

Why is Nylon called Nylon - FAQ

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The Curious Origin of the Word “Nylon”

Ever wondered how nylon, one of the most widely used synthetic fibers in the world, got its name? The story is as fascinating as the material itself — and full of twists.

A Tale of Two Cities?

According to some sources, including the now-archived "Answers Corporation" website, nylon was developed simultaneously in New York and London. This led to the playful theory that the name “nylon” was a blend of “NY” for New York and “LON” for London. While catchy, this explanation is more myth than fact.

The Real Story: Marketing Meets Chemistry

The true origin of the name is a bit more nuanced — and clever. When DuPont was developing this revolutionary fiber in the 1930s, they initially considered calling it “No-Run”, referencing its resistance to unraveling (or “running”) in stockings. But there was a problem: the fiber wasn’t completely run-proof, and making that claim could have been misleading.

So, the name evolved:

- “No-Run” became “Nuron” (by swapping the vowels)
- Then “Nilon”, to avoid sounding like a nerve tonic
- Finally, “Nylon”, with a “y” for clearer pronunciation

DuPont later explained in a 1978 publication (Context, vol. 7, no. 2) that the “nyl” part was essentially arbitrary, while the “on” suffix was borrowed from other fibers like cotton and rayon to give it a familiar, textile-like feel.

Why It Matters

Understanding the origin of the word “nylon” gives us a glimpse into the intersection of science, marketing, and language. It’s a reminder that even the names of everyday materials often carry stories of innovation, branding strategy, and a bit of creative wordplay.

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