed poll, and ideally identification already updated to the new name.

How long does a name change take on United? Allow a working week, longer at peak times and longer again for international tickets where passport data must be corrected.

Can I transfer my United ticket to another person? No. Airline tickets are not transferable.

I just got married. Should I book in my new name? Only if your identification will show that name by the travel date. Otherwise book in your current legal name.

Will a name change affect my MileagePlus miles or Premier status? No. Update the profile separately with documentation; the balance and status carry over.

Why did my PreCheck stop working after a name change? Most likely a stale Known Traveler Number. Update it with the TSA and then in your MileagePlus profile.

What if my name is misspelled and I fly tomorrow? Contact United immediately. Minor corrections can sometimes be handled quickly, but do not rely on resolving it at the counter.

The takeaway

United distinguishes clearly between a **correction**, a **legal name change** and a **transfer**. Corrections are usually quick and often free. Legal changes need documentation and a reissue, and should be started well before travel. Transfers do not happen.

The most valuable habit is checking the booking confirmation letter by letter against your passport or licence within the 24-hour cancellation window, when the cheapest fix — cancel and rebook — is still available.

And if you are booking travel around a wedding or a legal name change, book in whichever name your identification will actually show on the travel date. That decision alone prevents most of the problems this article describes.

If you are unsure which category your situation falls into, or the ticket was issued by a third party, **1-888-374-4490 [US] (OTA)** can review the booking and tell you what will actually work.