It is the awesome responsibility of parents to choose names for their offspring. In picking suitable names, they must try to find ones meeting certain standards regarded as desirable in our society. Specifically, names should be (1) short, (2) modern, (3) euphonious, (4) free of unpleasant connotations, (5) easy to pronounce, (6) matching the sex of the child being named, and (7) distinctive.

As far as the last of these criteria is concerned, one way of assuring the distinctiveness of the name selected is to use one beginning with the letter X. That letter is one of the strongest in the alphabet, and only a handful of reasonably common words begins with it: XENON, XENOPHOBIA, XEROX, XMAS, X-RAY, and XYLOPHONE.

Most medium-sized dictionaries include first names, either in the main alphabetical section or in a supplementary section in the back. Let's check three of the leading such dictionaries published in recent years, savoring the feast of X-names spread before us:

Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary (1963)
Funk & Wagnalls Standard College Dictionary (1963)
The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (1971)

Alas and alack! The combined resources of these three dictionaries do not yield a single name, masculine or feminine, beginning with the letter X. A just published dictionary, Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1973), with more than 150,000 entries, goes a step further yet, eliminating all first names.

Aside from being virtually inconceivable, such dereliction is also intolerable and unacceptable. As logologists, it is our bounden duty to compile a comprehensive list of X-names for consideration by prospective parents. Accordingly, we commence a thorough search of English-language dictionaries, biographical dictionaries, baby name books, fact finders, books of purported name etymologies, lists of Biblical names, lists of classical names, Shakespearean concordances, and related reference works, recording all X-names that enter our field of vision. Eventually, our list stands at 150 names, consisting of 100 masculine names and 50 feminine names.

Is this list, given at the top of the next page, complete? No, such a list can never be complete. Pick up any reference work that comes to hand, and you will find above. For example, Names, by Charles

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The list includes twice as many masculine names as it does feminine ones. Why? There are two reasons. First, the letter X suggests great strength, and strength is a masculine rather than a feminine attribute. Second, that period of time in which X-names were extremely popular -- the period of classical antiquity -- was a time when most of
the civilized world's illustrious individuals were men, so that a focus on masculine names was natural.

Some of the names on the list, upon investigation, seem rather strange. For example, XENELASIA turns out to be an English word defined as the banishment of aliens from ancient Sparta by official action, while XEROPHAGIA is another word, designating a strict Lenten fast observed in the Eastern churches. Yet, who are we to doubt what we find in published reference works? If words such as FAITH, HOPE, and CHARITY can be feminine first names, and if TUESDAY WELD can be named after a day of the week, then XENELASIA and XEROPHAGIA become plausible names, just more exotic ones.

Parents, take full cognizance of the treasures brought to your attention in this list of names! Use it, not merely for first names but for middle names as well! Think of the children among your relatives and friends turning green with envy upon learning that your son's name is XENOCLEIDES XYSTHUS MILLER, or that your daughter bears the proud name of XEROLIBYA XIUTLALTZIN BROWN. (For the benefit of skeptics, we hasten to mention that XIUTLALTZIN was an 11th-century queen of Tula or Tollan, the capital of the Toltecs in Mexico, and that she is listed in A Dictionary of Universal Biography by Albert M. Hyamson, First Edition, George Routledge & Sons Ltd., London, 1916.)

If you feel that using two X-names is a bit too much, you have the option of using one name spelled with two X's -- a masculine name such as XERXES, or a feminine name such as XERXENE. Both come highly recommended!